EXPECTATIONS FOR THE REGION'S PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

DMV*Moves* Survey – Key Takeaways And Findings: Read Ahead

Transportation Planning Board
December 18, 2024
Item 9

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

Table of Contents

1. Public Survey

2. Takeaways and Findings

3. Pathways to a world class transit

   a. Efficiency and Seamless experience

   b. Reliable and Increased service

4. DMV*Moves* Next Steps

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Public Survey

Background

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) have launched DMV*Moves*, a new joint initiative to develop a unified vision for more efficient, reliable, and seamless experience for transit users across our region.

Goals

To support this initiative and inform the DMV*Moves* vision, conduct a survey of residents throughout the Washington Metropolitan area to understand what the region desires for acceptable and successful future public transportation.

Approach

- Designed and fielded an online and phone survey from June 24 to August 11, 2024.

- Developed a multi-mode outreach approach aimed at reaching as many respondents as possible across all jurisdictions:
  - Invitation letters and reminder postcards sent to 20,000 households, oversampling from areas with a higher proportion of residents who are Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC) and of households with low incomes (below 200% of the federal poverty line)
  - In-person outreach, including at WMATA, MARC, VRE, and bus stations and at community events
  - Social media and digital outreach via COG and partner agencies
  - Opportunity to enter a drawing for one of ten $100 gift cards as an incentive to encourage participation

- Analyzed data received from 5,091 valid survey responses from across the region.

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Received 5,091 valid survey responses:

Virginia (37%)
- Fairfax County (13%)
- Arlington County (11%)
- Prince William County (5%)
- Alexandria City (4%)

Washington, D.C. (37%)

Maryland (26%)
- Montgomery County (14%)
- Prince George's County (7%)
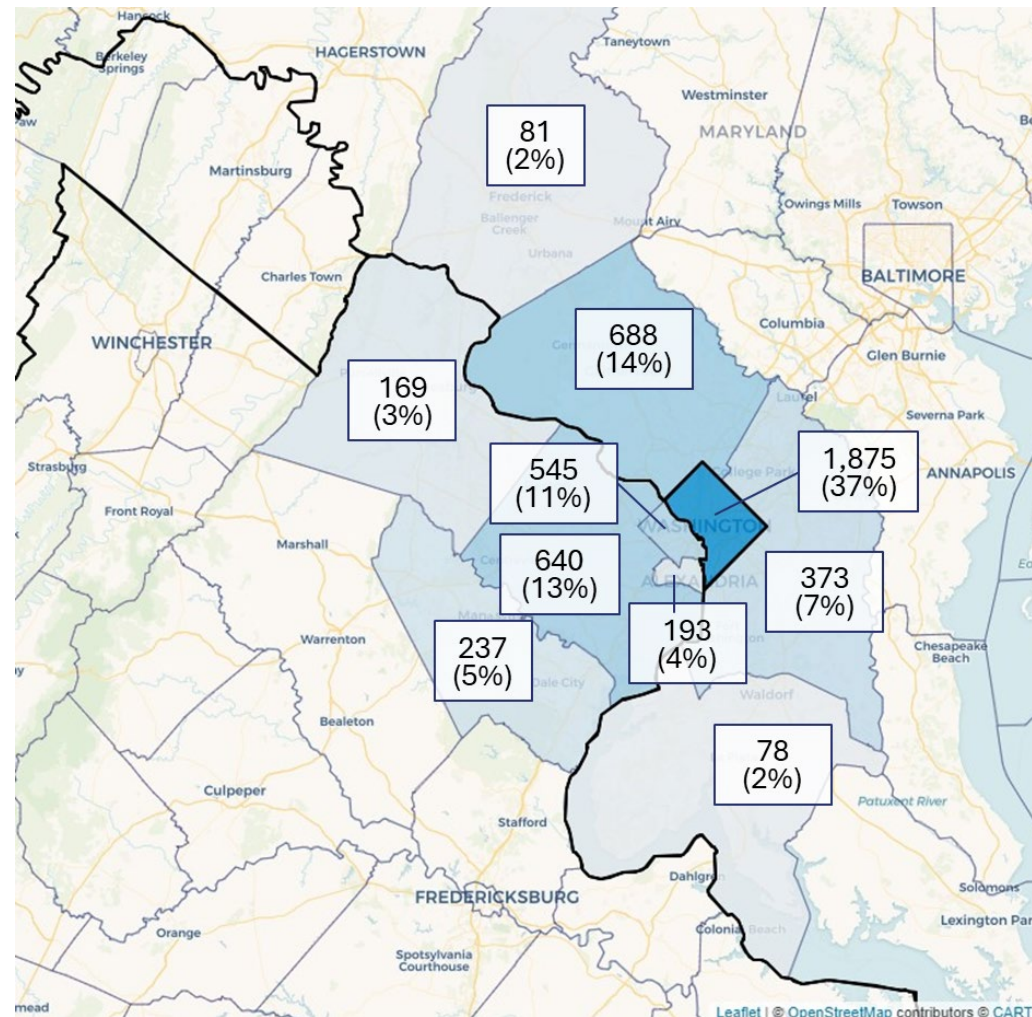- Frederick County (2%)
- Charles County (2%)

