



WASHINGTON AREA  
**BUS TRANSFORMATION**  
PROJECT

*A better way to get there*

# Strategy Summary



*“Buses play a critical role in connecting people throughout this region to opportunities. The Bus Transformation Project will identify and implement steps to make local bus a world class travel option for all of the region’s residents.”*

# Prosperity in Peril

Congestion, affordability, and mobility are major problems in the Washington Region that will only continue to grow as 40,000–60,000 jobs and households are added each year. Meanwhile, the world of transportation is innovating at a rapid clip, and our regional bus system has not kept pace.



## THE CHALLENGE

Growing congestion results in poor access to jobs, higher costs of living, and decreased economic growth, which is degrading the region's competitiveness. Time spent in congestion takes away from family, friends, faith, and fitness, suppresses income potential, adds to stress and frustration, and lowers the overall quality of life. Because the vast majority of the region's 20 million daily trips occur in personal vehicles on already-grid locked roads, environmental degradation continues, accelerating climate change.

Rail transit emerged as a highly-effective tool to combat these forces in our region, but its effectiveness has limits. Metrorail's high-speed, high-capacity network only reaches about a quarter of the region's land area, and any rail system expansion is many billions of dollars and decades away.

## THE BUS TRANSFORMATION PROJECT

Undertaken as a collaborative project to transform the bus system of the DC Metro area, the Bus Transformation Project re-envision the bus network as a coordinated regional transportation solution that addresses the changing needs of customers, leverages innovative technology, and employs a sustainable cost structure.

This Strategy Summary introduces more than 25 key recommendations for consideration by the broad range of public stakeholders across the region.

These strategies push forward innovation in operations, institutions, and technology that will position the region to create a truly integrated, accessible bus network.

Visit [bustransformationproject.com](http://bustransformationproject.com) to read more about the project and the draft Strategy in full.

## WHAT CAN WE DO?

Other regions nationally and globally have transformed their bus systems to solve congestion, promote inclusive mobility, generate ridership gains, and operate efficiently using currently available smart technology.

It is past time for us to do the same: rapid, effective transportation is critical to our region's prosperity. Buses have a vital role to play because they make efficient use of roadways by transporting large numbers of riders safely, conveniently, and affordably, and provide service in areas not accessible by Metrorail.





# A better way to **GET THERE**

## THE 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 that will support a growing and sustainable economy.

## A Regional Strategy

This strategy represents an entirely new and transformative mindset that redefines the traditional notion of bus by examining what a bus system is, what bus vehicles look like, how quality bus service works to best support various types of users across different areas within our region, and how the region's existing bus operators can best interact with each other and with other users of the roadways.

By exploring innovation in operations, institutions, and technology, this strategy positions the region to adopt strategies and concrete actions that transform the existing regional bus system into a truly integrated, accessible regional bus network that is part of the larger regional mobility system.

## Goals and Recommendations

From its vision, the Bus Transformation Strategy set out five goals to guide the transformation of bus across the District of Columbia, State of Maryland, and Commonwealth of Virginia: regional connectivity, rider experience, financial stewardship, sustainability, and equity.

To meet these goals, the project developed a dynamic range of recommendations based on stakeholder collaboration, public engagement, and world-wide best practices. These recommendations directly address the core challenges that will continue to get worse unless changes are made. While buses are a space- and cost-efficient means to move large numbers of people, they are currently not being used to their potential.

## Collaboration

Working together across political boundaries, solutions can be achieved that facilitate fast, frequent, affordable, and seamless travel connections for customers; connect people with jobs, services, and opportunity in our region; align the high-frequency and high-capacity regional bus network with roadways where buses are given priority; clearly delineate and effectively coordinate regionally provided services and locally managed bus systems; and empower organizations to coordinate functions, leverage transformative technologies, and transparently track progress.

## REIMAGINE BUSES

The bus system of the future includes not only large buses on fixed routes, but also shuttle buses that operate on-demand, autonomous vehicles, and publicly owned as well as private commercial operations. Learn more by visiting [bustransformationproject.com](http://bustransformationproject.com)!



# Strategies

The bus network of tomorrow can achieve performance outcomes and transportation objectives that will make the region more competitive, sustainable, and equitable.

## OUR GOALS

Developed by an inclusive group of stakeholders drawn from across the region, these goals guide the strategies envisioned to transform the regional bus system:

**Regional connectivity:** Provide reliable on-street transit options that efficiently connect people to places and improve mobility.

