



# INTERCITY BUS AND RAIL TRAVEL OVERVIEW

## National Capital Region Operations – Spring 2023

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# Purpose and Contents

- Recap intercity travel and federal planning requirements
- Review past TPB study of intercity travel
- Present an updated overview of NCR intercity bus and rail operations
  - Private and public intercity bus
  - Amtrak (National Railroad Passenger Corporation)
- Highlight planned FY 2024 TPB UPWP activities



Intercity Bus Stops at D.C. Union Station (Pierre Gaunard/COG)



# Background

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## What Is Intercity Travel?

- *Intercity Bus* “**Regularly scheduled bus service** for the general public that operates **with limited stops over fixed routes connecting two or more urban areas not in close proximity**, that has the capacity for transporting baggage carried by passengers, and that makes meaningful connections with scheduled intercity bus service to more distant points, if such service is available.” (FTA C 9040.1G, Federal Transit Administration, 2014)
- *Intercity Rail*: “...means **rail passenger transportation**, except commuter rail passenger transportation (49 U.S. Code § 24102)





# Why Study Intercity Travel?



Image Credits (Pierre Gaunard/COG)

- Economic impact due to tourism and business travel
- Potential use overlap with commuter transit
- Supports equity due to affordability and access to long-distance travel options
- Offers travel options for rural and small urban areas
- Federal requirements for MPO regional planning



# Federal Planning Regulations

- Federal planning regulations related to the FAST Act and published in May 2016 (*Statewide and Nonmetropolitan Transportation Planning; Metropolitan Transportation Planning; Final Rule*) require MPO consideration of intercity travel in regional planning:
  - “... the MPO designated for each urbanized area is to carry out a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive performance-based multimodal transportation planning process, including the development of a metropolitan transportation plan and a TIP, that encourages and promotes the safe and efficient development, management, and operation of surface transportation systems to serve the mobility needs of people and freight (including accessible pedestrian walkways, bicycle transportation facilities, and **intermodal facilities that support intercity transportation, including intercity buses and intercity bus facilities** and commuter vanpool providers) ... § 450.300(a)





# Previous TPB Intercity Travel Study

- In response to new federal requirements, TPB studied intercity bus passenger traffic in 2016
- Key findings:
  - Union Station was the dominant boarding/alighting point
  - Most trips are to or from the NYC area
  - Fridays were the busiest travel day by bus

Image Credits (Pierre Gaunard/COG)



# Spring 2023 Overview – Methodology

Collect updated information on intercity bus and rail operations in the NCR

- Online news articles, social media posts, and other open-source data were reviewed
- Amtrak service schedules were reviewed for intercity rail
- This overview focuses primarily on destinations with direct service from the NCR



Intercity Bus Stop at Vienna Metro Station (Pierre Gaunard/COG)





# Intercity Snapshot – Spring 2023

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34

NCR Intercity  
Bus Stops  
(Trip Origin)

