

Transit Issues in the Reston Metrorail Access Study Area (Wiehle and Reston Parkway Metro Station Areas)

The area surrounding the future Wiehle Avenue and the Reston Parkway Metrorail stations is currently served by several bus services. The purpose of these routes varies. Fairfax Connector operates both circulator routes that provide service in and around Reston and Herndon, as well as feeder routes that connect with the West Falls Church, Pentagon and Crystal City Metrorail stations. The Connector currently operates 54 bus routes throughout the county, providing connections to Arlington County, Alexandria, Falls Church, Vienna, Fairfax City and Herndon. Of the 54 Connector routes, 25 operate within the Wiehle Avenue and Reston Parkway areas. These routes are divided into Reston-based routes and Herndon-based routes. Routes serving Reston are numbered in the 500s, routes serving Herndon are in the 900s, while four RIBS routes circulate through the Reston-Herndon area. The standard fare is \$1.00 for local routes and \$3.00 for express routes, though discounts or complimentary service are provided for passengers with rail-to-bus transfers, seniors, persons with disabilities, MetroAccess customers and young children. In addition to the Fairfax Connector, both Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) and Loudoun County provide a limited number of express regional routes that travel from points in Loudoun and Fairfax counties to Washington, DC.

With the planned completion of Phase I of the Dulles Corridor Rapid Transit Project in 2013, which will terminate at the Wiehle Avenue Metrorail station and of Phase II in 2015, which terminates at Route 772 in Loudoun County, existing regional routes, feeder rail services and other bus routes will need to be modified. An existing bus conditions report has been developed by VHB. The next step is for VHB to examine the proposed feeder bus routes developed in the FEIS. During our review of the proposed feeder bus routes, we would like to ask the Reston Metrorail Access Group (RMAG) to discuss the issues below. VHB is seeking the RMAG's general input on feeder bus routes, operations, internal circulators, transit equipment, bus stops, and operations. A proposed feeder bus plan will be developed by VHB this summer and presented to the RMAG. Figure 1 illustrates the study area.

Issue 1: Routes and Service Area

Should all routes in Reston stop at one of the new Metrorail stations?

Is there a need for internal circulators in the areas immediately adjacent to the stations?

- Bus link between Reston Pkwy and Wiehle Ave stations
- Circular route along Sunrise Valley & Sunset Hills between Hunter Mill & Fairfax County Pkwy
 - Direction of operation

Which neighborhoods/community landmarks/employment sites should be served?

Considerations:

- Existing locations not currently on a bus route (See figures 2-5 for 2005 demographics and current bus routes)

- Locations slated for future development (See figures 6-9 for 2015 demographics and bus routes) Example, New Dulles Discovery building and high security government buildings north of Barnsfield Rd.

What should be the service area limits for feeder bus service into Reston?

Considerations:

- Distance from stations
- Integration of bus service from the west at Wiehle Ave while it is a terminal station
- Changes after the opening of Phase II stations

Should bus routes service only one neighborhood or multiple, adjacent neighborhoods?

Consideration:

- Tradeoff between service frequency and trip length

Issue 2: Hours of operation for bus routes

What should be the hours of operation for the bus system?

Considerations:

- Cost: \$60-\$70 per hour for each bus
- Metrorail service hours
 - Rail service begins at 5 am on weekdays, 7 am on weekends
 - Rail service ends at midnight Sun-Thurs, 3 am on Fri & Sat

Issue 3: Frequency of service

How frequently should the buses run?

- Weekday peak periods
- Weekday evening
- Weekday midday
- Weekend

Considerations:

- Trains will run every 7 minutes. Bus routes can be scheduled to meet train arrivals (every 7, 14 or 21 minutes, for example) or on regular intervals (every 15, 20, 30 or 60 minutes).
- Cost: \$300,00-\$350,000 per year to add an additional bus to a route
- Projected ridership on each route

Issue 4: Fare Structure

How much should the feeder buses cost to ride?

- RIBS routes
- Fairfax County routes

Consideration:

- Cost of service vs. rider price

How should transfers be handled?

- Bus-to-rail

- Rail-to-bus

Issue 5: Transit Equipment

What type of buses best accommodate the needs of Reston?

Considerations:

- Size:
 - Potential: from 30 standard with ~27 seats to 60 foot articulated with ~57 seats
 - The Fairfax Connector currently operates green diesel 30', 32', 35' and 40' buses. Additional costs for equipment and/or training may be incurred by Reston if standard and/or approved Fairfax Connector equipment is not used.
- Low floor buses
- Special fuel

Should special brand naming be used to identify Reston area buses?

