



COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING
1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, NW
WASHINGTON, DC 20004

MATTHEW FRUMIN
Councilmember, Ward 3

COMMITTEE MEMBER
Executive Administration and Labor
Facilities and Family Services
Hospital and Health Equity
Housing
Transportation and the Environment

June 30, 2023

Randy Clarke
General Manager and CEO
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
300 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024

Via e-mail

Dear Mr. Clarke,

Thank you for launching the Better Bus initiative to develop a Visionary Network plan that provides excellent bus service to residents across the DC region. **I write to submit my recommendations regarding WMATA's Better Bus Visionary Network plan on behalf of Ward 3 residents.** These recommendations were crafted after robust community engagement with Ward 3 neighbors, reflecting the feedback of more than 300 constituents and each Advisory Neighborhood Commission. Their comments are attached.

The proposal includes many elements that would serve the DC region's bus transit needs more effectively than current Metrobus service. If it were implemented, the proposal could expand service at all hours, improve certain crosstown connections, and extend service beyond jurisdictional borders for residents in much of the District. **The draft plan, however, would also lead to the elimination or significant changes to several routes – particularly routes serving internal communities tucked away a distance from major corridors. This could lead to reduced frequency and limited access to schools, employment centers, commercial districts, Metrorail transfers, and certain important crosstown routes.** A truly visionary Better Bus network would prioritize critical needs like improved frequency, reliability, connectivity, and equity for residents traveling to and from the far Northwest portion of the city.

WMATA expects its Visionary Network proposal to significantly improve Metrobus service to DC residents, ensuring 420% more routes will have 20-minute service and 20% more trips can be made conveniently by transit. The draft plan does succeed in including new connections in Ward 3; however, many came at the expense of existing connections. New bus transit connections in Ward 3 include:

- all-day connections from Palisades to the new MacArthur High School,

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- expanded access to Sibley Memorial Hospital,
- extension of Connecticut/Wisconsin Avenue bus service to Bethesda, and
- 24-hour service along Wisconsin Avenue.

These improvements are welcome, but frequent service is needed to connect Ward 3 to other areas of the city. Under the draft plan, however, certain Ward 3 neighborhoods could instead experience poorer access to hospitals, schools, employment, and transit hubs and an effective reduction in frequency along multiple corridors. Similarly, DC residents who work in Ward 3 but live in other neighborhoods will have more difficulty reaching their destination from other areas of the city, especially those not located on Metrorail's Red Line. In the Visionary Network proposal, some Ward 3 neighborhoods remain almost entirely disconnected from transit service and many seniors and people with disabilities must walk long distances across areas with difficult topography to reach restructured bus lines. While not exhaustive, these recommendations would enable reliable, frequent, well-connected service for all of Ward 3:

1. **Adjust routing and frequency of the proposed DC202 line to maintain service along the full N-series corridor.**
2. **Preserve the Metrobus route to interior Glover Park and its direct service to Downtown.**
3. **Ensure frequent service from Palisades to its business district, Downtown, and Metrorail stations.**
4. **Support adequate crosstown connectivity to aid housing and job growth.**
5. **Prevent a reduction in connectivity on the Connecticut Avenue NW corridor.**
6. **Scale up bus frequency on Wisconsin Avenue NW to accommodate extraordinary existing demand and housing growth.**
7. **Design a bus route to provide local access to the entire MacArthur High School catchment area that runs frequently before and after school hours.**

I understand that throughout the remainder of the year, WMATA will consider community feedback before airing a revised draft plan, again for public comment. **In addition to implementing these recommendations for an improved Visionary Network plan, WMATA should expand its community outreach campaign for its Phase 3 stage to ensure all neighbors have an opportunity to share meaningful feedback about the FY25 and long-term proposals.** I was pleased that WMATA agreed, at my request, to extend the Phase 1 comment period. That said, in my May 19 letter, I also emphasized the need to ensure the public comment process is accessible for all users. I reiterate my request that WMATA adds additional channels for providing feedback, including via email and phone, to supplement the features on the Better Bus website. WMATA must incorporate





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feedback from residents with limited technological abilities or internet access as it works to finalize an equitable Visionary Network draft.