9

Amtrak NCR  
stops

50+

Intercity bus  
destinations with  
direct (one bus)  
service from NCR





# Intercity Bus Service – Spring 2023

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15

Intercity  
Bus  
Operators

59

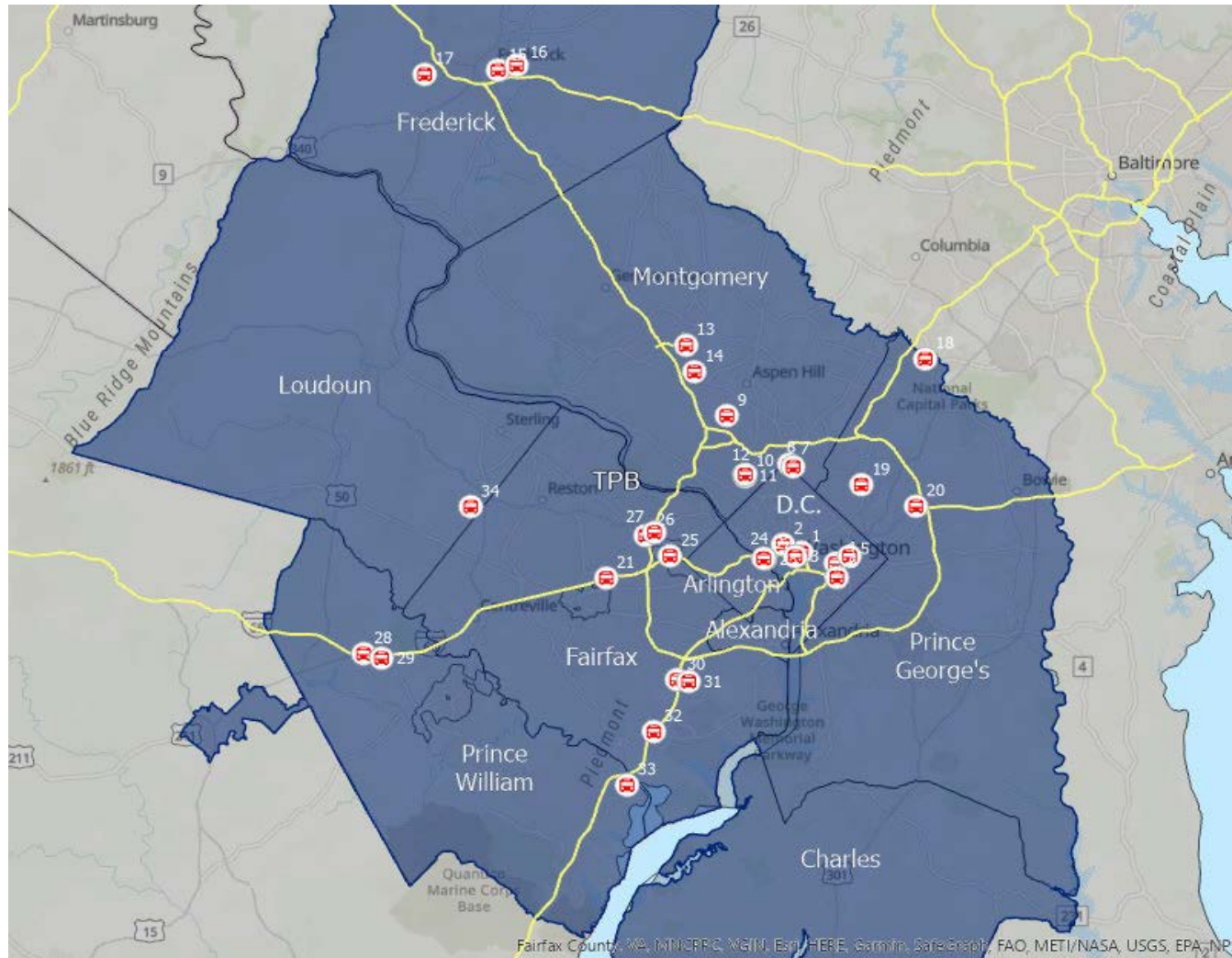
Friday bus  
trips  
originating  
from the NCR  
to Baltimore

200+

Friday bus  
trips  
originating  
from the NCR  
to NYC



# Intercity Bus NCR Origins



- Red bus icons = intercity bus stops
- Most stops are along or nearby interstate highways (yellow)
- Stops are numbered and correspond with the chart in the appendix



# Intercity Bus NCR Destinations



- Direct route destinations from the NCR include college towns, regional centers, and major cities
- The top 5 destinations by trip total are New York City, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Boston, and Richmond
- The DC <-> NYC route is by far the busiest and supports multiple bus lines
- Seasonal destinations and limited routes include beach and college towns





# Intercity Bus Providers

## Current Providers Included in 2016 Study

Greyhound

Peter Pan

Megabus

Best Bus

Vamoose

BayRunner

Washington Deluxe

TripperBus

## New Bus Lines for 2023 Review\*

FlixBus

Go Bus

Virginia Breeze

The Jet

OurBus

Wanda Coach/Starline

Coach

PandaNY

## Providers No Longer In Service \*\*

BoltBus

Eastern

Omnibus LaCubana

Rapid Overland Express

Royal Traveler

Sprinter Bus

## NOTES:

\* Some of these may have operated in 2016, but were not included in the study

\*\* BoltBus and Eastern are now part of FlixBus; Sprinter Bus' status is unclear