Other (<1%)

Responses based on subregions:
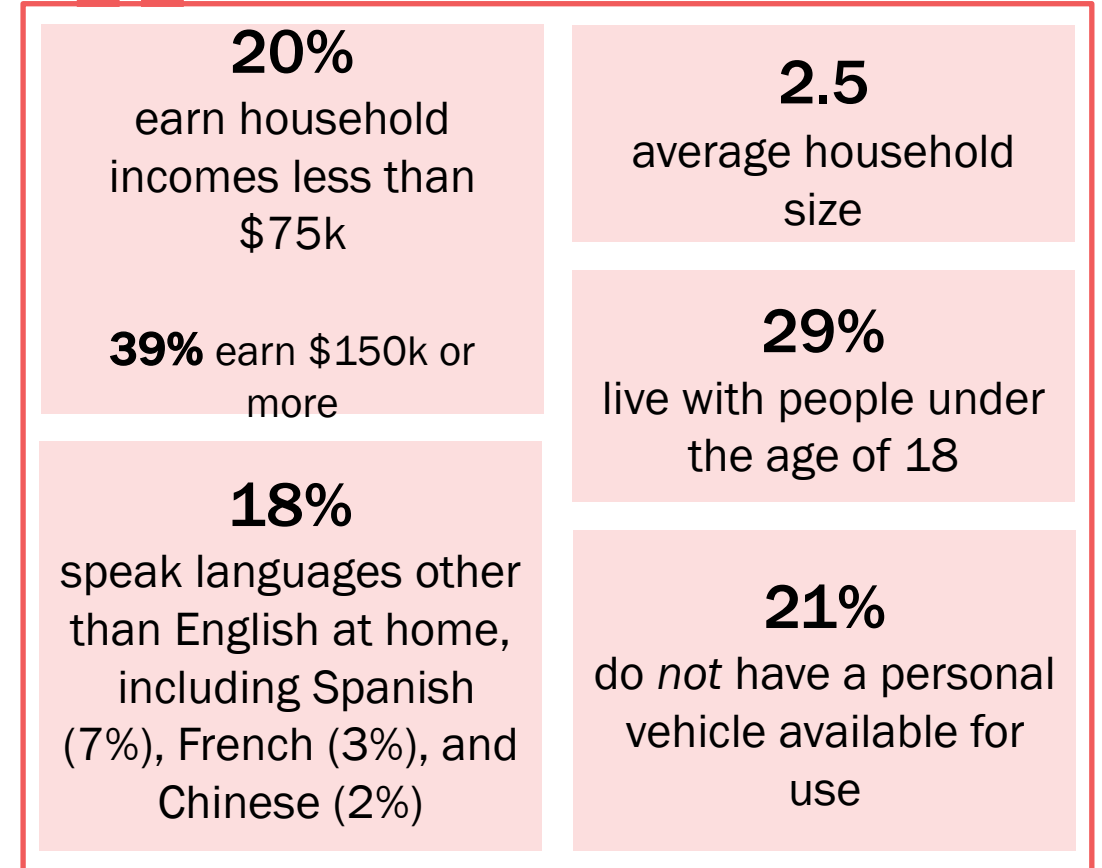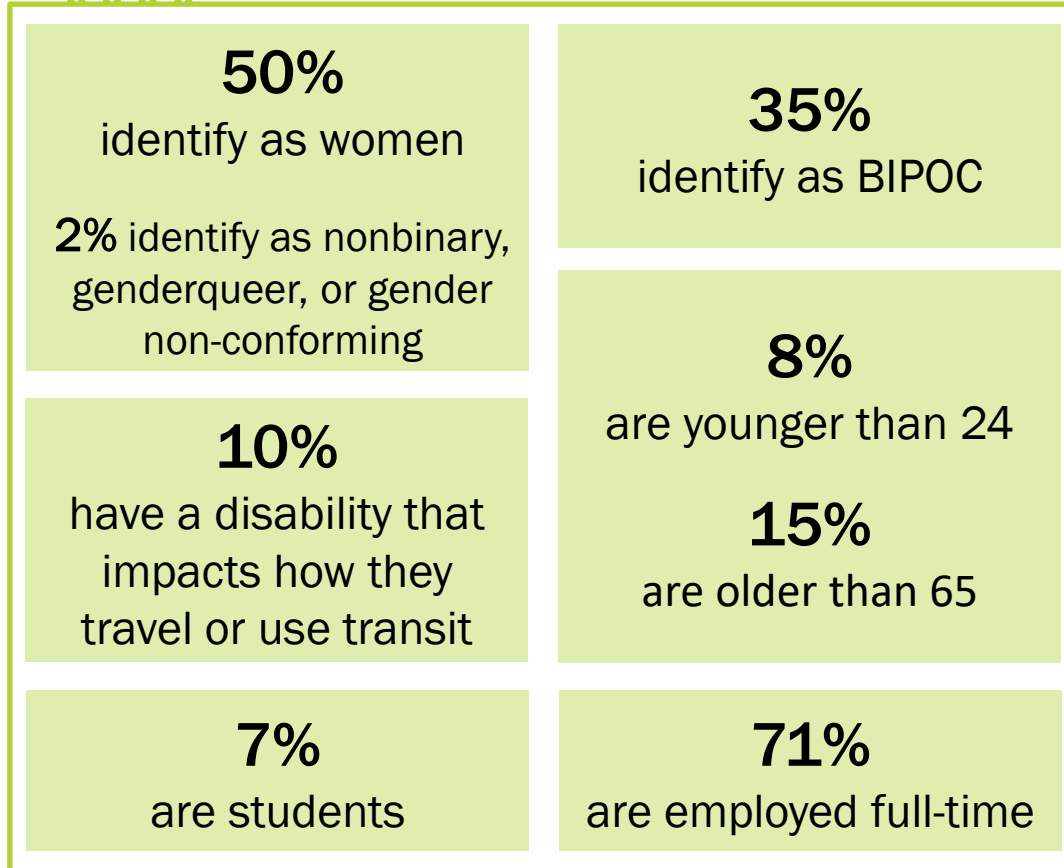- **Core (51%)**
- **Inner suburbs (33%)**
- **Outer suburbs (11%)**
- **Outside COG area (4%)**

Number and percentage of survey responses by jurisdiction.

Survey respondents were broadly representative of the region's diversity.

50% identify as women

2% identify as nonbinary, genderqueer, or gender non-conforming

35% identify as BIPOC

8% are younger than 24

15% are older than 65

10% have a disability that impacts how they travel or use transit

7% are students

71% are employed full-time

20% earn household incomes less than $75k

39% earn $150k or more

18% speak languages other than English at home, including Spanish (7%), French (3%), and Chinese (2%)

2.5 average household size

29% live with people under the age of 18

21% do *not* have a personal vehicle available for use

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Key Takeaways from the Survey

- More than half of respondents indicated more frequent off-peak and late-night service would encourage ridership.

- When planning for and funding transit services, DMV leaders should prioritize **reliable service, efficiently operated transit,** and **expanded service** across the region.