**Rider experience:** Ensure a convenient, easy-to-use, user-centered travel choice.

**Financial stewardship:** Maintain a transit mode that is financially sustainable in the long term.

**Sustainability:** Encourage vibrant, economically thriving and sustainable communities.

**Equity:** Create a bus system that is affordable and equitable.

1



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

2



**Prioritizing buses** on major roads moves the most people in the quickest, most reliable and fiscally responsible way.

3



Frequent, reliable, and **convenient bus service** is fundamental to offering equitable access to opportunities and improving quality of life across the region.

4



**Balancing the responsibilities of local and regional providers** will position local bus systems to meet their own jurisdictional needs and the regional bus system to meet regional needs and deliver regional benefits.

5



**Streamlining back-office functions and sharing innovation** will help all operators and allow more resources for operating bus service.

6



**Transforming and incorporating changes in bus service** operated by multiple providers across the region will require centralized leadership, coordination and collaboration.

This project will transform bus service . . .

FROM

TO

Last resort



Appealing and desirable

Slow and stuck in traffic



Fast trips to where you want to go

Wondering when the bus will come



Frequent and predictable

Disjointed



Unified and cohesive

Overlapping



Streamlined and efficient

Region divided



Stronger together





# From Strategy to Action

Authored in partnership with stakeholders across the region, the draft Bus Transformation Strategy sets out an ambitious path forward. Under six themes (referred to as elements in the full strategy), the draft strategy makes more than 25 recommendations to achieve the goals of this effort.

*Learn more about how the project developed into a draft strategy, and read the draft strategy in full on the website.*



1

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

## Recommendations

- 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.

## Importance

### **A modern bus system must...**

- ✓ Be a convenient, safe, easy-to-use, user-focused mobility option for all riders.
- ✓ Be legible for all users and provide one-stop information that includes trip planning, payment, and real-time status.
- ✓ Capitalize on innovations that reduce negative environmental impacts.
- ✓ Provide seamless connectivity to other transit modes.

### **Implementing these recommendations will result in...**

- ✓ Increased ridership and improved perception that bus is an appealing and desirable mode of travel, becoming an easy choice for all users, regardless of class, age, or ability.
- ✓ Positive impacts to the built and natural environment that create a more livable and sustainable region.
- ✓ Reshaped travel choices that help people choose where they live and work.



## 2

### Prioritizing buses on major roads moves the most people in the quickest, most reliable and fiscally responsible way.

#### Recommendations

- 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.

#### Importance

##### **A modern bus system...**

- ✓ Cannot be burdened by the high levels congestion that single-occupancy vehicles cause in the first place.
- ✓ Maximizes the people-carrying capacity of the region's roadway infrastructure.
- ✓ Effectively combats congestion with fast, frequent, and reliable service.
- ✓ Without intervention, bus runs the risk of becoming the mode of last resort, or worse, the mobility option reserved only for those who have no other choice.

##### **Implementing these recommendations will result in...**

- ✓ Predictable and reliable bus service that customers can trust.
- ✓ Moving the greatest number of people in the most efficient way—and giving people more time to earn, learn, and play.
- ✓ Myriad benefits across the region, including increased access to jobs and tourist attractions, enhanced economic competitiveness for the region, reduced emissions, and promotion of a healthier natural environment.



## 3

### Frequent, reliable, and convenient bus service is fundamental to offering equitable access to opportunities and improving quality of life across the region.

#### Recommendations

- 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.

#### Importance

##### **A modern bus system must...**

- ✓ Recognize that one size does not fit all, and that service decisions must be guided by demand, using evidence-based approaches, and performance targets.
- ✓ Consider the conditions that make sense for bus operations versus those that may make sense for other mobility options and individual jurisdictions.
- ✓ Offer a better choice over the personalized, on-demand choices people have at their disposal today.

##### **Implementing these recommendations will result in...**

- ✓ Consistent service across the region, as a result of cohesive planning, operations, and performance.
- ✓ Customers who are able to use bus region-wide to access key destinations—regardless of where they live and what times they travel.
- ✓ More consistent and effective services across the region, not only in supply, but in alternate forms of bus that are flexible and cost-effective, and that meet riders' growing expectations of transit and travel.



## 4 Balancing the responsibilities of local and regional providers will position local bus systems to meet their own jurisdictional needs and the regional bus system to meet regional needs and deliver regional benefits.

### Recommendations

- 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.

