



Moving Forward

Status of the Bus Systems of the National Capital Region



Regional Bus Subcommittee

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

September 2008

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 bus 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.

Subcommittee Members

Transit Operators

Alexandria Dash
Arlington Transit (ART)
City of Fairfax CUE
DC Circulator
DC Streetcar
Fairfax Connector
Falls Church George
Frederick County TRANSIT
Laurel Connect-a-Ride
Loudoun Commuter Transit
Maryland Commuter Rail
Montgomery County Ride On
MTA Commuter Bus
Prince George's County TheBus
PRTC Omni Ride
Virginia Railway Express
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)

Other Agencies

District of Columbia DOT
Maryland DOT
Maryland Transit Administration
Northern Virginia Transportation Commission
Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission (PRTC)
Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation
Virginia DOT

This brochure was made possible by a collaborative effort of Regional Bus Subcommittee members and TPB staff.

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Introduction



Bus services are an important component of the region's transportation system. The 13 bus operators in the region serve approximately 45% of the region's transit trips, and account for 45% of the region's transit operating costs. Bus services complement the Metrorail system by providing feeder service to stations, as well as additional capacity in highly congested rail corridors. Bus systems have a much greater reach than Metrorail, and provide a lower-cost, flexible service that can be implemented quickly. Similar to the Metrorail system, the region's bus operators are experiencing financial challenges. Also like the Metrorail system, the ridership and operating costs of the region's bus systems are steadily increasing, and will continue to rise.





Why is Transit Important?



Transit provides opportunities.

Public transportation provides access to job opportunities for million of Americans as well as a transportation option to get to work, go to school, visit friends, or go to a doctor's office.



Transit reduces energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.

Transit is part of the region's strategy to reduce energy use and lower the emissions of gases linked with global climate change.



Transit creates healthy communities.

Public transportation revitalizes neighborhoods, increases social interaction and pedestrian activity, enhances safety, and helps create a sense of "place" that will help make a community unique and special.



Transit reduces traffic congestion.

Public transit provides alternatives to single-occupancy vehicles, removing vehicles from the region's roadways.