- Most respondents support more and better transit services in the region, even if it results in higher costs.

- Service frequency and distance to/from stops pose challenges for both commuters and non-commuters.

- Public transit services in the DMV region are not only familiar but frequently used, especially for Metrorail and Metrobus.

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# Key Findings: Opportunities to increase ridership

- **When asked what service changes would encourage ridership, more than half chose more frequent off-peak and late-night service.**
  Other top answers include:
  - New transit connections/routes
  - More accurate information about arrivals/departures
  - More frequent service during peak commute hours
  - Longer operating hours
  - Bus-only lanes to reduce trip times

- **When asked what changes at stops, stations, and onboard would encourage ridership, all proposed changes were popular,** but the following stood out as most popular:
  - Digital signs with real time information
  - Stops/stations that are more comfortable, clean, and welcoming
  - Better pedestrian access to stops/stations
  - Modern buses/trains that use the latest technology and green energy

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Key Findings: Opportunities to increase ridership

- In the core region and inner suburbs, respondents tended to mention **frequency of service** as a top priority.

- In outer areas, respondents were more concerned with **distance to and from stops.**
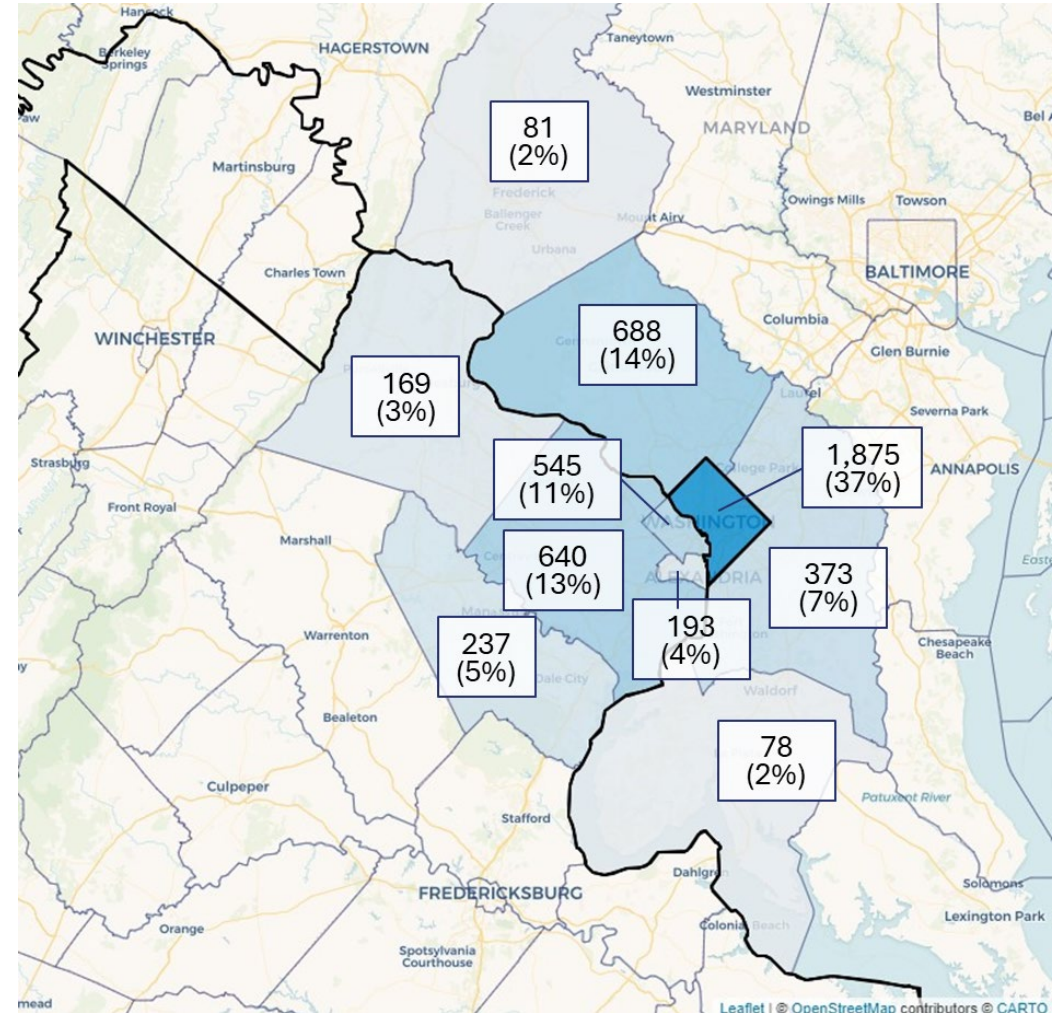
Number and percentage of survey responses by jurisdiction.

