

# BUS TRANSFORMATION PROJECT

Draft strategy briefing

June 2019

Item 8





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# I. Introduction

**Congestion, affordability, and mobility** are major problems in the DC region that will only continue to grow

## What can we do?

Limits to the effectiveness of Metrorail

- Currently only reaches about 25% of the region
- Expansions require decades and billions of dollars to build

Meanwhile, the world of transportation is innovating rapidly, and our bus system has not kept pace

- Many technology-driven mobility options threaten to make congestion worse
- Ridership is declining and operators are feeling the pinch

# It is past time for this region to transform its bus system.

A transformed bus system will meet these challenges and provide real results for the region:

- Reduced congestion and emissions
- Increased transit ridership
- Better and faster transportation
- Affordable transportation for more people
- More efficient use of resources
- Better travel experience for riders

The alternative is unaffordable, and harms regional competitiveness and livability.

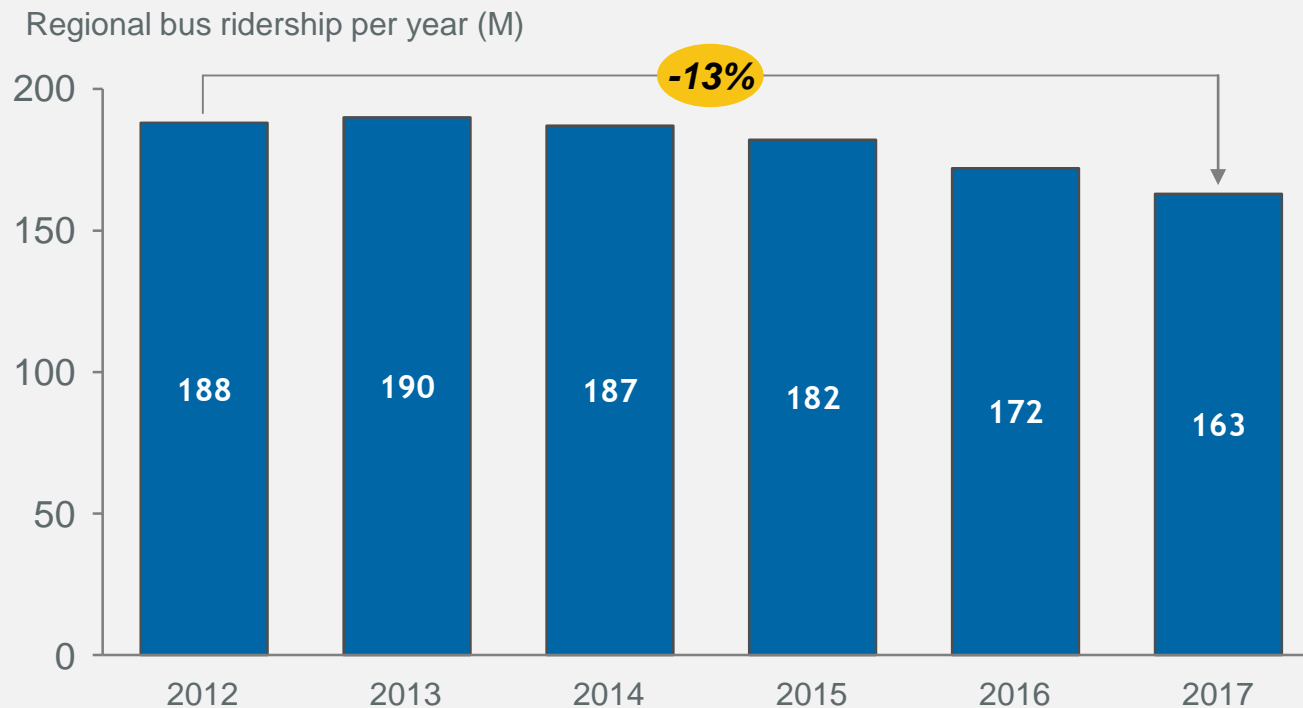
**There is a better way to get there.**



## The Challenge:

Customers are turning to other travel options. Traditional definitions of bus service are not keeping pace with rapid technology and social change.

Since 2012, bus ridership has fallen by 13 percent across the region.