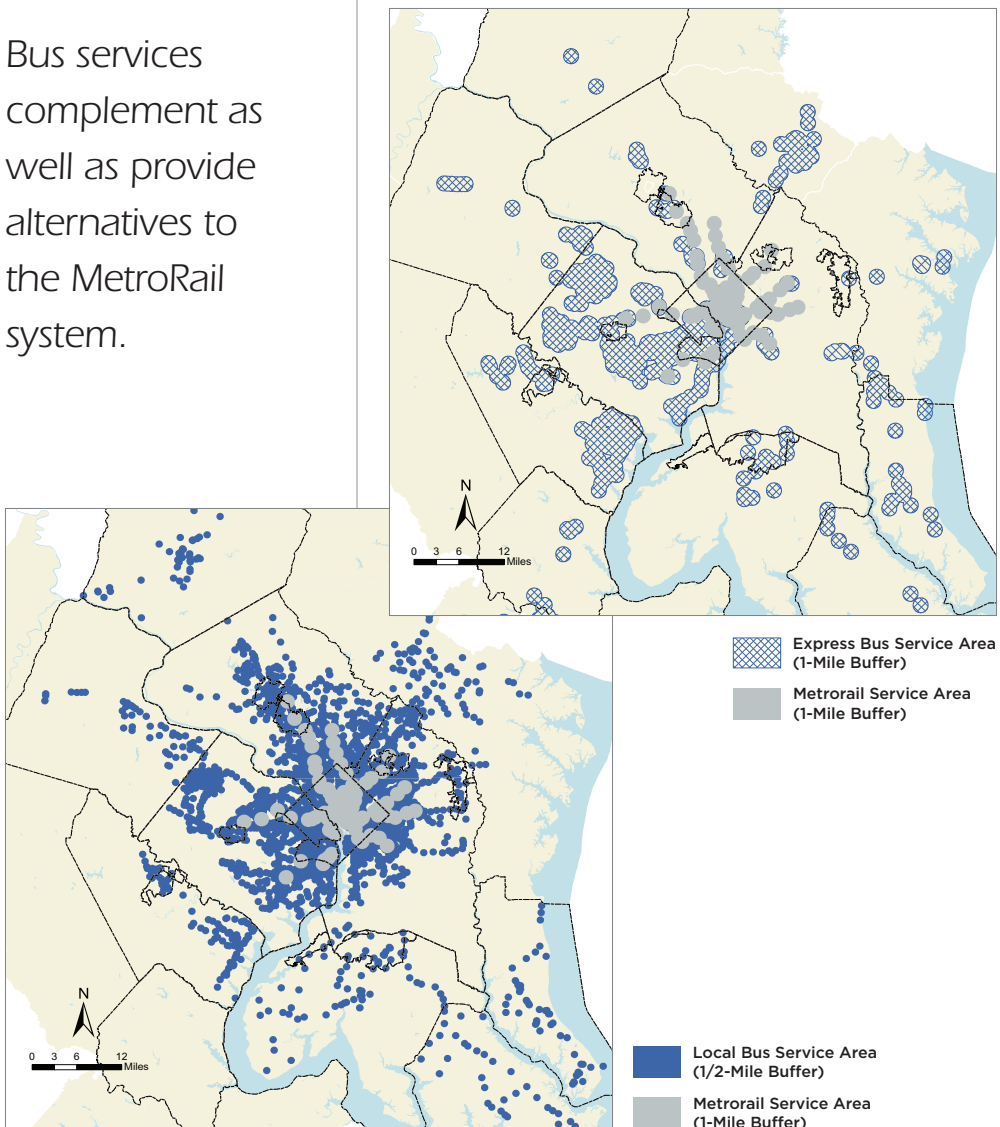
Why Bus Transit?

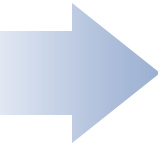


Bus services complement as well as provide alternatives to the MetroRail system.

Bus services:

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





Bus Systems of the National Capital Region

Feeder/Circulator bus

provides access to rail transit stations and local destinations



Local bus

provides medium-distance trips with frequent service

Commuter/Express bus

provides long-distance rush-hour services

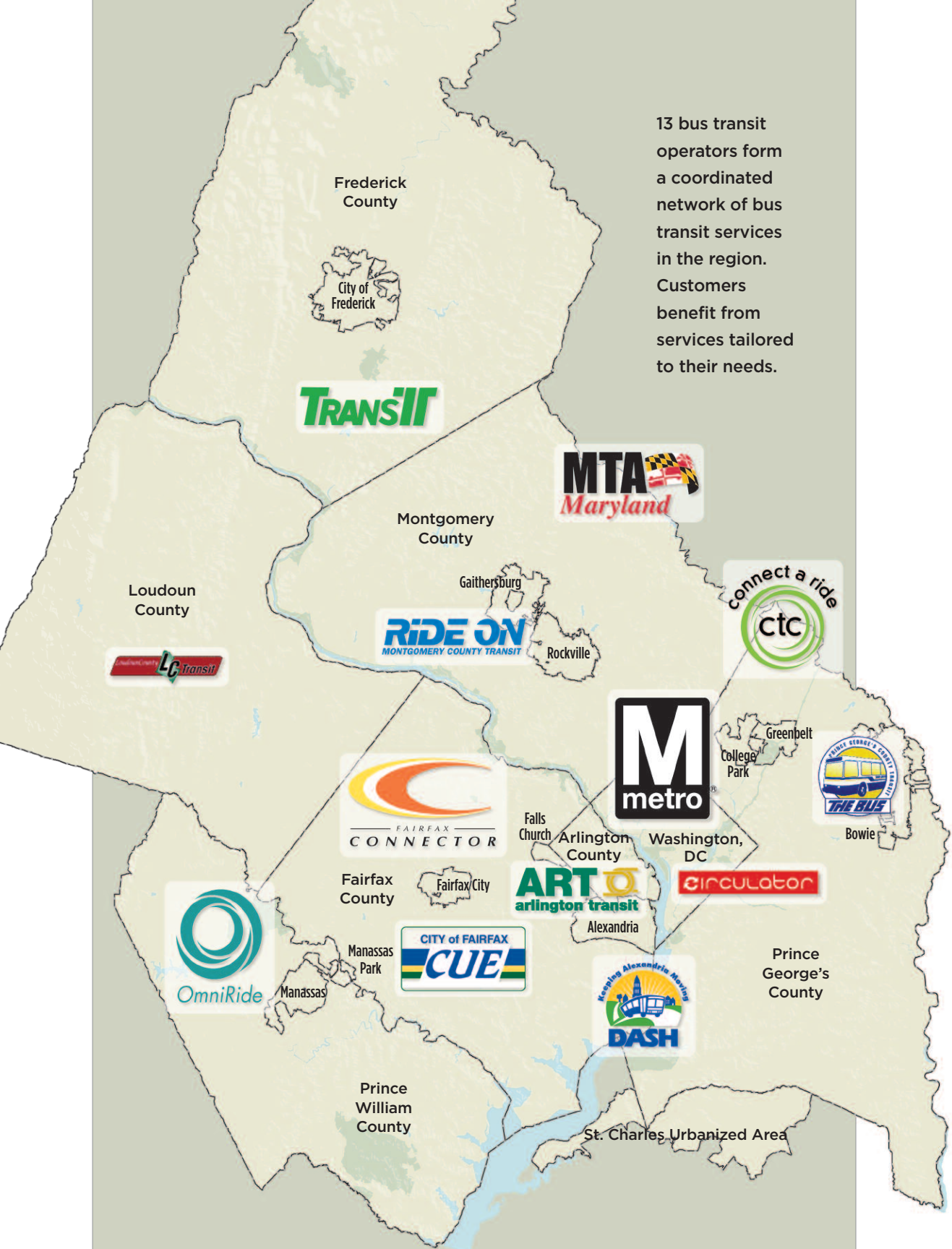



Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)

can provide high quality transit service similar to MetroRail

BRT is currently being evaluated for several corridors in the region.

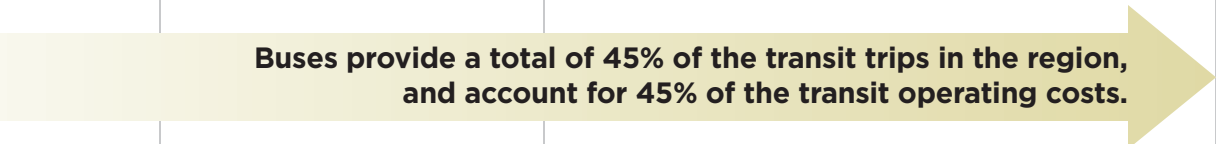
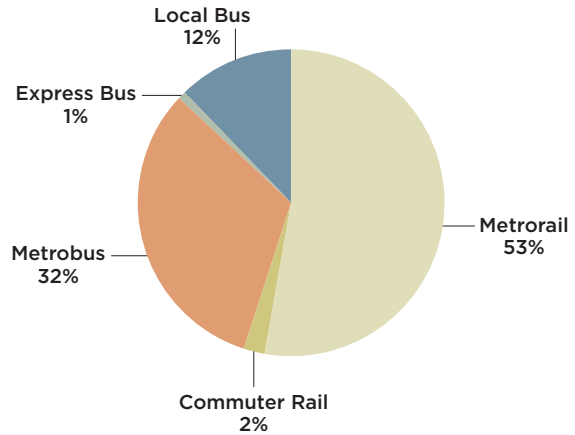
13 bus transit operators form a coordinated network of bus transit services in the region. Customers benefit from services tailored to their needs.