The Better Bus Visionary Network process offers a historic opportunity. Let's work together to craft and fund a truly visionary network that can be transformative for our city and region.

Fundamentally, I believe that Ward 3 and the District require a future-focused Metrobus system that serves all neighborhoods adequately, reliably, and equitably. I recognize that achieving a truly Visionary Network will require continued partnership between WMATA and various jurisdictions. To accomplish this, the Council needs additional information about the proposal and its elements, including its true cost, a reasonable timeline for implementation, and WMATA's ability to scale up bus operators and other required personnel.

This information will be critical because even as we are considering the Visionary Network proposals, WMATA faces a fiscal cliff that poses a disastrous risk for the regional economy and its transportation offerings. As the compact jurisdictions and federal government partner to rectify the financing shortfall, I hope they will act simultaneously to expand public transit service and fund the Visionary Network plan. To do that, we will need a clear sense of potential costs and possibilities. **WMATA is the economic lifeblood of the region. I fully intend to use the coming period to press for truly transformative bus service and to urge the District, Maryland and Virginia to think big in this moment. It is my hope that we can all work together to ensure both an aggressive plan for service and a deep, joint commitment to ensure full and stable funding.**

Thank you for considering my recommendations, which will support a truly visionary bus network for Ward 3. Please contact Christian Damiana at cdamiana@dccouncil.gov with any questions regarding the attached recommendations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Matthew Frumin".

Matt Frumin
DC Councilmember for Ward 3

cc: Peter Cafiero, Managing Director, Inter-Modal Planning; Allison Davis, Vice President, Planning
Ann Chisholm; Government Relations Officer

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Better Bus Visionary Network Recommendations

Councilmember Matt Frumin

1. Adjust routing and frequency of the proposed DC202 line to maintain service along the full N-series corridor.

The proposed DC202 line, which would replace the existing N-series bus lines, could drastically reduce Metrobus frequency and connectivity along New Mexico, Cathedral, Massachusetts, and Western avenues. The N-series lines were remarkably popular pre-pandemic, ranking 26th in overall ridership and enjoying rush-hour frequency of 10 to 15 minutes. After recent service reductions, the proposed DC202 line would further jeopardize the reliability of Metrobus service in the area. ANCs 3B, 3D, and 3E all cited the proposed DC202 as a top concern, as did several hundreds of residents directly to our office and using the WMATA Better Bus comment tool.

To ensure the DC202 line adequately serves residents of central Ward 3, WMATA should:

- **Provide high-frequency bus service on the DC202 line.**

Pre-pandemic, rush-hour frequency on the N-series lines was between 10 and 15 minutes. While WMATA touts 15-minute service on its proposed DC202 line, this is effectively a service cut for neighbors who can currently use any N-series bus.

- **Ensure sufficient, frequent service for New Mexico and Cathedral avenues.**

Residents near New Mexico and Cathedral avenues, who are largely disconnected from Metrorail, rely on the N-series buses to access medical appointments, schools, work, and commercial centers. The proposed DC202 would cut off their access to Downtown and Dupont Circle, providing only a low-frequency line to Woodley Park in its place. This area contains a significant population of seniors, many of whom will be unable to traverse the difficult topography to reach Massachusetts Avenue where they can access medical facilities, commercial centers, and Downtown.

- **Route the DC202 line north of Ward Circle on Massachusetts Avenue, enabling service to Spring Valley, AU Park, and Friendship Heights.**

The proposed DC202 line effectively strands Spring Valley and AU Park, severing them from bus service frequent enough to be used for commuting. The low-frequency DC300 is an insufficient replacement for the current heavily used N-series lines. WMATA should restore service to these neighborhoods, preserving access to the Spring Valley shopping area, medical complex, and American University facilities.

- **Extend the DC202 line beyond Dupont Circle to connect with Downtown.**

Residents value the current N-series lines because of their convenient access to Dupont Circle and Downtown. While the DC202 line still connects to Dupont Circle, it does not connect directly to Farragut North or West, which could potentially make commuting by transit less desirable and require a short transfer to reach employment centers near Farragut Square and Downtown.