Bus faces several **core challenges** that will continue to grow unless changes are made today:



Meet changing **customer needs**



Keep up with **changing technology**



**Coordinating** across region



Maintain **sustainable** cost structure



**Deciding** how service is paid for



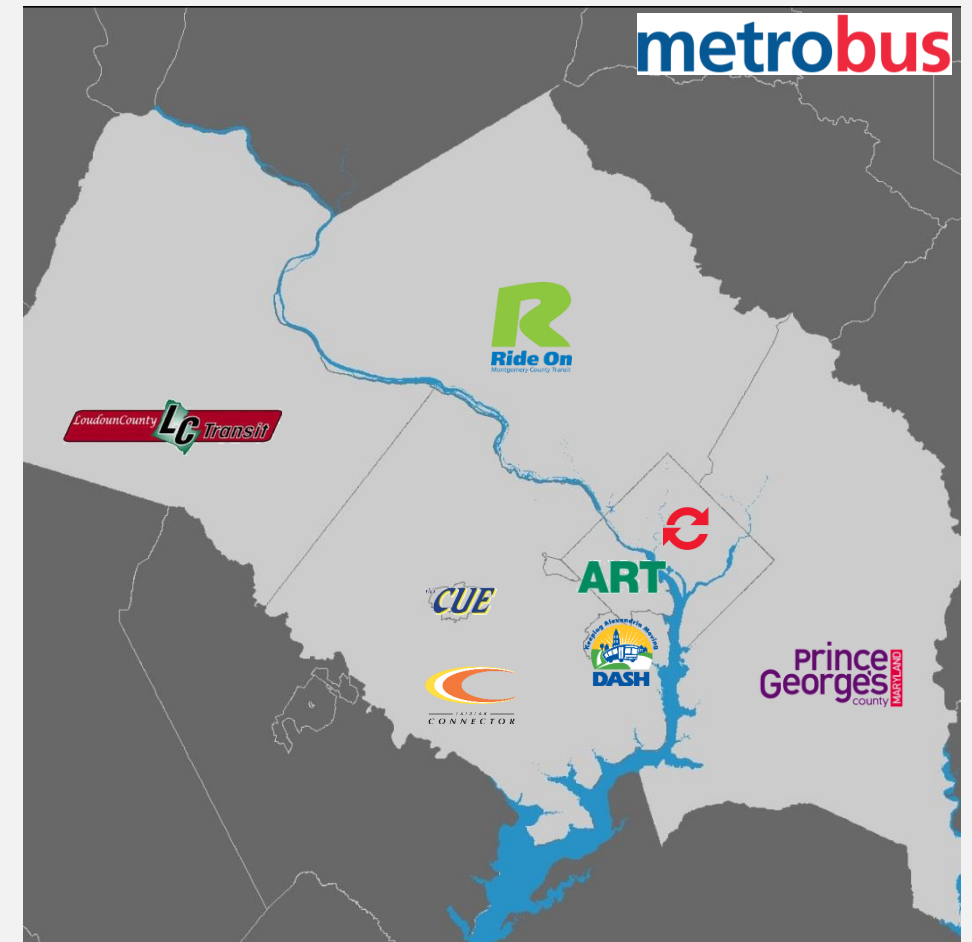
To solve these problems, the region must **transform its approach to bus**

- Priority ▼
- Technology
- Ease of Use
- Coordination
- Organization
- Affordability
- Service Provision

## Underlying Principles

- References to “bus” mean any vehicle that makes efficient use of roadways by transporting a large number of riders including:
  - Large buses on fixed routes and on-demand shuttle buses;
  - Vehicles with drivers and automated vehicles;
  - Publicly-owned and private commercial operations
- Focus on local bus, as distinct from commuter bus services
- Strategy does not address paratransit service, however none of the recommendations should impact how MetroAccess service is provided or funded
- A strategic framework for transforming the regional bus system may not fit every need perfectly. Local exceptions will still be possible.

Bus service providers included:





The Draft  
Strategy is the  
result of  
**collective effort**

Since the project began in September 2018, elected officials, transit agencies, transit advocates, bus operators, bus riders, and many other stakeholders helped to develop the recommendations in the Draft Strategy.

