



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES
Transportation Planning Division
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June 5, 2019

Bus Transformation Project Team
c/o NeoNiche Strategies
4501 Ford Avenue, Suite #501
Alexandria, Virginia 223102

Re: Comments on Draft Bus Transformation Project Recommendations

Dear Bus Transformation Project Team:

The City of Alexandria and DASH would like to thank WMATA and the consultant team for involving the City in the Bus Transformation Project process and providing this opportunity to comment on the draft recommendations. The City recognizes that the region cannot build its way out of congestion and that a transformation of the bus mode represents the least expensive and most impactful way to address the mobility needs of our region's residents and visitors.

The City supports many of the recommendations in the draft strategy document and has already been advancing many of these strategies within the City in coordination with WMATA. However, we would like to provide the following comments and suggestions to help shape the final recommendations and regional implementation:

Strategy 1: The City supports a more streamlined fare structure and more useful and equitable pass products in order to make the system more accessible and easier to use for all users. However, we will need to ensure that the cost impacts of these efforts are distributed fairly.

Strategy 2: The City supports the recommendations for bus transit priority measures under Strategy 2. The City has led the effort to implement bus rapid transit (BRT) in the region, through a partnership with Arlington County on the Metroway service, and is working to advance two other BRT corridors within the City. The City and DASH are also in the process of implementing a city-wide network of Transit Signal Priority (TSP) systems. A regional framework for advancing bus priority more broadly and where data indicates it is most important will ensure positive outcomes for our riders.

Strategy 3 (A) and 4: The City has reservations about the proposal to take over the operation of additional routes. In short, the City does not believe that this study is the proper mechanism to reassign routes to different providers and does not agree with all of the proposals and assumptions for doing so.

Specifically, the City has concerns that the proposed criteria would result in multi-jurisdictional routes that likely warrant being operated by a regional provider, such as the 10B and 25B which operate between major centers of activity in both Alexandria and Arlington.

Beyond the criteria, the cost savings articulated in the strategy document do not reflect actual costs, as costs are increasing to operate service for many jurisdictions. Moreover, the need to operate out of additional facilities due to an increase in fleet size will have significant impacts on operations that do not seem to be taken into account in the study.

The City therefore recommends that if WMATA wishes to re-designate routes, the final set of criteria are not established until after both the bus network plan in Strategy 3 and a more detailed analysis of the cost implications and benefits for all parties are developed.

Lastly, the City of Alexandria is currently conducting a bus network redesign of its own, the Alexandria Transit Vision Plan, to realign all routes in Alexandria most efficiently to meet the needs of residents. The core goals and objective of this ATV Plan are in alignment with the goals and objectives of the Bus Transformation Project, and Planning staff from WMATA and other partner agencies have been directly involved in the development of the ATV network designs. Based on this, the City of Alexandria and DASH strongly recommend that WMATA use the final ATV Plan recommendations for Alexandria as a key input for the development of the broader network redesign.

Strategy 5 (A): While the City supports improvements in efficiencies, the cost savings achieved by streamlining back office functions may result in more challenges than the cost savings are worth. The \$11 million estimate relative to WMATA's \$1.1 billion operating budget is fairly insignificant. WMATA should weigh the benefits versus the costs before advancing this recommendation.

Strategy 6: Regional coordination and support will be necessary to implement the strategies in the Bus Transformation Project. The City recommends building off existing structures and mechanisms wherever possible to achieve the greatest likelihood of success.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide feedback. We look forward to working with you as this process advances into implementation.

Sincerely,



Yon Lambert
Director of Transportation & Environmental Services
City of Alexandria



Josh Baker
General Manager
DASH