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Key Findings: Future investments

Support for investment options vary, with many expressing support for tolling, taxes, and vehicle fees to support transit.

- A regional transit tax (65%)
- Increased fees for private vehicles (55%)
- Expanding tolling to more lanes or roads (51%)

Support is lowest for increased fares, with slightly more support for increased fares during peak hours (45%) than for all hours (36%).

When planning for and funding transit services in our region, leaders should prioritize:

- Reliable service (63%)
- Efficiently operated transit (50%)
- Expanded service across the region (45%)

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Key Findings: Future investments

Most respondents support more and better transit in the region, even if it results in higher costs.

- 90% support more and better transit services in the region.
- 81% support more and better transit services in the region even if it results in somewhat higher costs (taxes, fares, fees, etc.).

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DMV*Moves* activities responsive to survey findings

DMV*Moves* work activities focuses on:

- Actions that will improve service (frequency, coverage, service types), provide cost efficiencies (coordination and sharing resources) and a seamless user experience (consistent fare policy, way finding, communications, transit stop design and amenities, etc.)
- Working with all transit operators in the region to identify opportunities and issues to take action and address to realize cost and service efficiencies
- Identifying unmet financial needs of all operators to maximize transit service in the region that is reliable, affordable and ensures the transit system in a state of good repair.
- Securing regional commitment to raise new revenues that is predictable, sustainable and dedicated to transit operations and capital investments.

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Initial Recommendations to achieve service and cost efficiencies
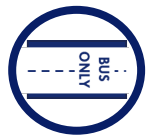
Customer-Experience Improvements

Integrate and align fare policies to provide consistent customer experience (e.g., transfers, youth fares, etc.)

Adopt shared service guidelines for when and how often transit operates and measure performance