- 5,679 survey responses
- 20 regional pop-up events
- 25 project committee meetings
- 13 Metrobus operator listening sessions
- 40 interviews with local jurisdictions and transit agencies
- 33 project briefings/meetings with elected officials
- 10,056 people reached by the project Facebook page

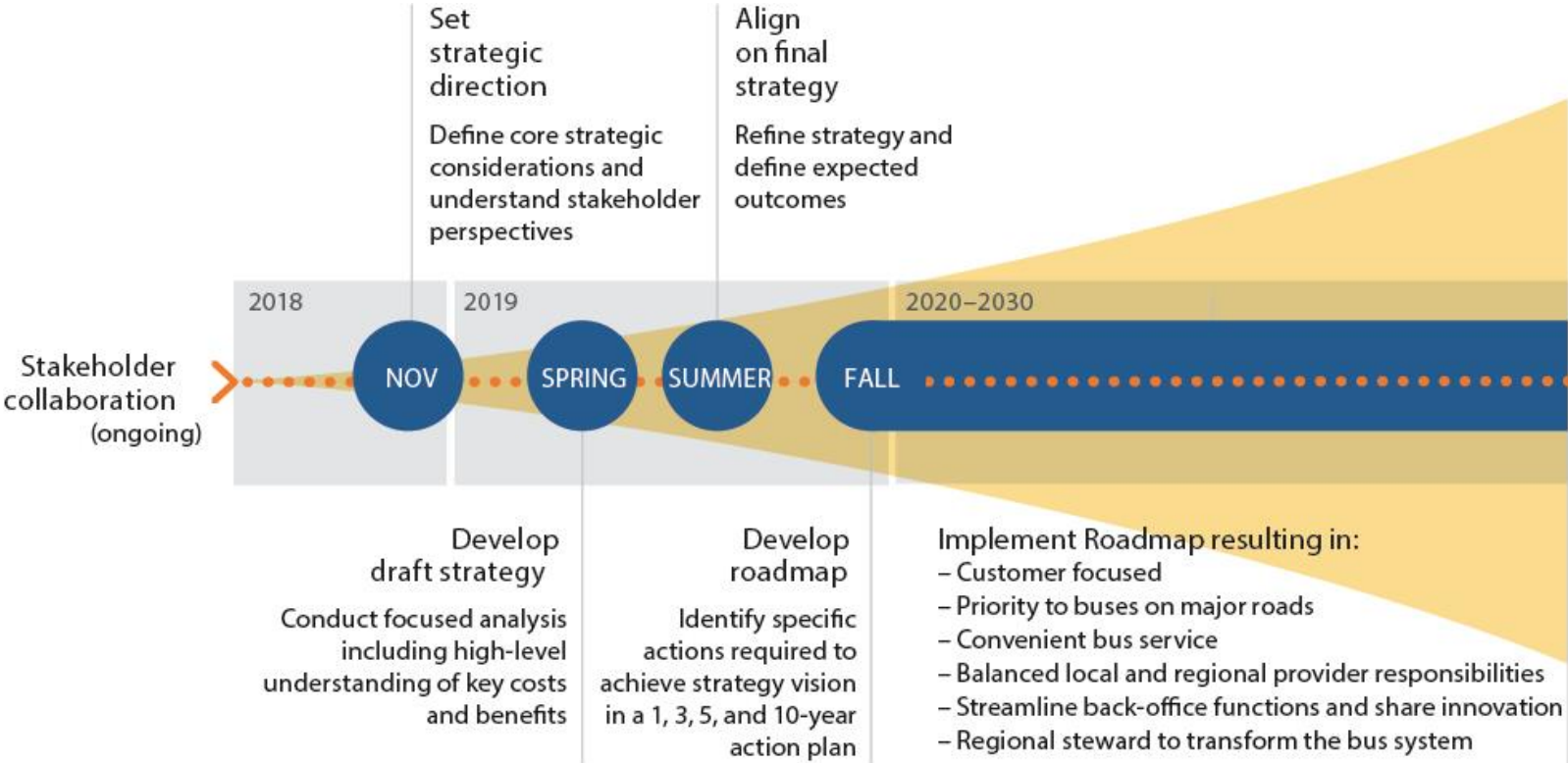


# The Transformation starts immediately, while tactical solutions will continue to be developed as we move through implementation

This Draft Strategy lays out the desired **direction for the regional bus system**, and is not a detailed implementation guide.

The proposed recommendations will be revised, and will be analyzed further.

Once finalized, a **10-year Roadmap** will be developed that lays out a series of specific implementation steps that will help the Bus Transformation gain momentum over time.





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## II. **Vision & goals** as voiced by stakeholders

## *Project Vision:*

Bus will be the **mode of choice** on the region's roads by 2030, serving as the backbone of a **strong and inclusive** regional mobility system.