“As a senior citizen without a car, I use these lines regularly to get to doctor’s appointments, go food shopping, [and] visit museums and theaters. I would be confined to my neighborhood without these buses, since I would not be able to afford taxis and Ubers”

-Patricia, Cathedral Avenue NW

“Eliminating or curtailing these bus lines will harm the population in our neighborhood, which is filled with seniors and people of limited mobility who desperately need the lines to work, get healthcare, and attend to their life needs.”

-Nancy, Cathedral Avenue NW

2. Preserve Metrobus service to interior Glover Park and its link to Downtown.

The existing D2 line fulfills the needs of Glover Park residents in several ways that the proposed DC201 line does not. The D2 efficiently serves the interior of Glover Park, preventing neighbors from navigating steep inclines to reach a bus stop that connects them to Downtown. The proposed DC201 line would eliminate that convenience, hindering access to Wisconsin Avenue, Dupont Circle, several local schools, and the Glover Park commercial center. Glover Park is among the most densely populated areas of Ward 3, yet WMATA plans to eliminate the D2 line without a useful replacement.

“The D2 route serves a broad range of individuals living in Glover Park, Burleith, Georgetown, and DuPont Circle. The elimination of this route would deprive them quick, easy, and timely access to the DuPont Circle Metro, Hardy Middle, Duke Ellington, and Stoddert Elementary. WMATA’s proposal would also have an outsized impact on the elderly and children. Please rescind the proposal to modify service.”

-Reed, 41st Street NW

“Having the D2 route through Palisades and then to Foggy Bottom would significantly delay my morning commute by more than 20-30 minutes. I know many people in my apartment complex and surrounding buildings also use the D2 to travel to work around Dupont and/or then use the Dupont metro station to get to their place of work.”

-Julie, W St NW

To rectify these issues, WMATA should adjust its proposed DC201 line to:

- **Ensure adequate service to the Glover Park interior and Wisconsin Avenue.**

The proposed DC201 inadequately serves the interior of Glover Park, forcing residents to walk long distances on steep hills to reach the Wisconsin Avenue commercial corridor, which includes multiple grocery stores, childcare centers, and medical facilities. It also reduces access to Hardy Middle School, Stoddert Elementary School, and Duke Ellington School of the Arts for Glover Park neighbors and distant DC residents alike, separating them from the neighborhood center and Dupont Circle Metro.

- **Connect to Dupont Circle and a central Downtown Metro station.**

Glover Park residents rely on the D2 bus line to reach Dupont Circle and Downtown for work and to support restaurants and small businesses. The proposed DC201 bypasses both areas, instead connecting to the new MacArthur High School and Foggy Bottom. While linking Glover Park to MacArthur is a worthy goal, it should not come at the expense of a bus line that serves locations useful for commuting Downtown. WMATA should instead design a bus route to provide local access to the new high school that runs frequently before and after school hours.

3. Ensure frequent service from Palisades to its business district, Downtown, and Metrorail stations.

The proposed high-frequency DC100 line will enable more reliable access to Dupont Circle and Metrorail transfers, incentivizing Palisades residents to choose transit over private vehicles. Unfortunately, WMATA’s proposed diversions from the D6 route eliminate connections to Downtown, Foggy Bottom, and several nearby schools. Similarly, the M4 route, which WMATA proposes replacing with a similar DC200 line, would also sever access from Palisades to Tenleytown, a significant commercial district and transit hub.

To preserve direct access to schools and employment centers, WMATA should:

- **Route the DC100 line to K St NW.** Foxhall Village and Palisades already have limited transit options, and losing direct access to Downtown will harm the District’s efforts to revitalize the area. By routing the DC100 line down K St NW, it can preserve convenient connections to Downtown, Capitol Hill, and neighborhoods in wards 7 and 8.
- **Route the DC200 down Arizona Avenue NW.**

The current M4 route connects Palisades residents to Tenleytown, its Metrorail station, and Jackson-Reed High School. If the DC200 line ends at Sibley Hospital instead of reaching the Palisades commercial corridor, residents will be forced to walk up steep topography to reach their bus connection to Tenleytown, which has the highest elevation in the city. Routing the DC100 on Arizona Avenue would also help connect students from the Tenleytown-AU Metro station to MacArthur High School.