# Business Class Intercity Bus Providers

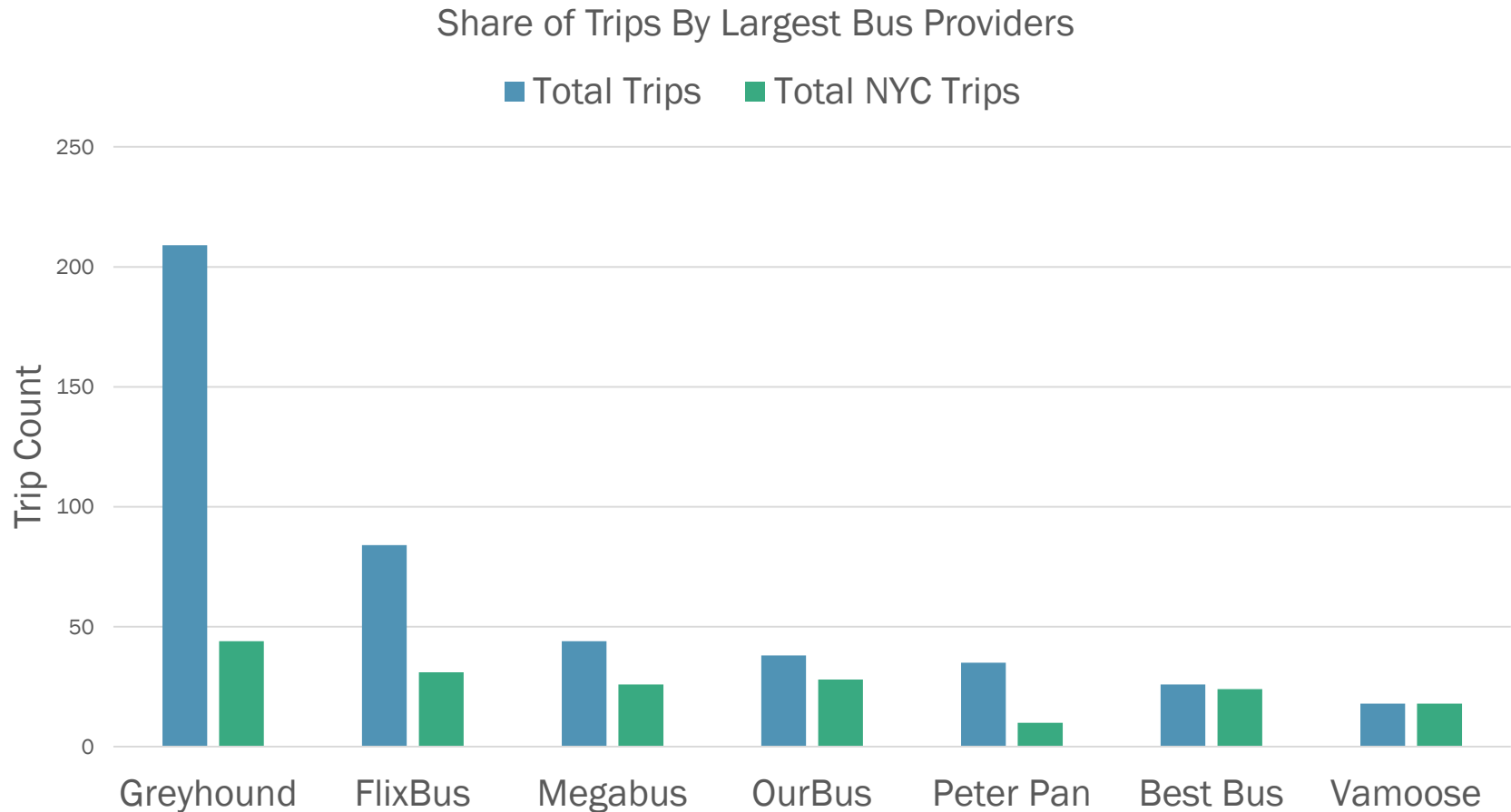
- Four premium intercity bus options
  - BestBus Prime
  - TripperBus Elite
  - Vamoose Gold
  - The Jet (all buses luxury)
- Prices range from \$49-\$179 one way.
- Amenities may include: more leg room, more comfortable seats, enhanced wifi, etc.



BestBus Prime Interior (BestBus./<https://www.bestbus.com/pages/prime.aspx>)



# Intercity Bus Providers – Service Share



Source: Bus Provider Online Schedules





# Intercity Bus Ridership – Covid Impacts

- Scheduled motorcoach businesses (intercity buses) experienced an appx. 65% decline in passengers nationally between 2019 and 2020 (American Bus Association’s 2020 Motorcoach Census)
- The COVID-19 pandemic led to widespread industry reorganization
- As of February 2023, intercity bus ridership had returned to 70-75% of pre-pandemic totals and was rising

ROX RAPID OVERLAND XPRESS



Rapid Overland Xpress has operated three years under difficult travel and economic conditions. ROX will suspend service until further notice, as of Sunday, May 22, 2022.