Considerations:

- Bus design and naming
- Signage

Issue 6: Bus Stop Design

How should amenities and safety features be prioritized for inclusion at Reston bus stops?

- Lighting
- Waiting areas
 - Landing pads
 - Seating
 - Shelters

Considerations:

- Cost
 - *Sidewalk:* \$100-\$200 per foot
 - *Benches:* \$400-\$800 each
 - *Trash cans:* \$250 each
 - *Shelter:* \$10,000 each
 - *Lighting:* \$600-\$1500 each
- Boarding levels at each stop

What information standards should be included at each bus stop?

- Real Time information
- Bus stop signs
- Maps

Considerations: Fairfax County is currently working toward acquiring and installing automated vehicle locators (AVL) on their buses. This is the springboard for real-time information at bus stops sometime in the future.

Should an adopt-a-stop maintenance program be advertised to local businesses and riders?

Considerations:

- Incentive for participants (riders, employers etc)
- Reduced maintenance costs vs. increased administrative costs
- Improved appearance of bus stops
- Employers may maintain the stop if they are allowed to advertise. The County Board has approved an RFP for advertising on shelters. One company will be selected to sell advertising space, as well as install and maintain the shelters.

Issue 7: Reston Town Center Transit Station (TCTS)

How should the TCTS be integrated into the bus service plan?

- Continued operations
- Shut down

Considerations:

- Connection between Reston Parkway station and TCTS
 - Pedestrian
 - Bus link
- Distance between Reston Parkway station and TCTS (0.3 miles with direct connection and .75 miles using existing roadways)
- The fare media currently sold at TCTS must be accommodated elsewhere if the facility is closed

Issue 8: Bus Operations Improvements

Where, if anywhere, should bus operations be improved by creating express bus lanes that can be used only by buses?

Considerations:

- Hours of operation
 - Peak hours only?
- Directionality of lanes

Should buses be given traffic signal priority or extended green lights?

Considerations: All technology will need to be presented to Fairfax County, the Fairfax Connector. The bus system would need to assign particular vehicles to the Reston routes if transmitters/responders need to be installed. The County currently has a signal priority demonstration program on Route 1 south of Alexandria. Signal prioritization is part of the County ITS plan; however, VDOT has the final authority over the County signals. However, where a bus route is near a fire house, signal priority may be easier to implement since fire trucks are currently using this equipment and nearby signals are already programmed (fire house near Wiehle). Funding of bus priority technology is an issue. Another issue to consider includes tradeoffs to cars and pedestrians if express bus lanes are installed.



