



WASHINGTON AREA
BUS TRANSFORMATION
PROJECT

bustransformationproject.com

Action Plan

Executive Summary

December 2019





A better way to **GET THERE**



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, our regional bus system is not keeping pace with this growth and riders' needs for frequent, reliable, and fast service.

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.

Other regions nationally and globally have transformed their bus systems to address similar challenges, decreasing congestion, improving reliability, and operating efficiently with frequent and fast service. It is past time for us to do the same: rapid, effective surface 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 they provide service in areas not accessible by Metrorail.

Over the course of the project, the region's residents and civic and advocacy groups were loud and clear on how to transform the bus system: **Transformation means fast, frequent, reliable, affordable service that feels like a unified system, and isn't beholden to geographic or funding boundaries.** The Bus Transformation Strategy provides a path forward as a coordinated regional strategy that addresses customer needs, leverages innovative technology, and fosters collaboration and coordination to make the strategy a reality.

This Action Plan highlights the activities required to achieve the changes envisioned for the region's bus system, and demanded by stakeholders and the public, over the next decade. Whereas the Bus Transformation Strategy document embodies the "what" for transforming bus, this Action Plan details the "how." These actions focus on achieving results that benefit bus riders and the whole region by providing frequent and reliable bus service on a consistent basis across the region, with improved speed and efficiency for riders.

Visit bustransformationproject.com to read more about the Strategy and the Action Plan.

Recommendations

Authored in partnership with stakeholders across the region, the **Bus Transformation Strategy** sets out an ambitious path forward. The strategy makes four key recommendations to achieve the goals of this effort.

THE FOUR MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS ARE:

- 1  **Provide frequent and convenient bus service** that connects communities and promotes housing affordability, regional equity, and economic growth.
- 2  **Give buses priority on roadways** to move people quickly and reliably.
- 3  **Create an excellent customer experience** to retain and increase ridership.
- 4  **Empower a publicly appointed task force** to transform bus and lead the implementation of a truly integrated regional system.

These four overarching recommendations encompass 26 specific recommendations that will require collaborative action from a number of agencies and stakeholders. With nine separate agencies providing local bus service in the region, along with multiple layers of state and local governments with adjacent responsibilities, no one entity can implement all of these recommendations on their own. **Agencies will need to take the initiative to lead some actions and partner together to achieve others.** Building on the excellent work already underway in our region, the Action Plan envisions a collaborative implementation approach that facilitates progress by sharing knowledge and best practices while leveraging the priorities and resources of each stakeholder.