### Importance

#### Because...

- ✓ The region's high-frequency, high-capacity bus network is a critical regional asset that must be clearly planned and managed.
- ✓ WMATA and its partner jurisdictions have the responsibility to clearly define 'regional' bus service, and decide how it should be delivered.

#### Implementing these recommendations will result in...

- ✓ Regional and local entities that operate the services they are best suited for.
  - Metrobus will operate the high-intensity inter-jurisdictional services that foster regional mobility and connect the whole region.
  - Local agencies will be empowered to better serve residents and businesses with direct control of local service.
- ✓ A consistent and transparent system for focusing resources on needed routes and services, leading to better overall service.
- ✓ Greater transparency of costs associated with "regional" services—clearer connections between what local jurisdictions pay for and the benefits received.



## 5 Streamlining back-office functions and sharing innovation will help all operators and allow more resources for operating bus service.

### Recommendations

- A Consolidate back-office support functions to realize shared benefits 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.

### Importance

#### Because...

- ✓ Some initiatives can only be delivered through regional collaboration and by leveraging regional resources to deliver efficiency and coherence through combined core support functions.
- ✓ The region's agencies must pilot new technologies and techniques that don't require extensive political will or funding streams for individual projects.

#### Implementing these recommendations will result in...

- ✓ A more seamless integration of programs that eliminates duplicative functions, drives joint actions where appropriate, and operates at a scale that propels regional efficiencies and cost savings.
- ✓ A system that facilitates a robust pilot program to serve as a catalyst for implementing new ideas—whether administrative, such as a standardized system for IT and data management, or for making bus move—quickly, efficiently, and equitably.
- ✓ Bus administration that will continue to evolve as a long-term, structured effort, and run more with the language of a business that ultimately serves the public good.





# 6

**Transforming and incorporating changes in bus service operated by multiple providers across the region will require centralized leadership, coordination and collaboration.**

## Recommendations

- A Form a regional 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.

## Importance

### Because...

- ✓ Immediate and sustained action is needed to implement recommendations to transform the bus system.
- ✓ Responsible agencies must be held accountable for the goals, priorities, and performance of bus across the region.
- ✓ A task force will have the authority to define who tackles what first, identify immediate priorities and challenges, and recommend composition and scope of the new Coalition.

### Implementing these recommendations will result in...

- ✓ Strengthened government entities responsible for bus who are unified in implementing strategy recommendations.
- ✓ A unified and progressive regional program; otherwise, the status quo will remain, and the region will likely be facing the problem for years, or decades to come.
- ✓ Regular reporting by independent organizations that increases the visibility of bus transformation and yields measurable improvements for customers.

*These recommendations position the region to provide the surface transit network it needs, with fast and frequent bus service that gets people where they want to go, quickly, reliably, and efficiently.*





# Collaboration

Engagement has been a cornerstone of this project, with more happening every day! Outreach activities to date:

- 140** Participants at the Kickoff Summit
- 5,700** Survey responses to date
- 13** Metrobus division engagement events
- 10** Focus groups
- 16** ESC meetings
- 8** TT meetings
- 1** SAP meeting
- 33** External project briefings
- 8** WMATA LT briefings
- 128** Social media postings
- 10,056** People reached via social media

*Creating a sustainable surface transportation future depends on collaboration between bus operators, cities, counties, and states that own the roads.*

*It also depends on input from the broader community - from businesses, non-profits and community organizations, thought leaders, the public, and many more!*

## WHO IS DRIVING THIS BUS?

Tapping into the immense expertise within this region has guided the development of this strategy, and this project has relied on the input of many from across the region.

### Executive Steering Committee

Committee members, who hold various leadership positions in the business community, with regional organizations and non-profits, or are unaffiliated transit experts or labor representatives, have been closely involved with developing the strategy and played an important role in ensuring transparency, independence, and consideration of the needs of the region's travelers and bus service providers.

### Strategy Advisory Panel

Panel members, who hold leadership positions in local and state governments, community-based organizations, businesses, minority and disability groups, labor organizations, think tanks, and the education community, represent a variety of regional perspectives and provide critical insight into issues that affect bus.

### Technical Team

Team members are recognized discipline leaders within WMATA and senior jurisdiction transit staff who review technical aspects and analyses throughout the project.

### WMATA Leadership Team

Team members are decision-makers within WMATA who oversee those parts of the project that affect organization and operations.

