



# **Moving Forward 2014**

**Status of the Bus Systems  
of the National Capital Region**

**Regional Bus Subcommittee**

**National Capital Region  
Transportation Planning Board**

May 2014

## **Subcommittee Members**

### **Transit Operators**

Alexandria Dash  
Arlington Transit (ART)  
City of Fairfax CUE  
DC Circulator  
DC Streetcar  
Fairfax Connector  
Frederick County TransIT  
Central Maryland Regional Transit  
Loudoun Commuter Transit  
Maryland Commuter Rail (MARC)  
Montgomery County Ride On  
MTA Commuter Bus  
Prince George's County TheBus  
PRTC Omni Ride  
Virginia Railway Express (VRE)  
Washington Metropolitan Area  
Transit Authority (WMATA)

### **Other Agencies**

District of Columbia Department  
of Transportation (DDOT)  
Federal Transit Administration  
(FTA)  
Maryland Department of  
Transportation (MDOT)  
Maryland Transit Administration  
(MTA)  
Northern Virginia Transportation  
Commission (NVTC)  
Potomac and Rappahannock  
Transportation Commission  
(PRTC)  
Virginia Department of Rail and  
Public Transportation (DRPT)  
Virginia Department of  
Transportation (VDOT)

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Regional Bus Subcommittee  
members and TPB staff.

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Design: Carla Badaracco Design

## **The Regional Bus Subcommittee**

The subcommittee was formed by resolution of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) on January 17, 2007. Its mission is to provide a permanent process for the coordination of bus planning throughout the Washington region, and for incorporating regional bus plans into the long-range transportation plan.

Membership includes representatives from all transit operators in the region as well as the departments of transportation and other regional transportation agencies.

### **What is the TPB?**

Transportation planning at the regional level is coordinated in the Washington area by the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB). The TPB is staffed by the Department of Transportation Planning of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG).

Members of the TPB include representatives of the transportation agencies of the states of Maryland and Virginia, and the District of Columbia, local governments, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, the Maryland and Virginia General Assemblies, and nonvoting members from the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority and federal agencies.

The TPB was created in 1965 by local and state governments in the Washington region to respond to a requirement of 1962 highway legislation for establishment of official Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). The TPB became associated with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments in 1966, serving as COG's transportation policy committee. In consultation with its technical committee, the TPB is responsible for directing the continuing transportation planning process carried on cooperatively by the states and local communities in the region.

## Introduction

The region's first bus rapid transit line, MetroWay, is due to open in 2014 along the Route 1 corridor in Arlington and Alexandria. Portions of the new route will feature busways separated from normal travel lanes so that buses can bypass congestion. Federal grant funding, awarded to the region in 2010 under the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) program, is helping to pay for the new line.



**Bus services are an important component** of the region's transportation system. In 2012, about 660,000 trips by bus were taken every day, a third of them on local and commuter bus services. That's nearly 200 million trips a year, and about 39% of all transit trips in the region.

Bus services complement the region's rail system, including Metrorail and commuter rail, by providing feeder service to stations, as well as additional capacity in highly-congested corridors. Bus systems have a much greater reach than rail, and provide a lower-cost, flexible service that can be implemented quickly.

Like Metrorail, the region's bus operators are in need of greater investment in keeping the current system in a state of good repair, providing additional capacity to meet growing demand, and taking full advantage of advanced customer service information technologies and other recent advancements. These investments are needed if the nation's capital is to have a world-class bus system.

### Bus System Accomplishments

In the last five years, area bus operators have been making significant investments in:

- Newer, cleaner, more accessible bus vehicles
- Integrated SmarTrip fare card systems, now available across most local and commuter bus services
- Limited-stop and express bus services, like MetroExtra
- Customer information technology, to provide real-time arrival and schedule information by web, smartphone app, electronic information display, text message, and automated voice response
- Making bus stops and transfer stations safer and more inviting, especially for persons with disabilities

## ***Why is Transit Important?***



### **Transit gives travelers more options.**

Public transportation provides access to job opportunities for millions of Americans, as well as options to get to other destinations, like school, to visit friends, or doctor's appointments. Seniors, children, and others with limited mobility or travel choices benefit especially from the availability of more options.



### **Transit makes better use of existing infrastructure.**

Public transit provides alternatives to single-occupancy vehicles, reducing the number of vehicles on already-crowded roadways.

### **Transit reduces overall energy consumption and helps improve and protect the environment.**

Fewer vehicles on area roadways leads to a reduction in overall energy use and helps lower the emissions of pollutants that cause health impacts as well as gases responsible for global climate change.



### **Transit creates stronger communities.**

Public transportation makes Activity Centers better and more vibrant by increasing social interaction and pedestrian activity, enhancing safety, and helping to create a sense of "place" that makes communities unique and special.