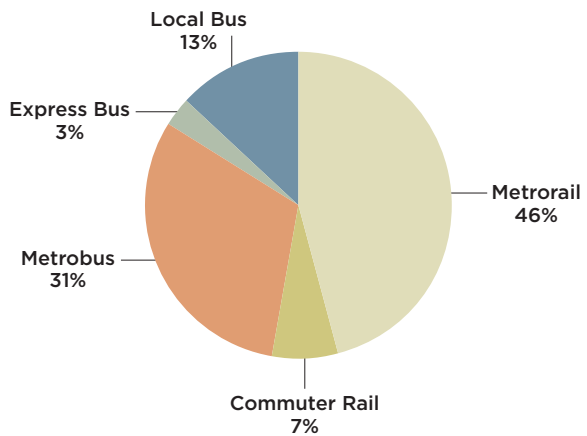
Buses are a major part of the region's transit system

Breakdown of Regional Transit Ridership
(% of Annual Trips, 2006)



Buses provide a total of 45% of the transit trips in the region, and account for 45% of the transit operating costs.

Breakdown of Regional Transit Costs
(Annual Operating Costs, 2006)

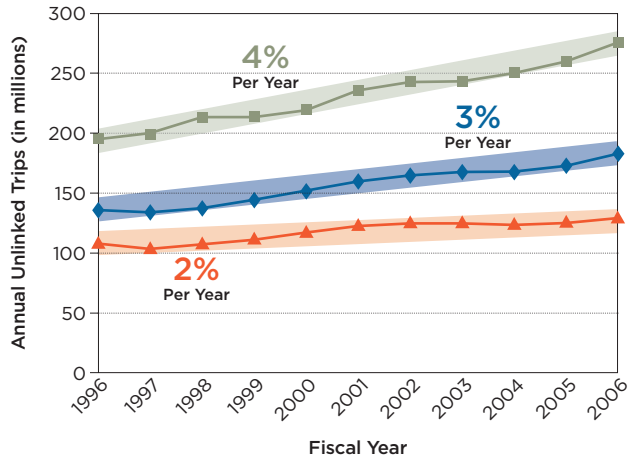




Both bus ridership and operating costs are increasing

Annual Ridership WMATA Metrorail, Metrobus and All Bus Systems

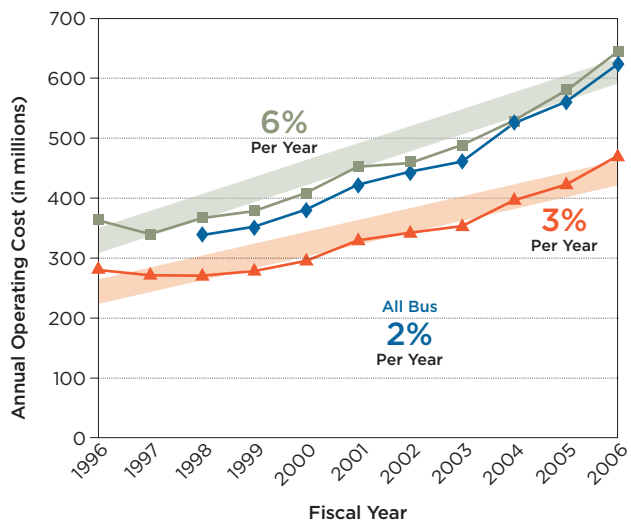
- Metrorail
- ◆— All Bus
- ▲— Metrobus



Regional bus ridership is increasing, as is the cost of operating bus transit service.

