

# GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

## ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION 3A



### Resolution Regarding WMATA FY2025 Budget

We appreciate the effort that WMATA and local and state leaders have been making to provide additional funds for the regional transit system to maintain effective operations in FY2025. It seems clear that WMATA, the three jurisdictions, communities and riders do not want to see the dramatic reductions in spending and services that would be necessary to deal with a \$750 million shortfall in funding, as the Docket continues to show. The elimination of over half the transit services would create unacceptable consequences for hundreds of thousands of residents, workers and visitors, business establishments and institutions, and would jeopardize the long-term function and viability of public transportation in the Washington, DC, metropolitan area.

The majority of residents in our ANC do not live in convenient walking distance from a Metrorail station so our area is highly dependent on quality bus service. If WMATA made the cuts in bus service proposed in the December 2023 draft budget (and repeated in the current Docket), would significantly reduce the quality of life, mobility and access for a large share of the individuals trying to travel to and from our area for the full range of purposes, and remove one of the primary reasons for many people to choose to locate in the area. Those changes would include:

- complete loss of bus service on the 96 and M4 and D2 routes
- elimination of weekend service on the N2/N4/N6 route
- truncation of the 33 route at Foggy Bottom/Potomac Park rather than Federal Triangle/Archives which are the current terminus, which would force most riders bound to downtown to make a transfer or walk a considerable distance to their destination and would end all direct bus-to-bus transfers between upper Northwest and either Southwest or Southeast Washington.

We have attached more detailed information on the routes our constituents use and need.

We want to emphasize that with additional funding for FY2025, WMATA needs and must work urgently to maintain essential services at reasonable fares, and keep the foundation of the public transportation system functioning as the basis for building up and improving future services, meeting transportation and energy and climate goals, and continuing to retain and increase the ridership base.

It is very important not to diminish or destroy the utility of the Metrobus services in particular in a short-term crisis, when the effect could be losing long-term ridership and confidence and trust in the WMATA system as a whole.

In addition, WMATA continues to plan for moving forward with its “Better Bus Initiative” and is still working toward issuing a revised “Visionary Network” map for the future regional bus system. WMATA committed to releasing the new map, based on the extensive and sweeping comments received on the preliminary network map in spring 2023. WMATA also has promised to conduct additional community engagement and provide for a public comment period on the new network map, as well as the expected Year One adjustments to begin implementing the Better Bus plans some time in calendar year 2024. It is essential that WMATA carry out those commitments as it would other public comment processes for the budget, and pay close attention to the comments. This is not just a one-year budget proposal, it is the roadmap for the next 30 years and must be carefully considered, with the needs of current riders and future riders in mind.

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**Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners (January 1, 2023-December 31, 2024)** [www.anc3a.org](http://www.anc3a.org)

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Thaddeus Bradley-Lewis

Judy Havemann

Hans Miller

Jeremy Del Moral

Ann Lane Mladinov

Our DC Councilmember Matt Frumin provided clear and strong comments on the potential impacts of major losses in bus service in the preliminary Network Map, and we hope that the revised map will not make the same devastating reductions in service that we saw in the preliminary map.

WMATA should not be carrying out short-term changes that will jeopardize the future functioning and utility of the regional transit system. When WMATA develops an operational plan to go along with the revised budget--we hope with the promised \$480 million in hand from the three jurisdictions--the staff and Board need to adopt a set of operating changes that will not decimate the system by terminating vital bus services that our neighborhoods need and the transit network as a whole needs in order to keep functioning as an effective regional system. That includes fares and services. Sharp rate increases will also hurt riders who most need economical service.

When WMATA completes the FY 2025 budget and focuses on the revised network map and proposed Year One changes to be implemented in FY2025 under the Better Bus Initiative, it will be just as important for the staff and Board to follow the same principles. Many of the changes in the December 2023 Budget and in the Better Bus Preliminary Visionary Network have involved cutting back key services to neighborhoods that do not have acceptable public transit alternatives for reaching to and from important points. That does not inspire confidence in WMATA's understanding of the vital role these buses play in providing access and mobility to people who have made their lives in the neighborhood, made investments in living there, and rely on public transit because they do not have a private vehicle and/or do not have safe and economical alternatives. The same is true in all the wards, particularly around the edges of the District, where the topography is hilly and streets often curve to follow the ridges and contours of the hills.