Figure 1. Study Area Overview

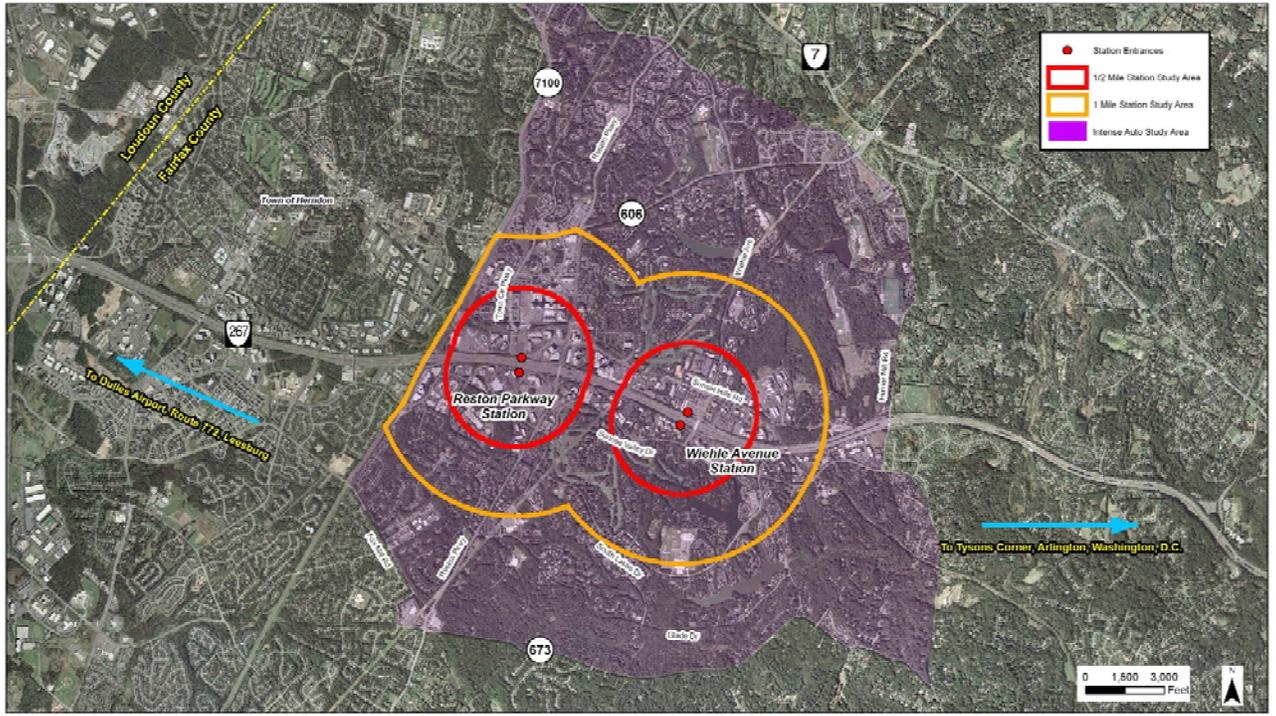


Figure 2

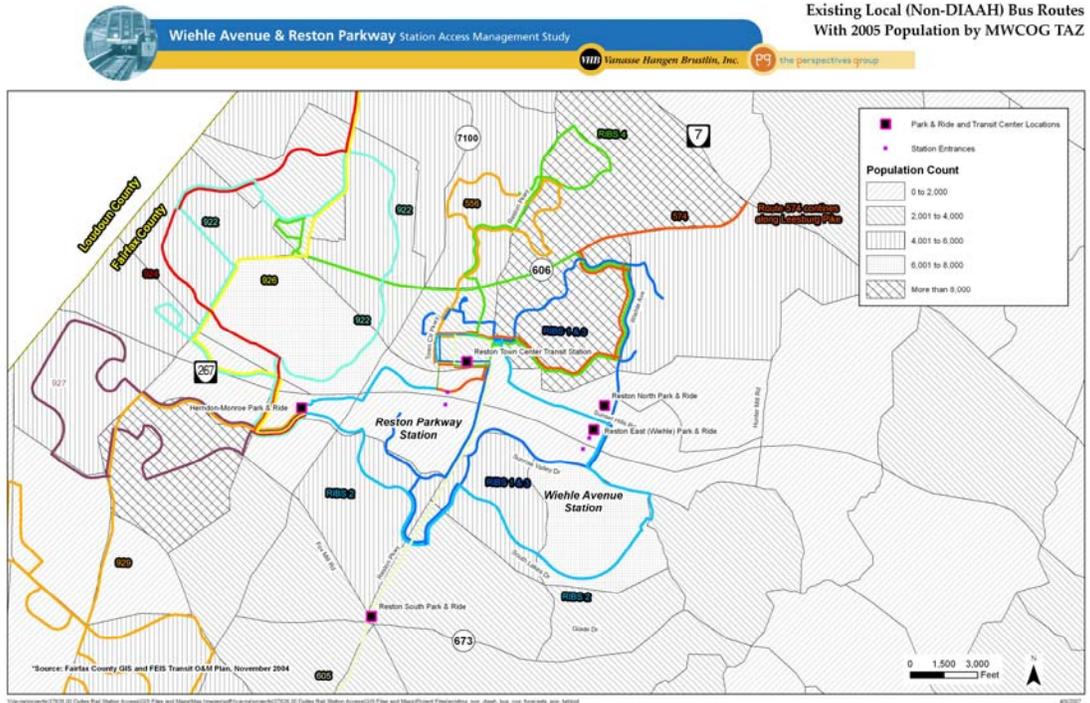