# Why Bus Transit?

Bus services complement as well as provide alternatives to the Metrorail system.

## Bus services:

- Respond to market needs
- Provide a range of services over a wide area of coverage
- Can be implemented quickly
- Have much lower capital costs relative to rail projects
- Support rail services by providing feeder service or by providing alternatives to rail along congested corridors

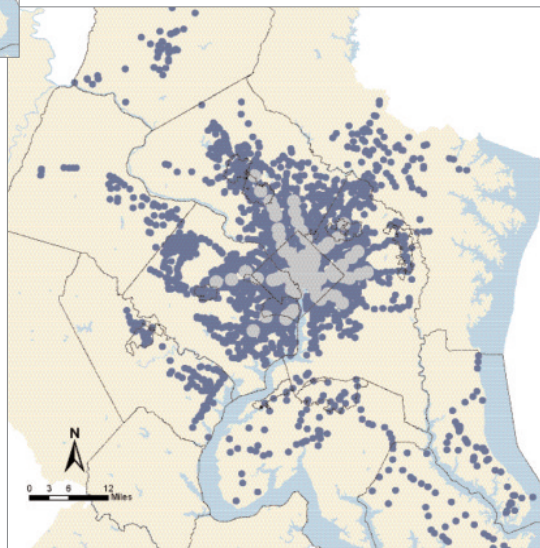


Express Bus Service Area (1-Mile Buffer)  
Metrorail Service Area (1-Mile Buffer)

## Old Maps

Local Bus Service Area (1/2-Mile Buffer)  
Metrorail Service Area (1-Mile Buffer)

Bus services are a flexible and cost-effective means by which to provide public transportation.



# Bus Systems of the National Capital Region

Different types of bus services can be tailored to meet the different needs of travelers.



## Shuttle/Local Circulator

Provides short-distance trips to rail stations and other local destinations. Often rush-hour or weekday only.

## Local bus

Provides short- and medium-distance trips to rail stations and other destinations. Often all-day service, usually seven days a week.



## Express/Commuter bus

Provides longer-distance, limited-stop service, often on highways or major arterials. Typically rush-hour only.

## Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)

Provides medium- and long-distance trips with service approaching the speed, frequency, and reliability of rail, using bus-only lanes, off-board fare collection, signal priority, and other treatments.

*BRT is currently being built on Route 1 in Alexandria and is being evaluated for several corridors in the region.*





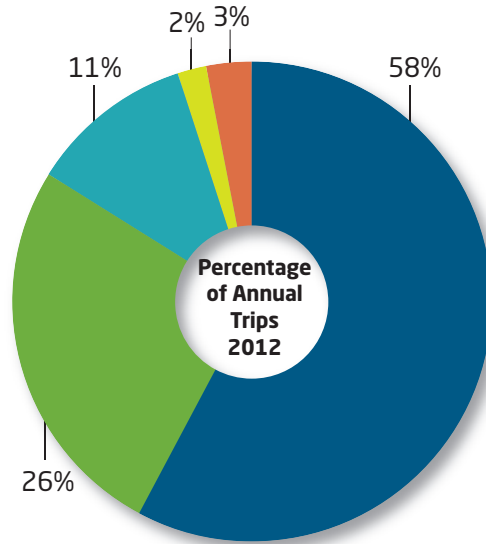
Thirteen bus transit operators form a coordinated network of bus transit services in the region. Customers benefit from services tailored to their needs.

**Buses are a major part of the region's transit system.**



In 2012, about 660,000 trips by bus were taken every day, a third of them on local and commuter bus services. That's nearly 200 million trips a year, and about 39% of all transit trips in the region.

**Regional Transit Ridership by Transit Mode**



- Metrorail
- Metrobus
- Local Bus
- Commuter Bus
- Commuter Rail



## ***Ridership is continuing to rise due to:***



### **Population growth**

The region's population is growing steadily—by 2040, it will increase by 1.3 million people, or about 24%. That growth will continue to result in higher demand for all transportation services, including buses.

### **Metrorail crowding**

As the Metrorail system becomes increasingly crowded, especially in the regional core, more and more commuters are turning to buses as a more convenient and comfortable alternative.



### **More development in Activity Centers**

Growing interest in focusing urban development around walkable and transit-friendly Activity Centers is increasing the number of travelers for whom bus transit is a viable travel choice.

### **Changing attitudes about bus travel**

With advances in vehicle amenities and arrival information technology, as well as improvements in bus stations and stops, travel by bus is coming to be seen as more desirable and accepted.



### **More suburb-to-suburb commuting**

Bus transit provides a more cost-effective option for meeting growing demand for commuting between suburbs rather than into and out of the regional core.

## ***The region's bus systems have ongoing funding needs.***



### **Maintaining existing bus fleets**

Buses are heavily used and require specialized, ongoing maintenance. Eventually bus vehicles must be refurbished or replaced in order to keep the bus fleet safe and in good working order.