### General Public

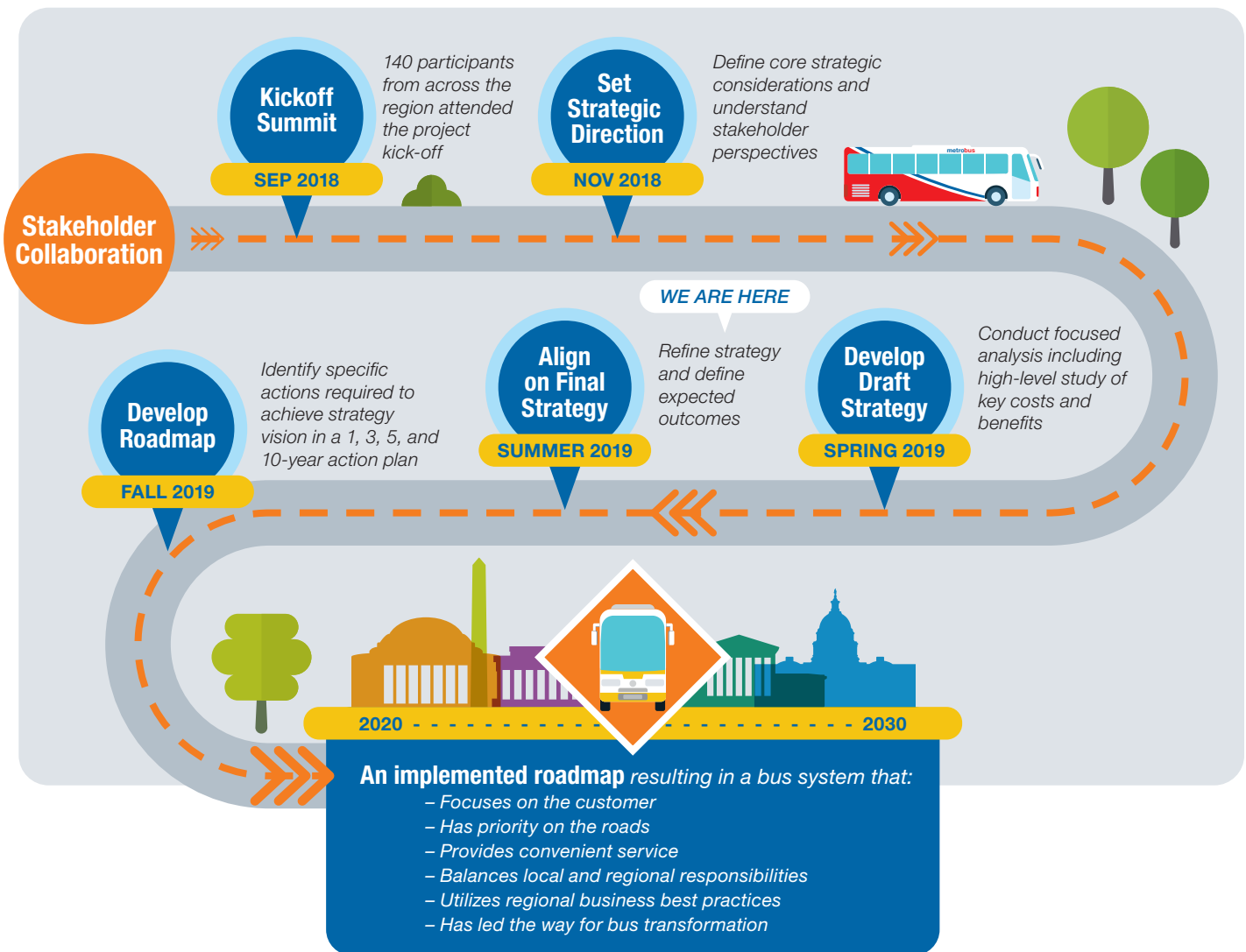
A broad sample of bus riders and non-riders have shared their priorities through various media, including almost 5,700 survey responses, both on-line and on-site at locations throughout the region.

### Other Key Stakeholders

Other stakeholders from across the region have provided input that represents the perspectives of broad constituencies. These stakeholders include transit and transportation leaders, and elected and appointed officials.

# Next Steps

The draft Strategy and its recommendations are the result of extensive stakeholder insights, best practice from other regions, and comprehensive analysis of the region's bus system.



Opportunities to give your feedback start now and continue through June 2019!  
Visit our website for more information and to read the draft Strategy in full.



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## LEARN MORE ABOUT THE REGION'S BUS SYSTEM

Bus System Today  
Public Input Survey Report  
Project Overview  
Strategic Considerations

[bustransformationproject.com/resources/#documents](http://bustransformationproject.com/resources/#documents)

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