Figure 3

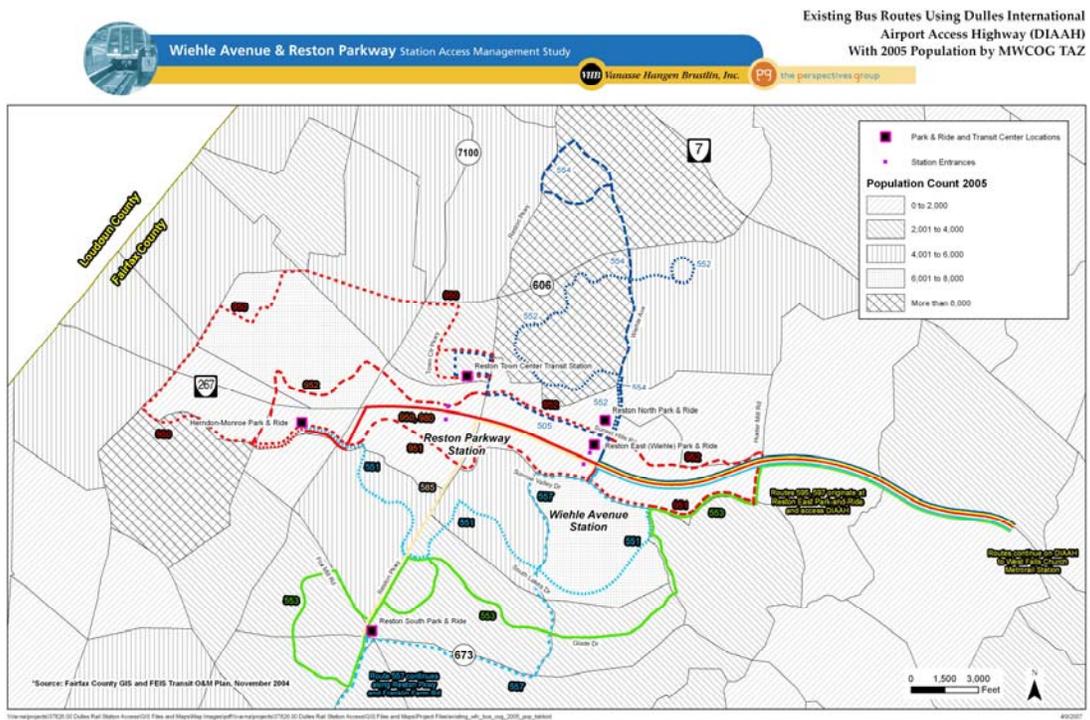


Figure 4

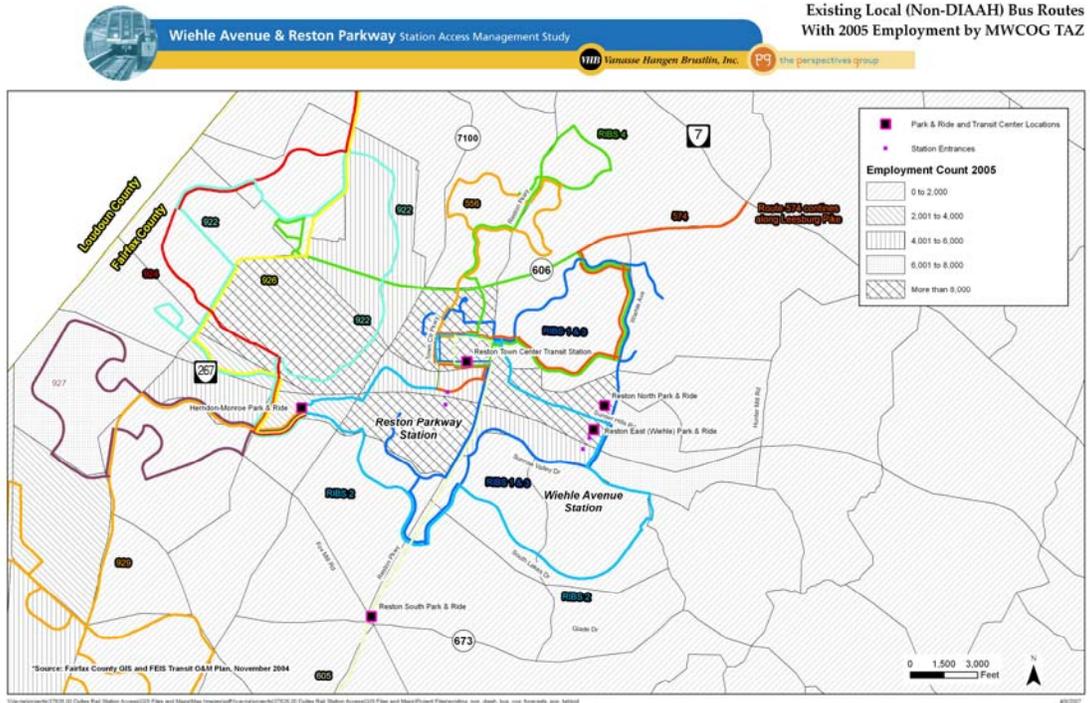