Annual Operating Cost WMATA Metrorail, Metrobus and All Bus Systems

- Metrorail
- ◆— All Bus
- ▲— Metrobus



Bus ridership and operating costs will continue to rise



Factors causing increases in bus operating costs:

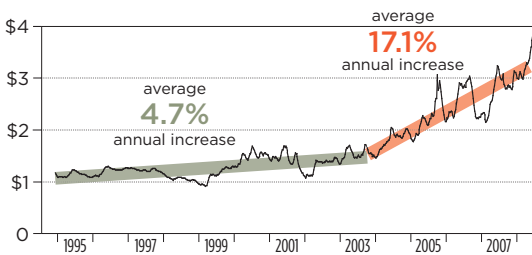
Increasing traffic congestion

Heavy traffic congestion slows buses and results in more buses being needed to maintain published schedules.

Increasing fuel costs

Costs for fuel and labor are rising faster than ever before, resulting in increases in operating costs.

Cost Per Gallon of Gasoline, 1995 to Present



Factors causing increases in bus ridership:

Rising fuel costs and Metrorail congestion

As gas prices increase, commuters turn to transit to find cost-effective transportation options. Many of these riders find faster and more comfortable commutes on the region's buses.



Regional Development

Increased emphasis on transit-friendly growth patterns has increased the number of potential bus riders.



The region's bus systems have immediate funding needs



Maintaining existing bus fleet in good repair

Buses are heavily used and require frequent and specialized maintenance.



Investing in clean-fuel technologies

Environmental and health concerns have increased the awareness of the need for clean fuel buses.



Expanding service offerings

New services 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.



Funding to cover operating costs

As both costs and service offerings increase, more money is required to operate the region's bus transit systems.

The region's bus operators also must consider other needs

Providing quality bus stops and transfer centers

Many bus stops in the region lack amenities and are inaccessible to persons with disabilities.



Implementation of Bus Rapid Transit

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) technologies will increase the speeds and reliability of bus services.



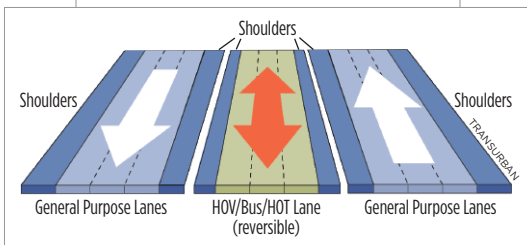
Compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act

Federal law requires transit services to be accessible to persons with disabilities.



Planning for the conversion of HOV lanes to HOT lanes

Conversion of High-Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes to priced toll lanes may raise new revenue for additional bus services.



Considering bus transit in land-use decisions

Bus transit must be considered early in the land development process in order to ensure transit-friendly neighborhoods.





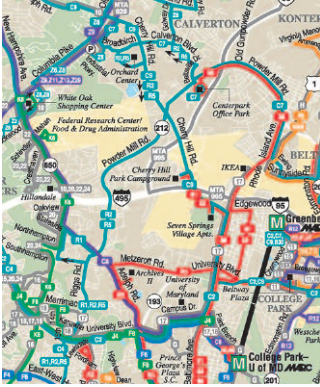
While Metrorail's challenges are well known, the region's bus systems are facing similar issues.



What you can do

Learn

Learn what bus services are available to you in your neighborhood.



Ride

Consider taking the bus for work trips, shopping trips, or for other parts of your daily travel routine.



Participate

Get involved in your community planning process and advocate for high quality transit from your local and regional decisionmakers.



Next Steps

The TPB, through its Regional Bus Subcommittee, is the regional organization planning to address these short- and long-term challenges. These planning efforts include:

- Addressing funding needs
- Providing support for beneficial bus projects
- Raising awareness of the needs of the region's transit operators

The Regional Bus Subcommittee's recently released report, *Status Report on the Bus Systems in the National Capital Region*, documented the successes and challenges currently faced by the region's transit operators.



Summary

- Bus services are an important part of the region's transportation system
- Bus systems face real monetary and infrastructure needs to maintain existing services and respond to growing demand
- Bus services are one of the solutions to the future growth challenges of the region

Learn more about
bus planning in the region at
www.mwcog.org/TPB/RBS



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