“The D6 takes people from Ward 6 through Ward 2 and through Ward 3 to Sibley. Along the way it gives riders access to GW Hospital; Georgetown Medstar Hospital and Sibley Hospital. It is a very democratic route allowing easy access for riders from less affluent wards to hospitals in other Wards. It also gives older residents of all wards good access to the many doctors along K Street/I Street, and downtown workers from all these wards good access to offices”

-Ann, 45th Street NW

While I appreciate the increase in frequency for the D6 proposed by WMATA, the changed route will make it much less helpful for how I use the bus. The current route goes to my office on 6th and Pennsylvania NW and passes the doctors, dentists, and activities of my whole family on K street.

-Silas, Cathedral Ave NW

A Truly Visionary Network

- Provide additional service to Foxhall Village, a need identified in WMATA’s analysis findings but not fulfilled.
- Restore express service between Palisades and Downtown similar to the former D5 line.

4. Support adequate crosstown connectivity to aid housing and job growth.

Crosstown connectivity to hospitals, schools, and employment is imperative for Ward 3 to become a more diverse, inclusive community. The Visionary Network succeeds in proposing several new crosstown lines, including:

- The medium-frequency DC200, which connects Sibley Hospital and American University to new areas east of Rock Creek Park like 16th Street Heights, Brightwood Park, and Fort Totten.
- The high-frequency, 24-hour DC104, which connects Van Ness and Cleveland Park to seven Metrorail stations, including Farragut North and West, McPherson Square, Metro Center, Gallery Place, and Union Station.

These lines will make commutes to and from Ward 3 more convenient, however many came at the expense of essential existing connections for residents. The most notable issue is the elimination of the crosstown 96 line, a critical route that serves the Ward 3 interior and connects across the entire city.

To facilitate sufficient access between Ward 3 and other areas of the District, WMATA should:

- **Restore the full 96 line through Ward 3.**

The 96 line is an invaluable route connecting Tenleytown, Cathedral Heights, and Cleveland/Woodley Park to Adams Morgan, U Street, Union Station, and destinations farther east. The route covers several Metrorail stations and serves many schools (Jackson-Reed High School, Deal Middle School, National Cathedral School, Eaton Elementary School, Maret School, Oyster-Adams Bilingual School, and Marie Reed Elementary School). WMATA's proposed alternative maintains a similar route except its terminus is at Calvert St NW in Woodley Park, separating Ward 3. Residents were vocal in support of preserving the 96 line, and it remains a crucial connection for residents, students, and workers.

“The 96 bus route is my connection to groceries, hardware stores, USPS and UPS mail services and the Tenley Library on Wisconsin Ave. The 96 also connects me via Adams-Morgan transfer options to city-wide services, resources and cultural offerings.”

-Nancy, Woodley Rd NW

“We use the 96 bus often. I consistently notice how many people use this route for short hops. It doesn't make sense that a popular bus that crosses the city should be removed from service. There is a saying here I've heard - that you know if someone's from DC if they ride the 96 bus. Shame that will become obsolete.”

-Yvonne, Connecticut Avenue NW

5. Prevent a reduction in connectivity on the Connecticut Avenue NW corridor.

The Connecticut Avenue NW corridor is a vital link between Chevy Chase, Forest Hills/Van Ness, Cleveland Park, Woodley Park, and Downtown. With several thousand residents living in multifamily housing in the area, robust transit service and connectivity are needed.

Unfortunately, two of the changes proposed in the Visionary Network could significantly reduce connectivity.

Instead, these minor route alterations could maintain connectivity:

- **Route the DC102 line through Adams Morgan like the existing L2.**

The current L2 connects the Connecticut Avenue corridor to Adams Morgan before continuing to Dupont Circle, ensuring access to a neighborhood not served by Metrorail. This short detour off Connecticut Avenue allows Ward 3 residents to reach lively restaurants in Adams Morgan and much of the city's bicycle infrastructure network.

