

# City of Alexandria, Virginia

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## MEMORANDUM

DATE: JUNE 19, 2019

TO: MEMBERS OF THE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

FROM: HILLARY ORR, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, T&ES

SUBJECT: AGENDA ITEM #8 – WMATA BUS TRANSFORMATION PROJECT

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**ISSUE:** WMATA is seeking feedback on the draft Bus Transformation Project recommendations which were released in May.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the Commission hear the draft Bus Transformation Project recommendations and provide written feedback to WMATA.

**BACKGROUND:** On May 6th the WMATA-led project team released a Draft Bus Transformation Strategy Report outlining recommendations to improve the Washington region's bus network. The Bus Transformation Project is focused on local bus service in the WMATA compact area region, which includes nine bus service providers. The Draft Strategy Report identified congestion, affordability and mobility as challenges facing the region and identified ways to meet those challenges. The project team will refine the recommendations and develop an implementation plan in a final report based on input from stakeholders and the public.

The project is managed by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority under direction from an Executive Steering Committee. Senior Leadership from DASH and the Transportation & Environmental Services are members of the Strategy Advisory Committee. Staff from DASH and the City are members of the Technical Committee.

The project has three goals, developed in collaboration with the committees:

1. Provide better service and a better customer experience for all riders
2. Identify the best role for bus service amidst rapidly changing technology and travel preferences
3. Increase efficiency to provide better results for customers.

Strategies fall under 6 categories:

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 is the most fiscally responsible way to move the most people quickly and reliably.
3. Frequent and convenient bus service is fundamental to accessing opportunity, building an equitable region, and ensuring high quality of life.
4. Balance local and regional operator responsibilities by positioning local bus systems to meet their jurisdictional needs and the regional bus system to meet regional needs and deliver regional benefits.
5. Optimize back-office functions through sharing, streamlining and shared innovation by consolidating regional resources and devoting more resources to operating bus service.
6. Customers in a regional with multiple bus providers need a regional steward to transform the bus system.

The [Executive Summary](#) includes each of the recommendations under each strategy. The complete [Draft Strategy](#) contains more information about each specific recommendation.

**DISCUSSION:** As participants in the process, staff provided feedback at a listening session held June 3 with the Project Team. Staff also provided the enclosed written feedback outlining general support for the plan and some specific areas of concern, signed by both the DASH General Manager and the Director of the Department of Transportation & Environmental Services (Attachment A).

Staff supports the broad principles outlined in the plan and has worked to implement many of the recommendations locally – including the development of a DASH app, dedicated bus corridors and transit signal priority, and the development of a bus network redesign to reconsider routes and service frequencies.

Staff's major area of concern is with the recommendation under strategy 4 to reallocate routes to local providers based on a set of criteria that would transition 140 routes from WMATA to local service providers, including twelve in Alexandria based on applying the proposed criteria to current routes. Staff recommends that the proposed criteria be reconsidered as part of a separate process and after a bus network redesign (strategy 3) examines bus service in the region. This deferment would allow for more collective thought and analysis on the logic and impacts of any reallocation of operators and would also be more likely ensure that optimal service for riders is at the forefront of a bus network analysis. Staff also recommends that the recommendations of the Alexandria Transit Vision (ATV) are a major input in the development of the proposed regional bus network redesign.

WMATA is looking for feedback on priorities for near term implementation and aspects to highlight more strongly in the final plan. The Transportation Commission may submit feedback on these items and any additional areas of support or concern.

**Attachment 1:** City of Alexandria Comments on Bus Transformation Project  
Recommendations, June 5, 2019.