### **Investing in new technologies**

Real-time customer information systems and clean-fuel and hybrid buses offer numerous benefits to customers, bus operators, and the region.



### **Expanding service offerings**

New services, such as limited-stop routes on heavily travelled corridors, are being introduced to increase the number of high-quality transit options in the region.

### **Expanding maintenance and storage facilities**

The expansion of bus fleets requires larger bus garages and shops.

### **Expansion to meet demand**

Growing customer demand for bus service leads to a need for more money to operate the region's bus transit systems.



## ***The region's bus operators must also consider other needs.***



### **Providing quality bus stops and transfer centers**

Upgrading bus stops in the region to provide amenities that increase safety and attractiveness, and creating intermodal transit centers where bus and rail connect.

### **Implementation of bus priority treatments**

Bus-only lanes, traffic signal priority for buses, and off-board fare collection will increase the speed and reliability of bus services.

### **Ensuring accessibility for persons with disabilities, low incomes, or limited English proficiency**

Making buses and bus stops accessible to persons with disabilities, improving access to bus transit for persons with low incomes, and providing schedule and other information in multiple languages and formats provides greater economic and social opportunity for more people.

### **Adapting to expansion of managed highway lanes**

High-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes and express toll lanes offer an opportunity for faster, more reliable bus travel on area highways. Toll revenues can also fund additional bus services.

### **Integrating bus transit into land-use decisions**

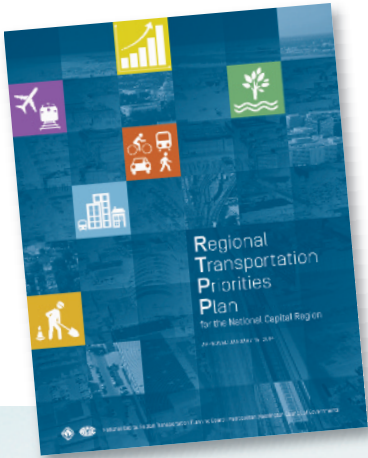
Bus transit must be considered in urban development and during the planning and zoning process to ensure transit-friendly neighborhoods.

### **Serving off-peak needs**

Seniors, low-income individuals, and persons wishing to live a car-free lifestyle have travel needs outside of traditional peak service hours, especially midday and on weekends.



## ***Bus transit is receiving increasing regional attention.***



### **Regional Transportation Priorities Plan**

The Regional Transportation Priorities Plan, approved by the TPB in January 2014, is designed to advance regional goals by identifying key strategies that are recognized throughout the region as offering the greatest potential contributions to addressing continuing regional transportation challenges.

The Priorities Plan includes a number of strategies related to bus transit. One near-term strategy is to improve access to transit stops and stations to increase transit ridership and support walkable urban development. One ongoing strategy is to apply more priority bus treatments, such as bus-only lanes and traffic signal priority, to make bus transit faster, more reliable, and more convenient. Long-term, the plan envisions greater concentration of households and jobs in Activity Centers supported by greater bus transit between and within the centers.

### **WMATA's Momentum Strategic Plan**

In 2013, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority unveiled *Momentum*, a strategic plan to guide future planning and investment in the Metrorail and Metrobus system through 2040.

One key focus of *Momentum* is on improving the existing Priority Corridor Network—24 key bus routes that carry half of all daily Metrobus trips. Many local bus routes also operate on these corridors. Improvements to the Network include an expanded bus fleet to provide more frequent service, additional garage capacity to store and maintain added buses, and greater use of priority bus treatments to improve travel speeds and on-time reliability.





## What you can do



### Learn

Learn what bus services are available to you in your neighborhood and familiarize yourself with new customer information tools that can make bus travel easier and more convenient.

### Give it a try

Consider taking the bus for work trips, shopping trips, or for other parts of your daily travel routine. Experience the improvements being made to the region's bus services.



### Participate

Get involved in your community planning process and advocate for high-quality transit options in your neighborhood or community.



## Next Steps

**The TPB**, through its Regional Bus Subcommittee, is the regional organization planning to address the short- and long-term challenges for continued improvements to the region's bus services. These planning efforts include:

- Coordinating a regional conversation on the role and importance of bus services
- Addressing existing and future funding needs
- Supporting efforts to improve bus service in the region
- Raising awareness of the needs of the region's transit operators



## Summary

- Bus services are an important part of the region's transportation system, providing 660,000 trips a day, or 39% of all transit trips
- Bus systems require sustained investment to meet current demand and make the infrastructure improvements necessary to meet future needs
- Bus services are one of the key solutions to the future growth challenges of the region

Learn more:  
[www.mwcog.org/TPB/RBS](http://www.mwcog.org/TPB/RBS)



**Regional Bus Subcommittee**

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