ROX Home Page in May 2023 (Rapid Overland Express  
<https://ridetherox.com/>)

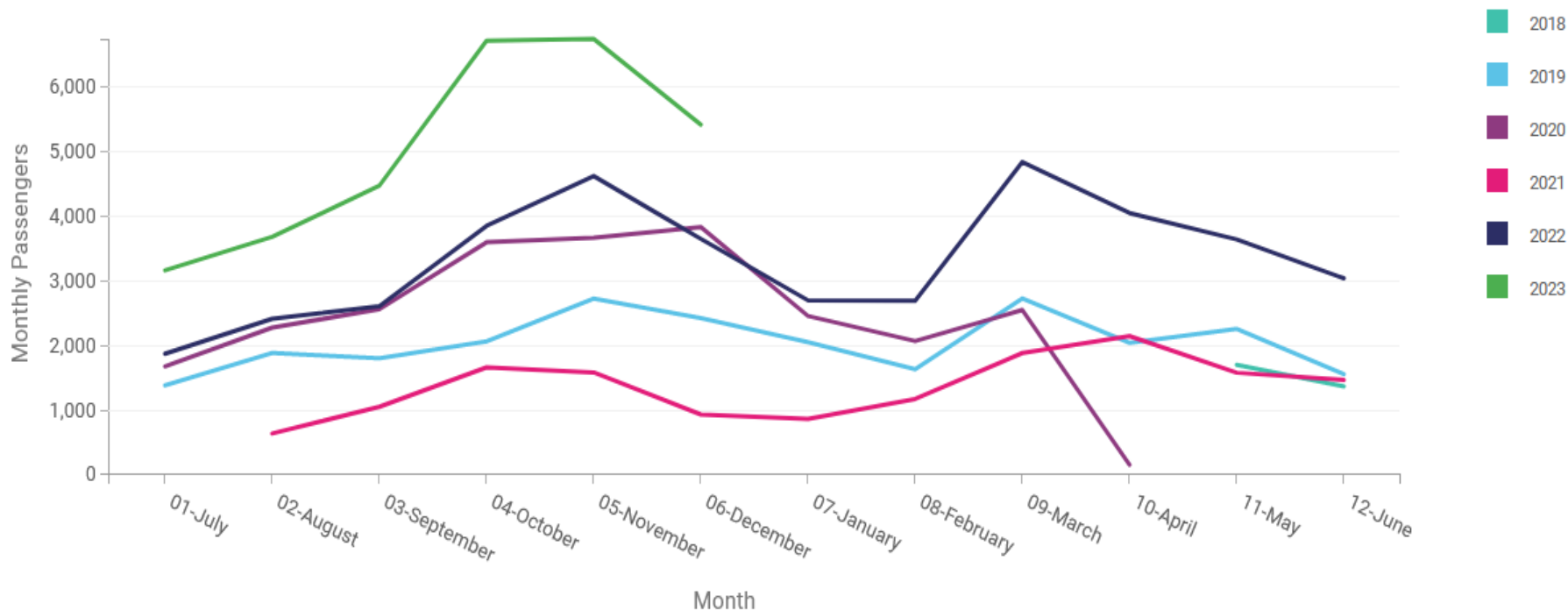


# Intercity Bus Ridership – Virginia Breeze

- Virginia Breeze/DRPT publishes quarterly reports of ridership statistics
- Ridership trends are seasonally consistent, but increasing annually

## Ridership by Fiscal Year

Each line represents a single fiscal year. Use the filter to explore route, stop, and month details. Note: the Virginia Breeze was inactive between April and August of 2020.



Source: Virginia Breeze/DRPT Data Dashboard



# Amtrak – Service Map



Amtrak Route Map (Amtrak/<https://www.amtrak.com/content/dam/projects/dotcom/english/public/documents/Maps/Amtrak-System-Map-1018.pdf>)

Amtrak operates in four directions from Washington, DC

- Northeast: Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York City, and Boston or Montreal
- Northwest: Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Chicago
- Southwest: Charlottesville, Charlotte, Atlanta
- Southeast: Richmond, and either Hampton Roads or on to Savannah and Florida





# Amtrak – Local Stations



Amtrak Route Map  
([Amtrak/https://www.amtrak.com/content/dam/projects/dotcom/english/public/documents/Maps/Amtrak-System-Map-1018.pdf](https://www.amtrak.com/content/dam/projects/dotcom/english/public/documents/Maps/Amtrak-System-Map-1018.pdf))

Amtrak trains stop at Union Station. Other stations in the region include:

- Northeast: New Carrollton (followed by BWI Marshall Airport)

- Northwest: Rockville

Southbound trains stop at Alexandria, and then:

- Southwest: Burke, Manassas
- Southeast: Woodbridge, and Quantico (followed by Fredericksburg)

Lorton (*Auto Train*)



# Amtrak – Train Service

- Most trips are between Washington DC and the Northeast/New York City

Name	Typical* Trips / weekday	Terminals
Acela	11 (16 in 2019)	Washington, DC <> Boston
Northeast Regional	14 (19 in 2019)	Washington, DC <> Boston plus Roanoke, Newport News, Norfolk
Vermont	1	Washington, DC <> Vermont
Capitol Limited	1	Washington, DC <> Chicago
Cardinal	3/week	Chicago <> New York City
Carolinian	1	Charlotte <> New York City
Crescent	1	New Orleans <> New York City

\* As of May 18, 2023. Schedules may vary day-to-day



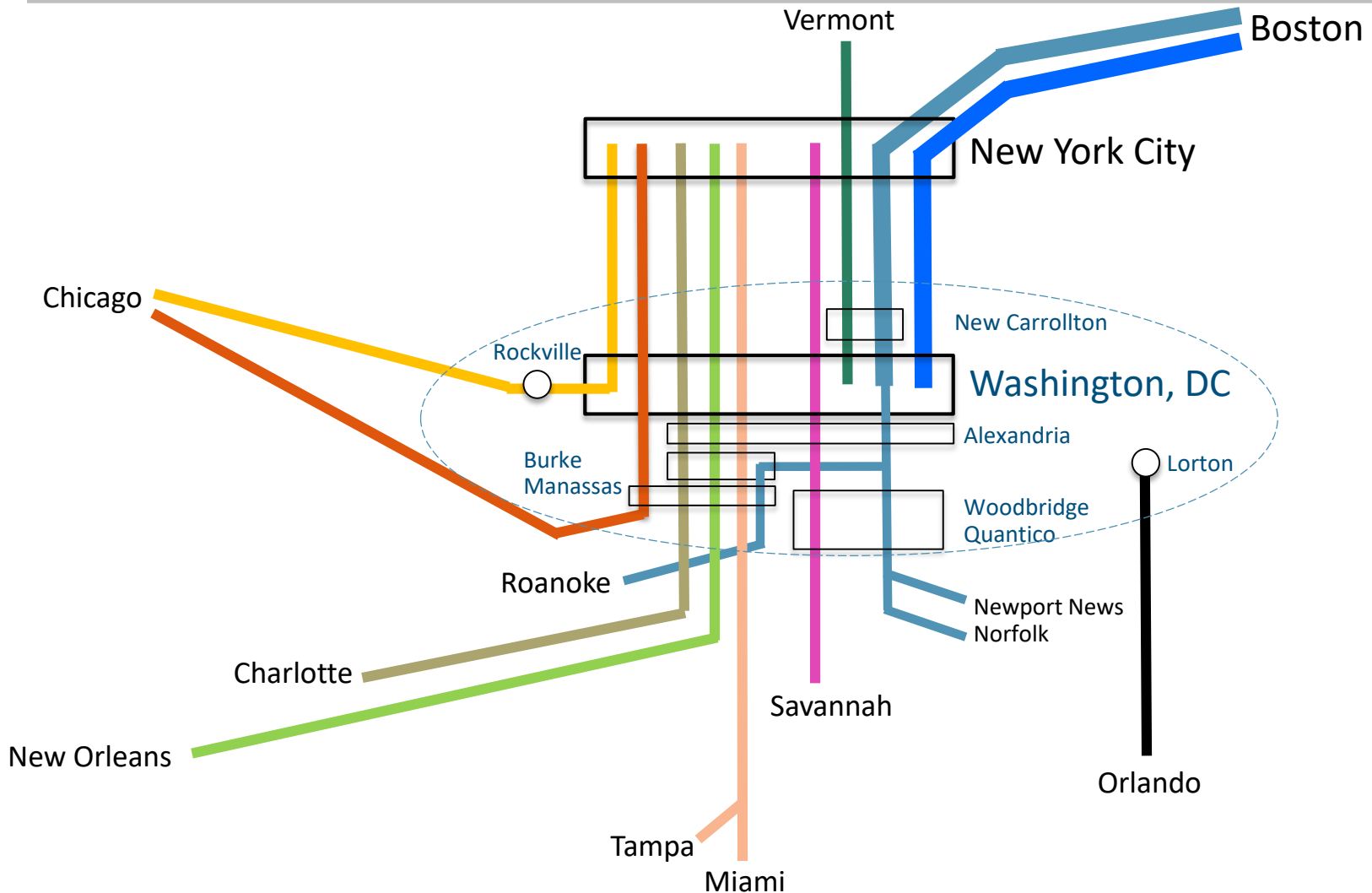
# Amtrak – Train Service (cont.)