Key Outcomes of Implementation

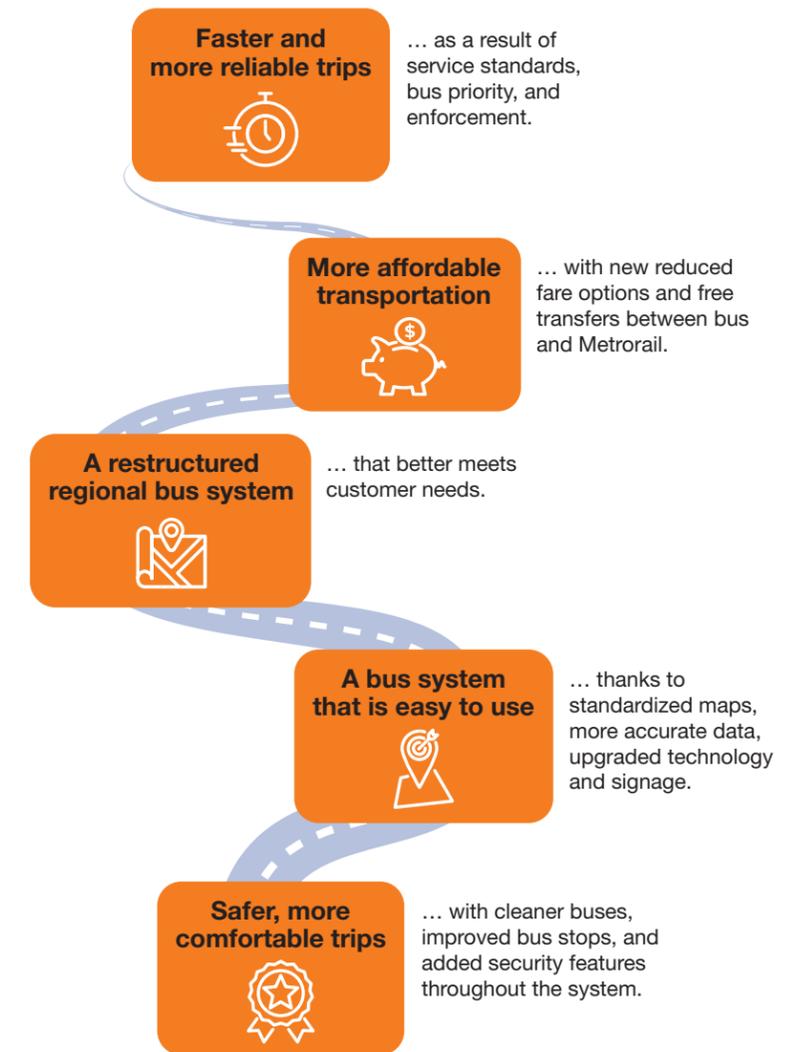
Concerted effort leads to a range of far-reaching regional benefits:

-  Satisfaction with transit service
-  Financial benefit
-  Environmental benefit

The region's system will also see many benefits:

-  Increased ridership
-  Higher operating cost efficiency
-  Better coordination in regional decision making
-  Increased transit mode share
-  Reduced environmental impact of transportation
-  Improved customer satisfaction
-  Less congestion on the region's roads

BY 2030 BUS RIDERS WILL SEE A VASTLY IMPROVED BUS SYSTEM:





Action Plan Overview

The Action Plan represents the detailed implementation plan for the Bus Transformation Strategy recommendations and prioritizes each activity for maximum impact over the 10-year implementation period.

The Action Plan is built around a set of milestones associated with the 26 recommendations—targets for achieving specific improvements by individual entities and all of the region’s bus providers. These milestones highlight how action by these agencies will result in a better bus system for the whole region.

All of the recommendations are critical to truly transforming bus in the region, but taken together they represent an extremely large undertaking that cannot all be addressed simultaneously. The Action Plan presents sequenced steps to implementation, based on each recommendation’s potential for transformation and the relative difficulty of implementation, to achieve maximum impact within a 10-year timeframe. **Considering activities already being pursued at the local, state, and regional levels, this Action Plan is designed to be flexible enough to encourage each jurisdiction and agency to implement their priorities while working collaboratively to implement regional priorities.** The specific actions are likely to be pursued and achieved in different manners in each of our region’s jurisdictions due to differences in the governance structures, processes, and progress that each has already made.

The following pages highlight the Action Plan schedule and priorities, with a focus on the **milestone achievements** that will transform the bus system in our region.

The recommendations have been divided into three categories based on how they should be implemented:

		
<p>Complete the Work Already Underway: Includes recommendations whose actions are already largely underway by the responsible parties.</p>	<p>Enhance Existing Efforts: Includes recommendations whose activities represent ongoing work that will need to be elevated through expanded funding or staffing existing programs and work activities.</p>	<p>Implement New Initiatives: Includes the remaining recommendations whose activities should be implemented as soon as possible by the involved actors. Current progress on these actions may vary widely between agencies, and some may already be underway at individual agencies.</p>

This Action Plan will allow the region to truly transform the bus into the mode of choice on the region’s roads and ensure that customers will be provided with high-quality service that takes them where they need to go quickly, reliably, and comfortably. This won’t be easy. It will take political will and require difficult decisions. While financial stewardship is an important tenet of the Strategy – and indeed many of the recommendations would result in operating cost savings, increased fare revenues from higher ridership, or both – **to successfully transform the bus, the Action Plan needs political leadership and financial resources.**

It is critical that in addition to completing the planning and technical work that is part of this Action Plan, the region must come together to ensure that **investment in bus and continued support of bus are at the forefront of regional conversations about transportation.**



Provide frequent and convenient bus service that connects communities and promotes housing affordability, regional equity, and economic growth.