# Goals for bus in the region as voiced by stakeholders

1	Regional connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide <b>reliable on-street transit</b> options that <b>efficiently connect</b> people to places and improve mobility</li></ul>
2	Rider experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure a <b>convenient, easy-to-use, user-centered</b> mobility option</li></ul>
3	Financial stewardship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Maintain a transit mode that is <b>financially sustainable</b> in the long term</li></ul>
4	Sustainable economic health & access to opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Encourage <b>vibrant, economically-thriving</b> and sustainable communities</li></ul>
5	Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create a bus system that is <b>affordable and equitable</b></li></ul>



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# III. **Overview** of draft strategy

# Strategy Elements

The strategy to achieve the vision and goals is built around six elements - with a set of recommendations underlying each:

	1	<b>Customer Focused</b>	The bus system should be customer-focused and an easy-to-use option that people want to ride
	2	<b>Priority to Buses on Major Roads</b>	Prioritizing buses on major roads is the fiscally responsible way to move the most people quickly and reliably
	3	<b>Convenient Bus Service</b>	Frequent and convenient bus service is fundamental to accessing opportunity, building an equitable region, and ensuring high quality of life
	4	<b>Balanced local and regional provider responsibilities</b>	Balance local and regional provider responsibilities by positioning local bus systems to meet their jurisdictional needs and the regional bus system to meet regional needs and deliver regional benefits
	5	<b>Streamline Back-Office Functions and Share Innovation</b>	Optimize back-office functions through sharing, streamlining and shared innovation by consolidating regional resources and devoting more resources to operating bus service
	6	<b>Regional Steward to Transform the Bus System</b>	Customers in a region with multiple bus providers need a regional steward to transform the bus system

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## IV. Draft Strategy: **elements** and detailed **recommendations**

**Element:** The bus system should be customer-focused and an easy-to-use option that people want to ride

Recommendations to drive strategy:

- (A) Expand **marketing** efforts related to bus to enhance visibility of bus options and benefits
- (B) Make buses easy to understand with **legible maps and consistent route naming** conventions
- (C) Create a **mobile solution** that allows riders to plan and pay for trips and access real-time service information
- (D) Make **bus fares** clear and consistent across the region
- (E) Introduce pass products that work across **all bus systems**
- (F) Enhance **reduced fare products** for low-income residents
- (G) Allow customers to **transfer for free** between bus and rail
- (H) Incentivize more employers to offer **transit benefits**
- (I) Make **bus stops** safe, convenient, and accessible across the region
- (J) Modernize the region's **bus fleet** with advanced technologies that improve the environment, safety, and the rider experience



What the strategy will achieve:

If bus agencies deliver outstanding end-to-end trip experiences for all riders, the region will see:

- Increased **customer satisfaction**
- Reduced **safety incident rates** at bus stops and on buses
- Reduced **environmental impact** of transportation
- Increased **transit ridership**
- **More affordable transportation** for residents that need it most
- **Less congestion** on our region's roads



**Element:** Prioritizing buses on major roads is the fiscally responsible way to move the most people quickly and reliably.

Recommendations to drive strategy:

- A** Obtain commitments from each local and state jurisdiction to prioritize bus on major corridors within their boundaries
- B** Adopt consistent priority guidelines for corridors across the region
- C** Develop enforcement programs that maximize the effectiveness of bus priority efforts
- D** Offer incentives to jurisdictions to encourage implementation of the regional priority guidelines
- E** Coordinate with regional congestion mitigation efforts, including congestion pricing, curb access management, and parking limitations to move more people more efficiently

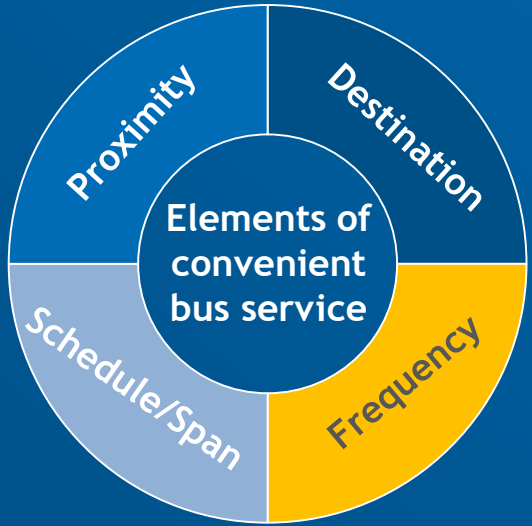


What the strategy will achieve:

If the region commits to priority treatment of bus, it will experience:

- **Reduced journey time** for bus riders
- **Increased ridership**
- **Greater on-time performance** for bus
- **Decreased bus operating costs**
- **Improved traffic conditions** across modes
- **Improved regional productivity and competitiveness**

**Element:** Frequent and convenient bus service is fundamental to accessing opportunity, building an equitable region, and ensuring high quality of life



Recommendations to drive strategy:

- A** Develop a regional bus network plan that realigns routes to create the most efficient and customer focused bus system
- B** Adopt consistent guidelines across the region to provide customers with the right amount of bus service by location and time of day
- C** Provide flexible, on-demand transit services to markets where customers are not well-served by conventional bus service



What the strategy will achieve:

Strategic investment in enhancing access to bus will result in:

- Increased responsiveness to customer demand for service
- Increased access to transit (frequency, schedule, span)
- Increased bus ridership
- More efficient use of resources

**Element:** Balance local and regional provider responsibilities by positioning local bus systems to meet their jurisdictional needs and the regional bus system to meet regional needs and deliver regional benefits

Recommendations to drive strategy:

- A Position the regional bus system to provide the services that meet regional needs
- B Revise the cost local jurisdictions pay WMATA for local service to better match the actual cost to provide service
- C Develop a 10-year plan to optimally allocate services between bus systems for applicable routes



What the strategy will achieve:

**Balancing local and regional provider responsibilities will:**

- Better align bus service with regional needs
- Reduce cost of bus service regionally
- Improve regional coordination of bus service delivery
- Improve responsiveness of bus service to rider needs

**Element:** Streamline back-office functions and share innovation by consolidating regional resources and devoting more resources to operating bus service

Recommendations to drive strategy:

- A Consolidate **back-office support functions** to realize shared benefits of scale for bus systems that choose to participate
- B Establish a Regional Mobility **Innovation Lab** to drive continuous improvement in customer experience
- C Develop **regional standards for bus data** collection, formatting, sharing, and analysis



What the strategy will achieve:

If the region pursues centralization of select business functions and shared innovation across bus operators, it will experience:

- Annual **Cost saving** potential of ~\$11.7 million due to economies of scale, which can be redirected into improving service
- Greater **consistency in service** for customers
- Greater understanding of bus system usage, which will enable additional **cost savings** and efficiencies
- Improved customer experience, leading to **ridership growth**

**Element:** Customers in a region with multiple bus providers need a regional steward to transform the bus system

Action recommendations to drive strategy:

- A Form a **task force** responsible for Bus Transformation Project execution; after a three-year period, transfer responsibilities to a formal **Coalition of jurisdictional representatives** with authority for implementation
- B Hold transportation and transit agencies accountable for prioritizing bus as a **primary mode of transportation** within their organizations
- C Publish an annual Bus Transformation and **bus performance scorecard** to drive accountability for results