- **Route the DC200 and DC204 lines on McKinley Street to serve the Chevy Chase Commercial Corridor.**

The proposed DC200 and DC204 lines, which would replace the existing E4 route, travel down Military Road instead of McKinley Street, reducing access from much of the Chevy Chase commercial corridor. To access the Chevy Chase business district from the DC200 and DC204 lines, residents would have to walk two to six blocks farther; traveling this 0.4-mile distance would be difficult for seniors and neighbors with mobility issues. The existing E4 runs more centrally through Chevy Chase, making it a preferred way to access the Friendship Heights Metro and Lafayette Elementary.

“Moving the E4 bus to Military means no access to the Connecticut Avenue stores for workers. It also means an extra 4 block walk after taking the bus from or to Friendship Heights. I feel that our ward has lost bus access.”

-Leslie, Chevy Chase Pkwy NW

“I am writing that the city should not take away the E4 bus route and it should bring back the E6 bus route so that families in Chevy Chase can more easily get around this neighborhood without a car and can continue get to Friendship Heights Metro.”

-Alyssa, Chevy Chase Pkwy NW

A Truly Visionary Network

- Revive the former E6 route, which provided service to interior Chevy Chase and was canceled without a community hearing. Mayor Bowser rightly suggested that eliminating the E6 could “strand” the Chevy Chase community.
- Connect the DC102 line directly to Downtown destinations, similar to the L1 route.

6. Scale up bus frequency on Wisconsin Avenue NW to accommodate extraordinary existing demand and housing growth.

The existing 30-series routes are among the highest ridership of any Metrobus line, and they have long suffered due to delays, congestion, and passenger crowding. WMATA itself, in a 2007 study, noted broad and persistent performance-related issues. As several neighborhoods along the Wisconsin Avenue NW corridor experience a boom in housing production, WMATA should be proposing an increase in service frequency. The Visionary Network draft succeeds in extending the proposed DC101 to Bethesda and the Council appropriated funds to support 24-hour service on the line. More must be done to accommodate extraordinary demand.

“Our family is concerned by the decreased service on Wisconsin Ave. We try to use only the bus to go to work, school, and hobbies. We need frequent and dependable service. We base our choices on accessibility for schools, camps, and socializing and further cuts will make it more challenging for families living in NW.”

-Amanda, Wisconsin Ave

A Truly Visionary Network

- Restore the former 37 route, which supplemented Wisconsin Avenue service with a rush-hour express line between Friendship Heights and Downtown that avoided congestion in Georgetown.
- Increase frequency along Wisconsin Avenue beyond the Visionary Network’s “high frequency” service to address chronic passenger crowding and meet growing demand.

7. Design a bus route to provide local access to the entire MacArthur High School catchment area that runs frequently before and after school hours.

The new MacArthur High School, which will open to 250 students this fall, will serve a catchment area including Cleveland Park, Cathedral Heights, Foxhall Village, Palisades, Spring Valley, and Wesley Heights, as well as out-of-boundary students. The school, located in Ward 3’s Foxhall Village, is not served by Metrorail (the closest stop is in Rosslyn) and has few bus transit connections to interior Ward 3 neighborhoods. Public transit to MacArthur High School is not a viable option for many in-boundary neighborhoods, most notably Cleveland Park and Spring Valley; it could take more than an hour for many of these students to reach MacArthur High School using public transit. Similarly, out-of-boundary students will experience difficulties reaching MacArthur High School using public transit, and many will need to make one or more transfers to reach their destination. Nearly all Ward 3 ANCs cited insufficient access to MacArthur High School as a significant concern. MacArthur High School was intended to serve residents from across the District, and realizing this goal is only possible with a bus route that connects to in-boundary neighborhoods and Metrorail.

To ensure the new high school can thrive, WMATA should:

- **Establish a reliable, timely, and frequent bus line that serves the interior portions of the MacArthur High School feeder pattern, including Cleveland Park, Cathedral Heights, Spring Valley, and Wesley Heights before and after school hours.**