Name	Typical* Trips / weekday	Terminals
Palmetto	1	Savannah <> New York City
Silver Meteor	1	Miami <> New York City
Silver Star	1	Tampa <> New York City
Auto Train	1	Lorton, VA <> Orlando (Sanford, FL)

\* As of May 18, 2023. Schedules may vary day-to-day



# Amtrak – Train Service Schematic





# Amtrak – Ridership Information (2019)

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Union Station (Second busiest station in nation after New York Penn)

- 85 - 90 trains daily
- 5.2 million passengers in FY 2019

Other stations in the NCR in FY 2019

- Alexandria: 201K
- Burke: 9K
- Lorton: 236K (Auto-Train)
- Manassas: 26K
- Quantico: 20K
- Woodbridge: 12K
- New Carrollton: 186K
- Rockville: 5K
- *BWI Marshall: 751K*
- *Baltimore: 1.044 M*



# Amtrak – COVID-19 Impact on Ridership



- Passengers are returning to Amtrak, but business travel is still down
- In FY21, ridership from Union Station dropped 66% from FY19
- All routes are back in operation and national ridership grew by 10.8m in FY22
- In April 2023, Amtrak ridership nationally reached 89% of its pre-pandemic level





# Key Findings

- Similar trends to the 2016 Intercity Travel Study
  - Northeast Corridor routes make up most regional intercity bus and rail travel
  - Fridays are still the busiest day on average
- Slow recovery of pre-pandemic ridership
- Bus lines dealing with workforce shortage and pandemic recovery

Front of Union Station, Washington, D.C. (Union Station Redevelopment Corporation/USRC Facebook Page)





# FY24 Intercity Travel Study

- Tasks 3.7 and 7.1 of TPB's FY24 UPWP include a complete update to the 2016 intercity travel count
  - Joint project between Systems Performance Planning and Transportation Research and Data teams
  - From FY24 UPWP Task 7.1: "...conduct a regional survey gathering usage information on intercity buses, commuter buses, rail transit, and commuter rail ... to advise regional planning and coordination"

D.C. Greyhound Station – Union Station (Pierre Gaunard/COG)





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National Capital Region  
**Transportation Planning Board**

# Appendix



# Methodology – Spring 2023

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- Origin Stops: The list of intercity bus stations and stops in the national capital region (NCR) was derived from both the 2016 TPB intercity travel study and current research of bus service providers' websites:
  - (ex. route maps, stop lists, bus schedules, etc.).
- Destination Stops: To find the list of destinations served by intercity travel providers, we also referenced the 2016 study, travel provider websites, and bus ticket booking sites.
  - In order to narrow the list of destination trips offered, this preliminary analysis focuses on destinations with direct service from the NCR (no bus transfer required).
- Provider List: Online news articles, social media posts, and other open source data were reviewed to conclude which bus providers are actively operating in the region.



# Methodology – Spring 2023

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- Trip totals for travel to individual destinations were calculated by researching provider schedules and counting the total number of trips offered to the applicable destination city from regional stops (whether direct or transfer service).
- Friday was the travel day used to calculate total trips offered to any city by every provider.
  - Some did offer more trips on Saturdays, Sundays, or specific times of the year.