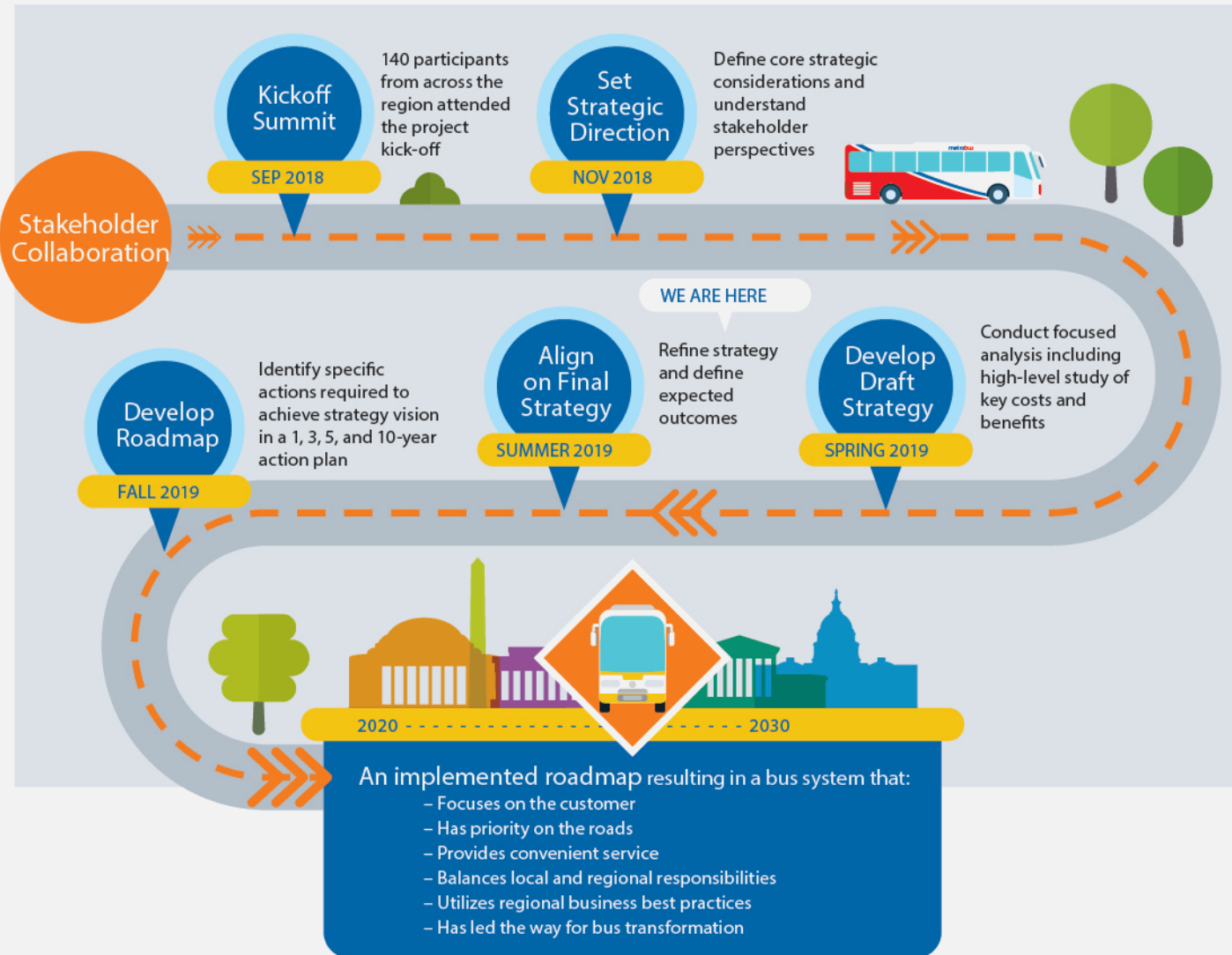


What the strategy will achieve:

If the region commits to strengthening coordination and governance, it will experience:

- Increased **customer focused** decision making
- More **cost efficient** use of resources
- Improved **coordination** among bus operators and across mobility modes

# Strategy Development Process



## We Want to Hear From You!

- Briefings:
  - NVTC: June 6
  - TPB Tech and TPB : June 7 and 19
- Public
  - Open Houses: May 20-23
  - Online at [BusTransformationProject.com](http://BusTransformationProject.com)
- Written comments from elected officials
- Listening sessions for SAP and Tech Team
  - May 31
  - June 3
- WMATA Board: July
- Stakeholders can also submit written comments to:

[BusTransformationProject@neonichestrategies.com](mailto:BusTransformationProject@neonichestrategies.com)

## More Information

Additional information, case studies, and analysis are available on the project website. Including:

<b>White Paper #1</b>	Project Overview, including key challenges	<a href="https://bustransformationproject.com/resources/#documents">https://bustransformationproject.com/resources/#documents</a>
<b>White Paper #2</b>	Strategic considerations and supporting analysis to help set the strategic direction for the Strategy	<a href="https://bustransformationproject.com/resources/#documents">https://bustransformationproject.com/resources/#documents</a>
<b>Bus System Today</b>	Summary of key information about the regional bus system	<a href="https://bustransformationproject.com/resources/the-bus-system-and-its-riders-today/">https://bustransformationproject.com/resources/the-bus-system-and-its-riders-today/</a>
<b>Public Input Survey Report</b>	Summary of the results of the public survey on regional bus priorities conducted in Fall 2018	<a href="https://bustransformationproject.com/resources/public-survey-results/">https://bustransformationproject.com/resources/public-survey-results/</a>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	Executive summary of the draft strategy and recommendations	<a href="https://bustransformationproject.com/resources/#draft">https://bustransformationproject.com/resources/#draft</a>
<b>Draft Strategy</b>	Full version of the Draft Bus Transformation Strategy	<a href="https://bustransformationproject.com/resources/#draft">https://bustransformationproject.com/resources/#draft</a>

[\*\*\*BusTransformationProject.com/Resources/#documents\*\*\*](https://bustransformationproject.com/resources/#documents)