Improve wayfinding, customer information, and amenities at transit stops

Implement bus priority strategies to get best value from high-frequency routes

Administrative & Cost Efficiencies

Explore shared use of resources and assets and grouped procurements

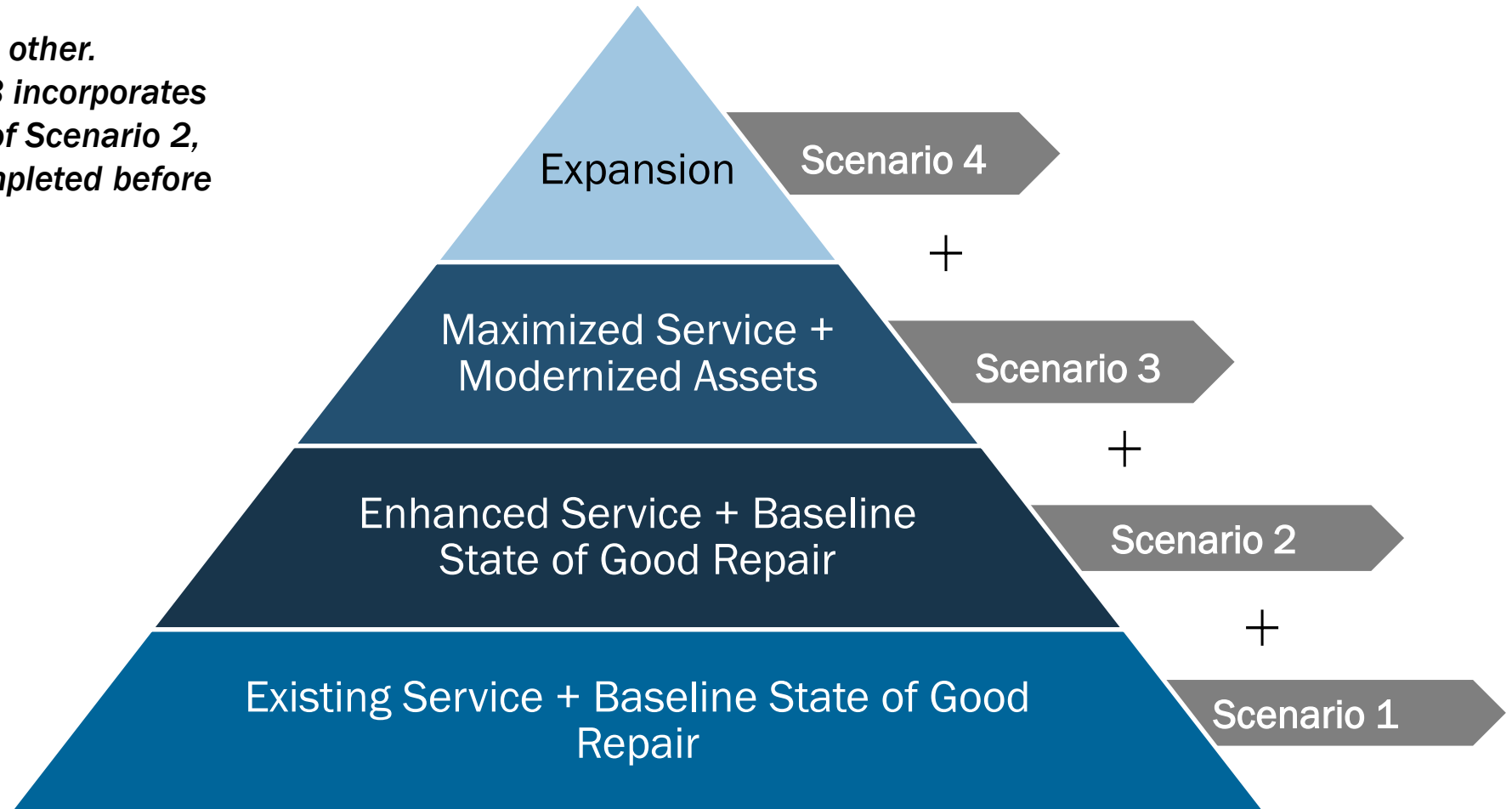Make training, certification, and inspection programs more consistent across the region

Action plans will be provided in November for Task Force adoption.
Advisory Groups will provide more recommendations as the project progresses.

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Potential Transit System Funding Scenarios

Four scenarios to support near-term needs and long-term opportunities:

Scenarios build on each other. For example, Scenario 3 incorporates the changes and costs of Scenario 2, Scenario 3 must be completed before system expansion, etc.

Expansion — Scenario 4

+

Maximized Service + Modernized Assets — Scenario 3

+

Enhanced Service + Baseline State of Good Repair — Scenario 2

+

Existing Service + Baseline State of Good Repair — Scenario 1

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Scenario 1: Existing Service + Baseline State of Good Repair

- All providers continue existing (FY2025) service

- Capital investments limited to necessary State of Good Repair (SGR)

- Funding gap exists
  - Increased service costs
  - Not all necessary SGR currently funded

Scenario 2: Getting More Value from Existing Transit Assets

- Meet Scenario 1 needs

- Metro and the region implement Better Bus Visionary Network Phase 1
  - Includes increases in local bus service (esp. off-peak and weekend)

- Planned service improvements:
  - MARC and MTA commuter bus
  - Optimized Metrorail service

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Scenario 3: Operate at Full Capacity; Modernization to Make Transit More Cost Efficient