# NCR Bus Stops – Origins (Map Key)

ObjectID	Stop Name	Address	City	State	Zip Code	Transit Stop	Passenger Facilities	Private Business	Amtrak	Commuter Rail
1	Union Station	50 Massachusetts Avenue NE	Washington	DC	20002	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
2	Dupont Circle	250 Massachusetts Avenue NW	Washington	DC	20036	Y	N	N	N	N
3	Metro Center	565 13th Street NW	Washington	DC	20004	Y	N	N	N	N
4	Stadium-Armory Metro	25 19th Street SE	Washington	DC	20003	Y	N	N	N	N
5	3355 Benning Road NE	3355 Benning Road NE	Washington	DC	20019	N	N	Y	N	N
6	2305 Pennsylvania Av. SE	2305 Pennsylvania Av. SE	Washington	DC	20020	N	N	Y	N	N
7	Silver Spring Transit Center	8404 Colesville Road	Silver Spring	MD	20910	Y	N	N	N	Y
8	Silver Spring Greyhound Station	8100 Fenton Street	Silver Spring	MD	20910	N	Y	N	N	N
9	North Bethesda Metro	5500 Marinelli Rd	North Bethesda	MD	20852	Y	N	N	N	N
10	Bethesda	4681 Willow Lane NW	Bethesda	MD	20814	N	N	N	N	N
11	Bethesda	7401 Waverly Street	Bethesda	MD	20814	Y	N	N	N	N
12	Bethesda	4550 Montgomery Ave	Bethesda	MD	20814	Y	N	N	N	N
13	Shady Grove Metro	15903 Somerville Drive	Rockville	MD	20855	Y	N	N	N	N
14	Rockville	622 Hungerford Dr	Rockville	MD	20850	N	N	N	N	N
15	Frederick Transit Center	100 South East St.	Frederick	MD	21701	N	Y	N	N	Y
16	Airport	1341 Hughes Ford Rd	Frederick	MD	21705	N	N	N	N	N
17	Prospect Plaza	403 S Jefferson St	Frederick	MD	21701	N	N	Y	N	N
18	Laurel	605 7th Street	Laurel	MD	20707	N	N	Y	N	N
19	College Park Metro	4931 Calvert Road	College Park	MD	20742	Y	N	N	N	Y
20	New Carrollton Metro	4700 Garden City Drive	New Carrollton	MD	20785	Y	N	N	N	Y
21	Vienna Metro	9550 Saintsbury Drive	Vienna	VA	22031	Y	N	N	N	N
22	Rosslyn	1101 Wilson Blvd	Rosslyn	VA	22209	Y	N	N	N	N
23	Rosslyn	1001 Wilson Blvd	Rosslyn	VA	22209	Y	N	N	N	N
24	Rosslyn	1601 North Kent Street	Rosslyn	VA	22209	Y	N	N	N	N
25	West Falls Church Metro	7040 Haycock Road	Falls Church	VA	22043	Y	N	N	N	N
26	Tysons Corner Metro	1784 Tysons Blvd	Tysons	VA	22102	Y	N	N	N	N
27	Tysons - McLean Metro	1824 Dolley Madison Blvd	Tysons	VA	22102	Y	N	N	N	N
28	University Blvd Park and Ride	13305 Lee Hwy	Manassas	VA	20109	N	N	N	N	N
29	Cushing Rd Park and Ride	7313 Cushing Rd	Manassas	VA	22109	N	N	N	N	N
30	Springfield - Backlick North Park and Ride	6831 Backlick Rd	Springfield	VA	22150	N	N	N	N	N
31	Springfield Metro	6770 Frontier Dr	Springfield	VA	22150	Y	N	N	N	N
32	Lorton VRE Station	8990 Lorton Station Blvd	Lorton	VA	22079	N	N	N	N	Y
33	Woodbridge VRE Station	1040 Express Way	Woodbridge	VA	22194	N	Y	N	Y	Y
34	Washington Dulles International Airport	1 Saarinen Cir	Chantilly	VA	22166	Y	Y	N	N	N



# Bus Stops and Providers

County or city	Station	Providers	Select Destinations
Washington, D.C.	Dupont Circle	FlixBus, Best Bus, Washington Deluxe, OurBus	New York City
	Metro Center	The Jet	New York City
	Union Station	Greyhound, Flixbus, Peter Pan, Megabus, Best Bus, Virginia Breeze, Washington Deluxe, OurBus	<b><u>MD:</u></b> Annapolis, Baltimore (area); <b><u>PA:</u></b> Philadelphia, Pittsburgh; <b><u>OH:</u></b> Cleveland; <b><u>NY:</u></b> New York City, Ithaca; <b><u>MA:</u></b> Boston; <b><u>DE:</u></b> Dewey Beach; <b><u>VA:</u></b> Warrenton, Harrisonburg, Lynchburg, Blacksburg, Charlottesville, Richmond; <b><u>GA:</u></b> Savannah, Atlanta, <b><u>NC:</u></b> Raleigh/Durham, Charlotte; <b><u>FL:</u></b> Jacksonville, Orlando, Miami



# Bus Stops and Providers – Union Station



Buses parked at Union Station (Pierre Gaunard/COG)