PRIORITIES:

- A. Establish regional standards** across bus systems to provide consistent bus service, tailored by location and time of day.
- B.** Collect and **share standardized bus operations and performance data** across agencies to improve transparency and better plan bus service.
- C. Collaboratively restructure the region’s bus network** to create the most efficient and customer-focused bus system.
- D.** Cooperatively **assess Metrobus’ current service definitions and funding allocation formula** using the WMATA Board’s Authority.
- E.** Leverage existing efforts by transit providers to **operate flexible on-demand services** to supplement the fixed route network where and when warranted.

↑ 1%–3%

Cities such as Austin, Columbus, and Houston that have recently restructured or redesigned their bus service have stabilized ridership and in some instances, realized ridership increases from 1% to 3%.

48%

Today, 48% of the Washington area population has 15-minute or better service during peak periods. Applying service guidelines to ensure that service aligns with demand will increase the number of residents with access to frequent service and the number of jobs accessible via frequent service.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS



in 2020

- The WMATA Board will revise the definitions of “regional” bus service and associated funding formulas.
- Multiple agencies will pilot and implement flexible on-demand service.
- The region will adopt minimum service standards tailored by land use and time of day.



in 2021

- Data sharing agreements between bus providers will be implemented.
- The bus system restructuring effort for the region will begin.



by 2025

- Data about all the regional bus providers will be available in one place.
- The new restructured regional bus system will be operational.
- Flexible, on-demand service will be provided in the areas and times of day where it makes the most sense, widening the reach of the transit system throughout the region.

BENEFITS UNLOCKED

Customers will have:

- a more seamless experience using the region’s transit system
- bus service that better matches their needs and demands
- better access to frequent bus service

The region’s bus system will see:

- increased ridership
- higher operating cost efficiency
- improved customer satisfaction
- less congestion on the region’s roads
- reduced environmental impact of transportation

2



Give buses priority on roadways to move people quickly and reliably.

PRIORITIES:

- F.** Obtain commitments from state and local agencies (including roadway owners) to **adopt consistent guidelines**, bolster jurisdictional capital spending, and expedite coordinated implementation of bus priority.
- G.** Implement enforcement policies that **establish bus priority** and result in reliable and fast service.
- H.** Establish a capital program at WMATA that **supports accelerated implementation of bus priority projects**, including BRT.
- I.** Support regional congestion mitigation efforts that bolster bus priority and **move more people more efficiently**.

\$30M

Improving bus speeds to 2008 levels would enable Metrobus to recoup much of the \$30M that is lost annually to congestion and could result in ridership increases of 7%.

↑10%

With transit signal priority (TSP), routes outside of downtown DC have shown runtime improvements of greater than 10% and schedule reliability has shown improvements by about 5%.

↓85%

In London, automated bus lane enforcement reduced bus lane violations by 85%.

Up to 31%

New York City Select Bus Service showed travel time improvement averages of 13% to 23% and 10% to 31% increases in ridership.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS



in 2020

- The region will commit to pursuing area-appropriate bus priority treatments at the policy level.
- The region will develop an implementation-ready enforcement program for bus priority.



in 2021

- WMATA will develop a capital program for implementing bus priority in the region.



by 2025

- The region will have established guidelines for where and how bus priority should be implemented.
- To appropriately enforce bus priority, the necessary equipment will have been acquired and necessary legislation will have been enacted by the appropriate state and local bodies.
- Efforts to support and implement congestion pricing in the region will be moving forward.
- Implementation of bus priority projects around the region will be underway.