- Maximize region's transit system

- Efficient operations to enable both faster and more reliable service

- Targeted capital investments to make service delivery more cost-effective

- Will not and cannot solve challenges alone but can reduce their magnitude

Scenario 4: Expand System to Move More People + Generate Economic Activity = Meet Region's Goals
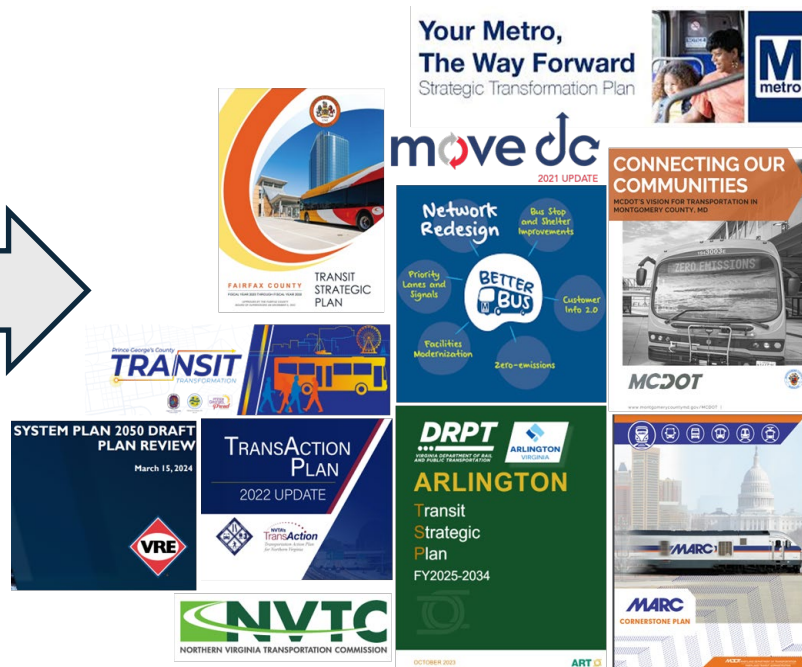
- Expand region's transit system to meet current and future needs and connect the region

- Move more people on transit through infill stations, bus rapid transit (BRT) lines, ferry services, bike share.

- Focus housing and jobs around transit

- Improve air quality and the environment

NEXT STEPS: The Future Requires A Shared Vision

The region once had a unified
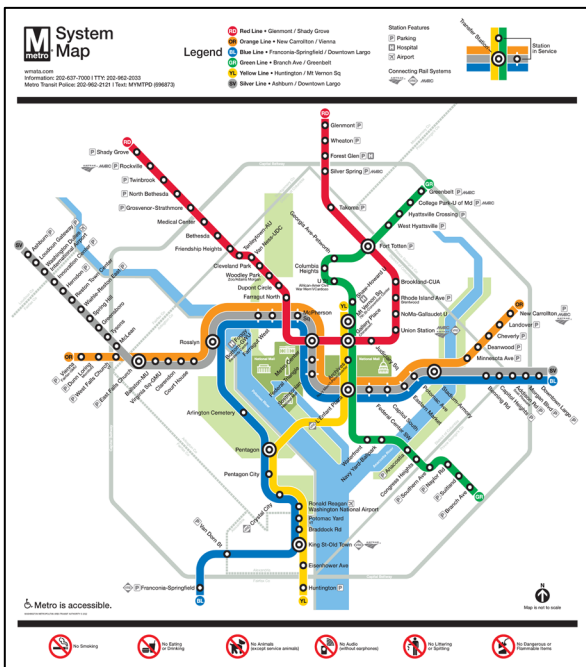
...currently lacks one...

...but now has the opportunity for a new unified vision.

DMV*Moves* Look-Ahead

Task Force 01/24/25

Key Topics:
- Preferred funding scenario
- Draft funding plan

Task Force 03/24/25

Key Topics:
- Policy recommendations
- Draft Plan, Policies, and Action Steps

Task Force 05/16/25

Key Topics:
- Final Plan, Policies, and Action Steps

Joint COG/WMATA Board Meeting *TBD*

Key Topics:
- Adoption of DMV*Moves* Plan

Jan   Mar   May   Jun

Advisory Group Meetings

Jan, Feb

Advisory Group Meetings

Mar, Apr

Working groups meeting regularly to deliver Task Force six Action Plans for an integrated, seamless, more efficient transit system

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