Efforts to "straighten out bus routes" may sound reasonable but too often those general statements end up meaning elimination of neighborhood buses if they have hills and/or multiple turns onto small residential streets--even where the residential streets are lined with a dense cluster of row homes and apartments. That includes a number of Metrobus routes serving our area, in fact all but the lines on Wisconsin Avenue, Connecticut Avenue, and maybe Massachusetts Avenue. Paring back to service on those major streets is not enough to serve all the far-flung neighborhoods, including many that currently have bus service, have multi-family dwellings including buildings that are not high income, and have many people who want and need transit in order to meet their transportation requirements. Cutting out these services is not the way to a better future for neighborhoods and households' health and well-being, for the District's housing policy and economy, education and employment, or for the environment and energy conservation.

Bus service is the foundation of the transit system and the essential transportation for reaching the "grass roots" customers (many of whom are seniors or have mobility challenges, cannot walk long distances or ride bicycles or scooters, especially with parcels, with children, and/or in inclement weather). That's the reality, and wishing for straight routes and a rectilinear network of bus lines is not going to meet all those needs adequately to satisfy District goals and objectives.

The DC Circulator is not designed to serve that kind of market either. It is the job of the regional transit system to serve medium-size markets when no other form of public transportation can. Those routes may not be as remunerative as a high frequency bus line on a major arterial. But the network of bus lines feeds Metrorail and also feeds the bus lines on priority corridors. Local bus routes make it possible for people to live in the apartments off the main corridors, along Glover Archbold Park, Cathedral Avenue, etc., and get to stores and schools and other establishments that are not on the main streets. WMATA cannot abandon all of these routes and still be an effective, people-centered transit system.

It is also vitally important to have a sense about the prospects for the future of the transit system. Multi-family developments are continuing to go in on main arterials while at the same time small apartment and condominium buildings are adding units and ADUs are being built throughout the neighborhoods. The District is still coming out of the COVID-19 period when so many residents were working from home. Many workplaces are asking employees to come to the office just two days a week, but that is changing. Year One of a transformative bus network plan is not the best time to cut off the arms of your feeder network because pre-COVID-19 riders are still adjusting and deciding about returning to work. It can be hard to recapture bus riders after service is removed. They lose their habit of using public transit and they lose their faith in public transit.

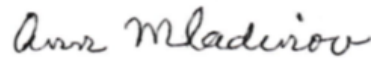
BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

- WMATA should not adopt the devastating cuts in Metrobus services that were proposed in the December 2023 budget, either in the revised FY2025 budget or in subsequent operating changes within the Better Bus process. That includes the drastic changes affecting our area, including elimination of the 96, M4, D2, D6, and G2; elimination of weekend service on the N-line; and truncation of the 31/33 at Foggy Bottom/Potomac Park that were included in the Docket released on February 8. Those changes would leave many people and neighborhoods without vital public transit service, and hurt the overall transit network and transportation system, cutting off connections and forcing more people either to use private motor vehicles or car-hire services or be left with no reasonable transportation options at prices they can afford.
- WMATA must assure that it maintains the vital Metrobus services that riders now rely on throughout our area, not only on major arterials but also serving high density residential neighborhoods that have long been bus-dependent, to make it possible for people to reach key destinations by transit, whether for work, school, shopping, medical appointments, recreation, etc. Those are principles WMATA has expressed in the budget documents and the Better Bus Initiative, and should remain top priorities.
- WMATA must also meet its commitment to issue its revised Better Bus "Visionary Network" for full public comment and take the comments into account in any map of the future system that it decides to implement. As part of that public review and comment process, WMATA should also reflect public comments in its recommendations for "Year One" changes under the Better Bus Initiative, and take care not to eliminate or reduce vital lines needed for current and future riders.

We hope WMATA will continue to hear the voices and the needs of the people they serve, and work with the District and the other jurisdictions to shore up the funding for the transit system and ensure that WMATA services can be maintained and improved for the short and long term.



Chair



Secretary

This resolution was approved by the Commission by a vote of 4 - 0 at a duly noticed public meeting on February 20, 2024, at which a quorum was present. (Three of the five Commissioners constitute a quorum.) By the same vote, the Commission designated the Chair or his designee(s) to represent the Commission on this matter.