BENEFITS UNLOCKED

Customers will have:

- Faster and more reliable trips

The region's bus system will see:

- Increased ridership
- Higher operating cost efficiency
- Improved customer satisfaction
- Less congestion on the region's roads
- Reduced environmental impact of transportation

3



Create an excellent customer experience to retain and increase ridership.

PRIORITIES:

Equip riders with high-quality, accurate, and easily accessible information to plan a trip.

- J.** Ensure that **accurate, real-time service information** for all providers is available in one place.
- K.** Make bus service easy to understand with legible maps and **customer-friendly route names** across providers.
- L.** **Expand marketing efforts** to enhance visibility of bus options and benefits.

Make paying bus fares easier.

- M.** Provide **full transfer discount** between local bus and Metrorail.
- N.** Provide **reduced fare options** for low-income riders.
- O.** Create a **mobile solution** to plan and pay for trips in one place.
- P.** Develop **regional passes** that work across all providers, and make bus fares clear and understandable.
- Q.** **Incentivize more employers** to offer transit benefits.

15,000

An increase in 15,000 weekday transit riders could result by creating a more seamless fare structure between Metro and local bus providers.

↑2%

Providing accurate real-time information increased ridership by 2% in San Francisco, New York, and Chicago. They also realized increased customer satisfaction, increased customers' feelings of safety and security, and reduced perceived wait times.

↑20%

Across the WMATA Compact area, some 350,000 residents (8.5% of the total population) live below the poverty line, and low-income people make up about 25% of weekday passenger trips (rail + bus). A 50% decrease in fares could generate a 20% increase in ridership.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS



in 2020

- Mobile payment will be enabled on local buses in the region.
- All bus providers in the region will have a plan for publishing GTFS-Real Time bus data.
- Transfers between Metrorail and Metrobus will be free.
- DC will pilot a low-income fare product for transit passengers.



in 2021

- GTFS-Real Time data will be available for all bus providers in the region.
- Transfers between Metrorail and all local bus services will be free.
- The region will begin deploying easier to understand print and electronic maps.
- The region and the jurisdictions will develop plans to encourage more employers to offer transit benefits to bus riders.



by 2025

- Bus routes across the region will have a cohesive, easy to use numbering scheme.
- Low-income fare products will be available in all jurisdictions.
- WMATA will have an upgraded mobile solution that allows people to plan and pay for all their local bus and Metrorail trips in the region.
- All regional bus providers will accept WMATA's Monthly Unlimited Passes and other types of unlimited bus passes.

BENEFITS UNLOCKED

Customers will have:

- A more seamless experience using the region's transit system
- Less expensive trips, especially for low-income passengers
- Accurate, easy-to-use, accessible information that makes it easy to use the region's transit system

The region's bus system will see:

- Increased ridership
- Improved customer satisfaction
- Less congestion on the region's roads
- Reduced environmental impact of transportation

3

(continued)



Create an excellent customer experience to retain and increase ridership.

PRIORITIES:

Make it safer and more pleasant to ride the bus.

- R.** Make **bus stops and shelters** safe, comfortable, accessible, and technology-enabled.
- S.** Advance technology and programs that **improve the safety** of everyone on board by partnering with riders, bus operators, and unions.
- T.** Empower front-line staff to provide **exceptional customer service**.
- U.** Ensure that all buses meet the highest standards of **comfort and cleanliness**.

Pursue innovation and bus improvement.

- V.** Advance new vehicle technologies to improve bus' **environmental footprint and efficiency**, such as electric buses and automation.
- W.** Establish a Regional Mobility Innovation Lab to systematically **share knowledge and accelerate improvements** such as service provision, customer experience, and bus operator and passenger safety.

↓ 50%

On-board monitors showing live CCTV footage of the vehicle to passengers were added to some Metrobuses, which resulted in a reduction in customer complaints by over 50% and criminal incidents logged by the control center by 30%.