# Bus Stops and Providers (cont.)

County or city	Station	Providers	Select Destinations
Washington, D.C.	Stadium-Armory Metro	OurBus	<u>NJ</u> : Newark; <u>NY</u> : New York City
	3355 Benning Road NE (Gas Station)	Wanda Coach/ Starline Coach	New York City
	2305 Pennsylvania Av. SE	PandaNY	<u>FL</u> : Orlando, Jacksonville; <u>GA</u> : Atlanta, Savannah; <u>NC</u> : Greensboro, Raleigh, Charlotte; <u>NY</u> : New York City
Frederick County	Frederick MARC	BayRunner, Greyhound	<u>DC</u> : Washington; <u>IL</u> : Chicago; <u>MD</u> : Baltimore, BWI, Silver Spring; <u>OH</u> : Cleveland, Toledo; <u>PA</u> : Pittsburgh;
	Frederick Airport	BayRunner,	<u>MD</u> : Baltimore, BWI,





# Bus Stops and Providers (cont.)

County or city	Station	Providers	Select Destinations
Frederick County	Prospect Plaza (City of Frederick)	OurBus	Pittsburgh
Montgomery County	Bethesda (3 curbside stops)	FlixBus, Vamoose, TripperBus	<b><u>GA:</u></b> Atlanta; <b><u>MA:</u></b> Boston (area); <b><u>NC:</u></b> Charlotte; <b><u>NY:</u></b> New York City, Ithaca; <b><u>PA:</u></b> Pittsburgh; <b><u>VA:</u></b> Richmond, Tysons
	North Bethesda	OurBus,	<b><u>NY:</u></b> Ithaca; <b><u>PA:</u></b> Pittsburgh; <b><u>VA:</u></b> Blacksburg, Tysons
	Rockville	FlixBus	<b><u>MA:</u></b> Boston (area); <b><u>NY:</u></b> New York City, Ithaca
	Shady Grove Metro	OurBus	Pittsburgh
	Silver Spring	Greyhound	<b><u>DE:</u></b> Wilmington; <b><u>IL:</u></b> Chicago; <b><u>MD:</u></b> Baltimore; <b><u>NY:</u></b> New York City; <b><u>OH:</u></b> Cleveland; <b><u>PA:</u></b> Philadelphia, Pittsburgh; <b><u>VA:</u></b> Fredericksburg, Richmond



# Bus Stops and Providers (cont.)

County or city	Station	Providers	Select Destinations
	Silver Spring (Transit Center)	Peter Pan	<u>FL</u> : Orlando, Jacksonville; <u>MD</u> : Baltimore; <u>NY</u> : New York City; <u>PA</u> : Philadelphia
Prince George's County	College Park	Greyhound	<u>MD</u> : Baltimore ; <u>PA</u> : Philadelphia; <u>NJ</u> : Newark; <u>NY</u> : New York City; <u>DE</u> : Wilmington;
	Laurel	Greyhound	<u>MD</u> : Baltimore ; <u>PA</u> : Philadelphia; <u>NY</u> : New York City; <u>DE</u> : Wilmington;
	New Carrollton	Greyhound	<u>MD</u> : Baltimore ; <u>PA</u> : Philadelphia; <u>NY</u> : New York City; <u>DE</u> : Wilmington;
Arlington County	Rosslyn Metro (3 curbside stops)	FlixBus, Vamoose, Tripper Bus	<u>MA</u> : Boston (area); <u>NY</u> : New York City, Ithaca
Fairfax County	Lorton VRE Station	Vamoose	New York City



# Bus Stops and Providers (cont.)

County or city	Station	Providers	Select Destinations
Fairfax County	Backlick North Park and Ride	OurBus	Blacksburg
	Springfield Metro	Greyhound, Best Bus, OurBus	New York City
	Tysons Corner Metro	Go Bus	New York City
	Tysons - McLean Metro	OurBus	Harrisonburg, Roanoke, Blacksburg
	Vienna Metro	Go Bus, Best Bus, OurBus	New York City
	Woodbridge VRE	Greyhound	<u>DE</u> : Wilmington; <u>MD</u> : Baltimore; <u>NY</u> : New York City; <u>PA</u> : Philadelphia; <u>VA</u> : Richmond, Springfield
	Falls Church	West Falls Church Metro	Virginia Breeze/Megabus



# Bus Stops and Providers (cont.)

County or city	Station	Providers	Destinations
Loudoun County	Washington Dulles Int'l Airport (IAD)	Virginia Breeze/ Megabus	<b>NY:</b> New York City; <b>PA:</b> Philadelphia (via D.C. on Virginia Breeze); <b>VA:</b> Blacksburg, Charlottesville, Danville, Gainesville, Harrisonburg
Prince William County	Gainesville (University Park & Ride)	Virginia Breeze	Washington, D.C.
	Manassas (Cushing Rd Park & Ride)	OurBus, Best Bus, Go Bus	New York City



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