128,000

Transitioning to a battery electric bus fleet could reduce Metrobus emissions by almost 128,000 metric tons of CO₂e annually by 2040, the equivalent of almost 100,000 passenger vehicles driven for 1 year.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS



in 2021

- New customer service training programs will be developed for transit staff.
- Best practices for bus cleanliness will be established.



by 2025

- Bus will be marketed more effectively around the region, with an appropriate portion of operating costs spent on marketing efforts.
- Responsible parties will have developed plans and identified funding to ensure that all bus stops are ADA accessible and meet jurisdiction's amenity guidelines by 2030.
- All transit providers will be implementing their plans to equip buses with enhanced safety equipment.
- All transit providers will have implemented improved customer service training programs and other policies that ensure best-in-class customer service.
- All providers will have implemented improved bus cleaning programs, ensuring that buses throughout the region have clean interiors and exteriors.
- Bus providers across the region will be in the process of implementing full zero emission vehicle fleets and supporting facilities.
- The Regional Mobility Innovation Lab will have successfully launched.



by 2030

- All bus stops in the region will meet jurisdictional guidelines for access, amenities, and safety.
- Buses will be safer for passengers and bus drivers and be fully equipped with the best safety and security features.

BENEFITS UNLOCKED

Customers will have:

- A more seamless experience using the region's transit system
- Safer and more comfortable experience when riding and waiting for the bus

The region's bus system will see:

- Increased ridership
- Improved customer satisfaction
- Less congestion on the region's roads
- Reduced environmental impact of transportation
- Higher operating cost efficiency

4



Empower a publicly appointed Task Force to transform bus and lead the implementation of a truly integrated regional system.

PRIORITIES:

- X.** Convene a Task Force to **ensure implementation** of the Strategy and **provide long-term leadership** for the region's bus system.
- Y.** Facilitate an independently published **annual progress report** on Bus Transformation Strategy implementation and a **bus performance scorecard** to track the level of service delivered to customers.
- Z.** **Develop a platform for rider feedback**, administered by the task force, and an ongoing mechanism for incorporating feedback into regular revisions of the Strategy recommendations.



With increased visibility of bus performance, progress on bus transformation, and expanding implementation of bus priority treatments across the region, the profile of bus is expected to grow among regional decision makers, and investment in priority treatments and other critical improvements is expected to increase.

8,800

The Bus Transformation Strategy was shaped through the priorities and preferences of over 8,800 people who responded to surveys and attended events. During implementation, public input will continue to be a crucial part of the process in the form of a regional rider feedback platform.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS



in 2021

- The region will come to consensus on a formal process that elevates the role of bus in regional transportation plans and ensures that all local bus providers are moving forward in the same direction.
- The first Bus Transformation Progress Report will be published.
- The first annual Bus Performance Scorecard will be published by an independent entity.
- The region's Rider Feedback Platform will be launched to provide a single touchpoint for riders to provide comments on the bus system.



by 2025

- This Action Plan will have been revised to reflect progress made and new priorities and opportunities.

BENEFITS UNLOCKED

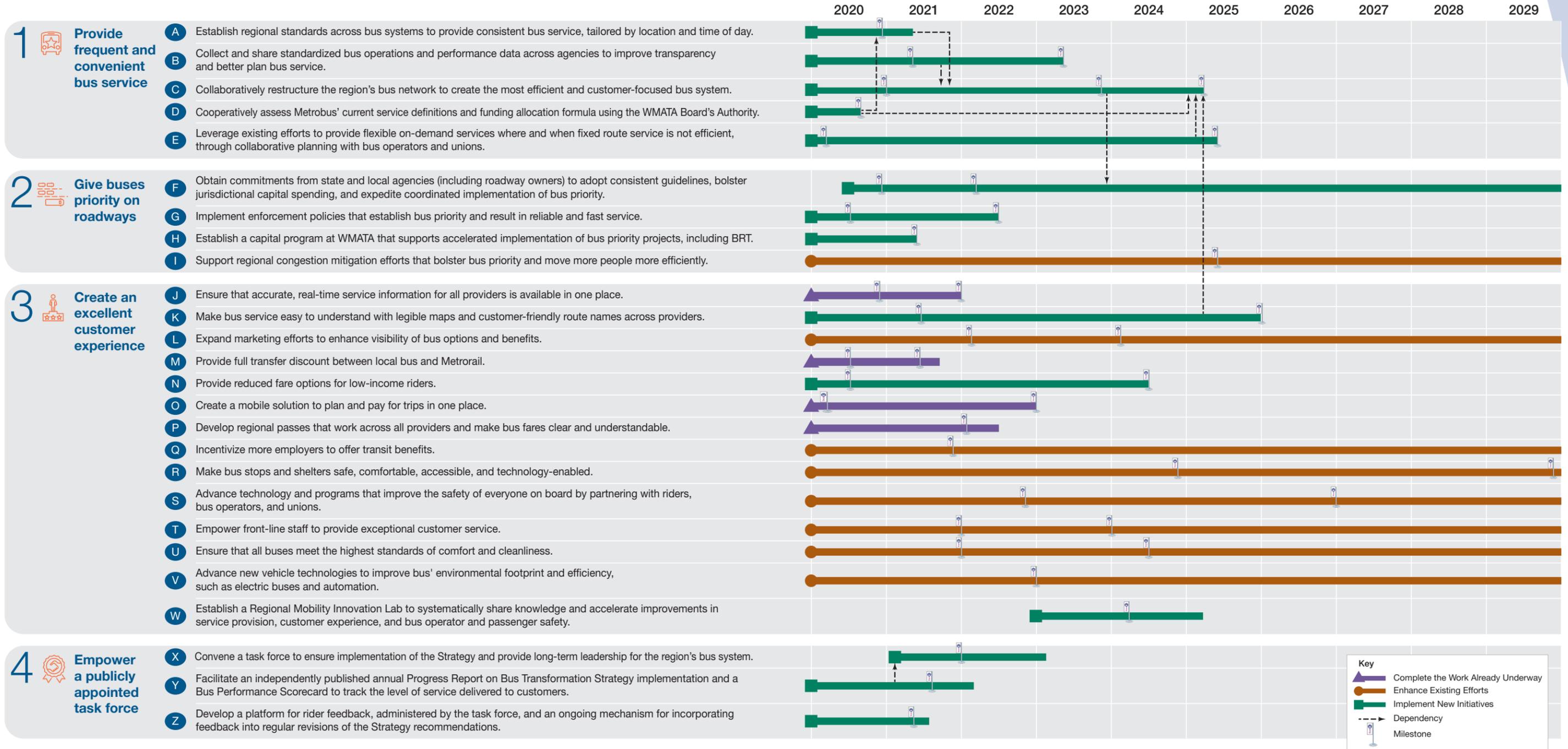
Customers will have:

- A more seamless experience using the region's transit system
- A voice in shaping the Bus Transformation Strategy as it evolves

The region's bus system will see:

- Improved customer satisfaction
- Less congestion on the region's roads
- Better coordination in regional decision making

Action Plan



Collaboration

Engagement has been a cornerstone of this project from the beginning!

Engagement activities include:

- 140** Participants at the Kickoff Summit
- +8,800** Public survey responses to date
- 13** Metrobus division engagement events
- 4** Focus groups
- 23** ESC meetings
- 16** Technical Team meetings
- 8** SAP meetings
- 45** External project briefings
- 3** Public open house events
- 33** Pop-up events
- 14** WMATA Leadership Team briefings
- 285** Social media postings
- 312,000** People reached via social media

Creating a sustainable surface transportation future depends on collaboration between bus providers and 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?

Immense expertise within this region has guided the development of this strategy. This strategy has relied on extensive input 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 (SAP)

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 9,000 survey responses, both on-line and on-site at locations throughout the region.

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 Action Plan represents the end of the first phase of the Bus Transformation Project, but the work doesn't end here.

Now the hard work begins. Each transit provider, and many other entities in the region, have a role to play in implementing this Action Plan over the next 10 years. In order to unlock the benefits of an improved bus system, each agency will need to identify areas in which they can **lead, support, or partner** with other agencies to advance these recommendations.

Support across all recommendations and activities will be important to the Bus Transformation Strategy's successful implementation. Different agencies may have opportunities to lead in different areas. The lists below are not exhaustive, but provides some guidance for groups that want to push Bus Transformation forward.

WMATA	ALL BUS PROVIDERS:	ROADWAY OWNERS	LOCAL & STATE GOVERNMENTS	OTHER REGIONAL ENTITIES
✓ C	✓ A	✓ F	✓ F	✓ L
✓ D	✓ B	✓ G	✓ G	✓ Q
✓ H	✓ C	✓ I	✓ I	✓ W
✓ M	✓ E	✓ R	✓ M	✓ X
✓ O	✓ J		✓ N	✓ Y
✓ P	✓ K		✓ Q	✓ Z
	✓ L		✓ X	
	✓ R			
	✓ S			
	✓ T			
	✓ U			
	✓ V			



Charting Progress

Where will we be a year from now? Two years from now? Ten years?

This Action Plan has defined an aggressive but feasible path towards the bus system this region needs. But the Action Plan is intended to be a living document that will adapt to progress and change. It has been developed in collaboration with the project Technical Team, and the prioritization process is documented in a transparent manner—all with the intent that the contents can be updated to reflect progress and change from year to year.

Progress made on implementation and the resulting benefits will be tracked regularly to highlight the region’s progress to date and areas where more support is needed. How many of our region’s goals can we achieve? How much better can we make our bus system?

Working together, we can transform bus into the mode of choice on the region’s roads. This sample Progress Report shows how the region could grade itself on its progress in implementing the Bus Transformation Strategy next year.

RECOMMENDATION	ACTION PLAN TIMING	LEAD ACTOR(S)	SUPPORTING ACTOR(S)	STATUS	MILESTONE CHECK
J  Create an excellent customer service experience to retain and increase ridership.	2020-2022	Bus providers, including WMATA	Working group to facilitate regional coordination	In-progress and on track	2020 milestone reached (all providers have plans for GTFS-RT); 2021 milestone on track (GTFS-RT available for all providers)
K Make bus service easy to understand with legible maps and customer-friendly route names across providers.	2020-2025	Bus providers, including WMATA	Bus system restructuring workgroup (1C) to facilitate some action steps	In-progress but delayed	2021 milestone (easier to understand print and electronic maps) partially delayed
L Expand marketing efforts to enhance visibility of bus options and benefits.	2020-2030, and ongoing	Bus providers, including WMATA	Support from jurisdictions and independent organizations	Kickoff behind schedule	2022 milestone (bus will be marketed more effectively around the region) will likely be missed
W Establish a Regional Mobility Innovation Lab to systematically share knowledge and accelerate improvements in service provision,	2023-2025	Working group comprised of bus providers, including WMATA, and	State and local gov’t; roadway operating agencies	Not yet initiated	Not scheduled to start until 2023

EXECUTIVE STEERING COMMITTEE

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THIS PROJECT WILL TRANSFORM BUS SERVICE...

from

Wondering when the bus will come



MAKE BUS THE EASY FIRST CHOICE



to

Frequent and predictable

from

Slow and stuck in traffic



PRIORITIZE BUSES ON MAJOR ROADWAYS



to

Fast trips where you want to go

from

Last resort



FOCUS ON THE CUSTOMER



to

Appealing and desirable

from

Region divided



STRENGTHEN REGIONAL COOPERATION TO TRANSFORM THE BUS SYSTEM



to

Stronger together

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE REGION'S BUS SYSTEM

- Final Strategy
- Draft Strategy and Recommendations
- Bus System Today
- Public Input Survey Report
- Project Overview
- Strategic Considerations

bustransformationproject.com/resources/#documents

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