Figure 5

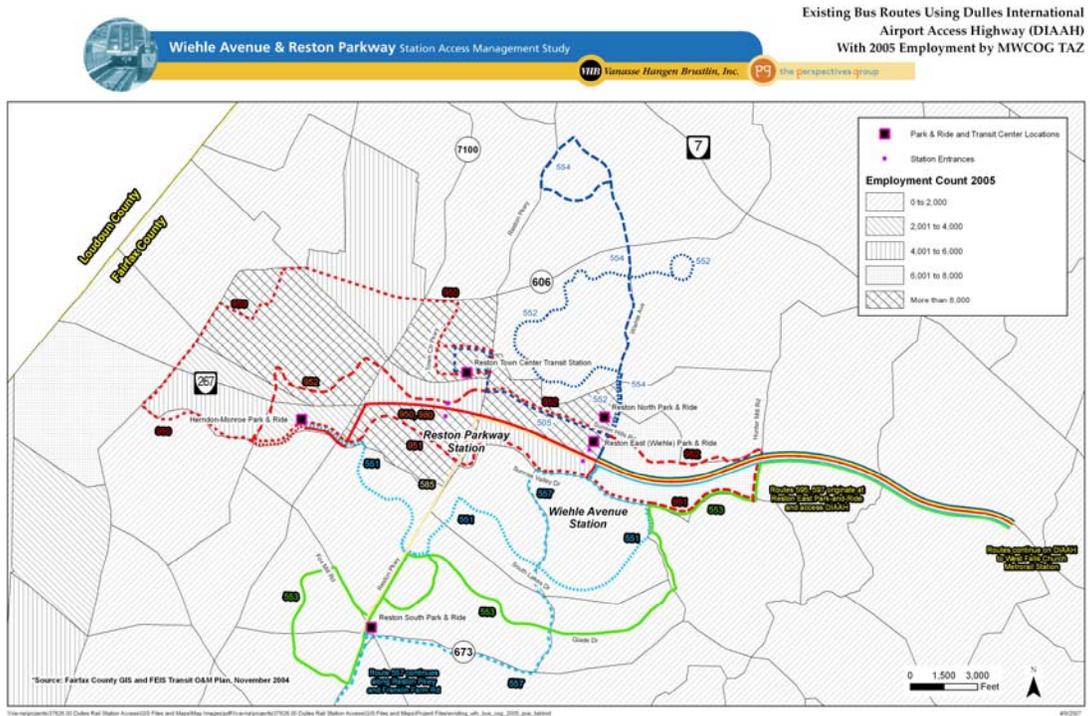


Figure 6

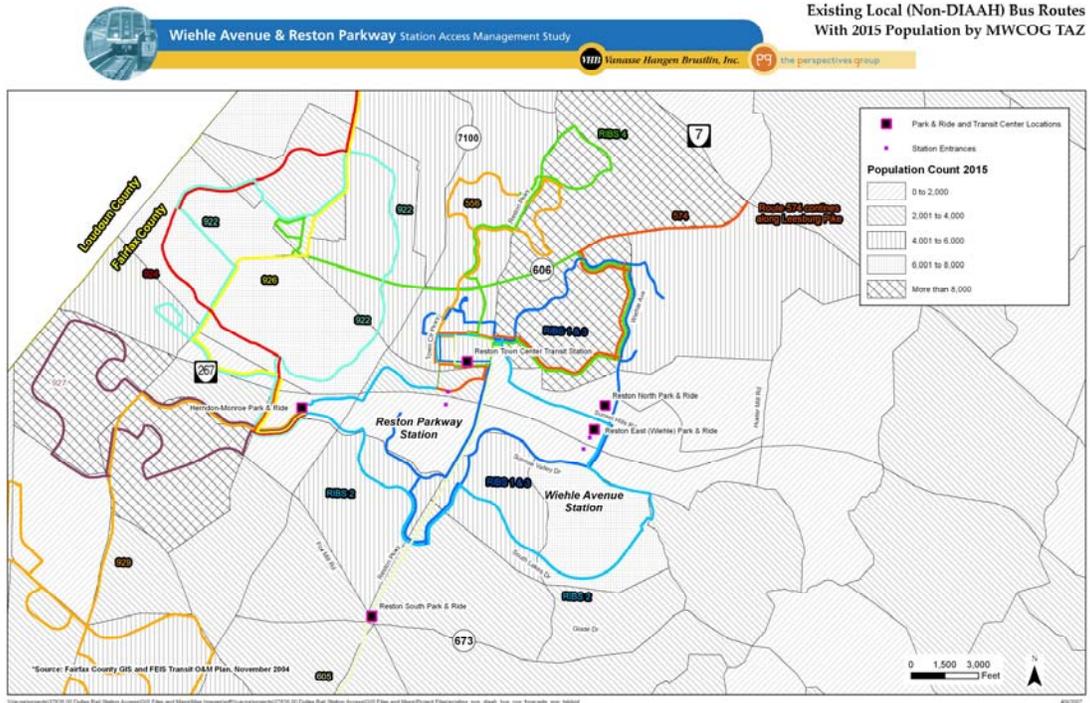


Figure 7

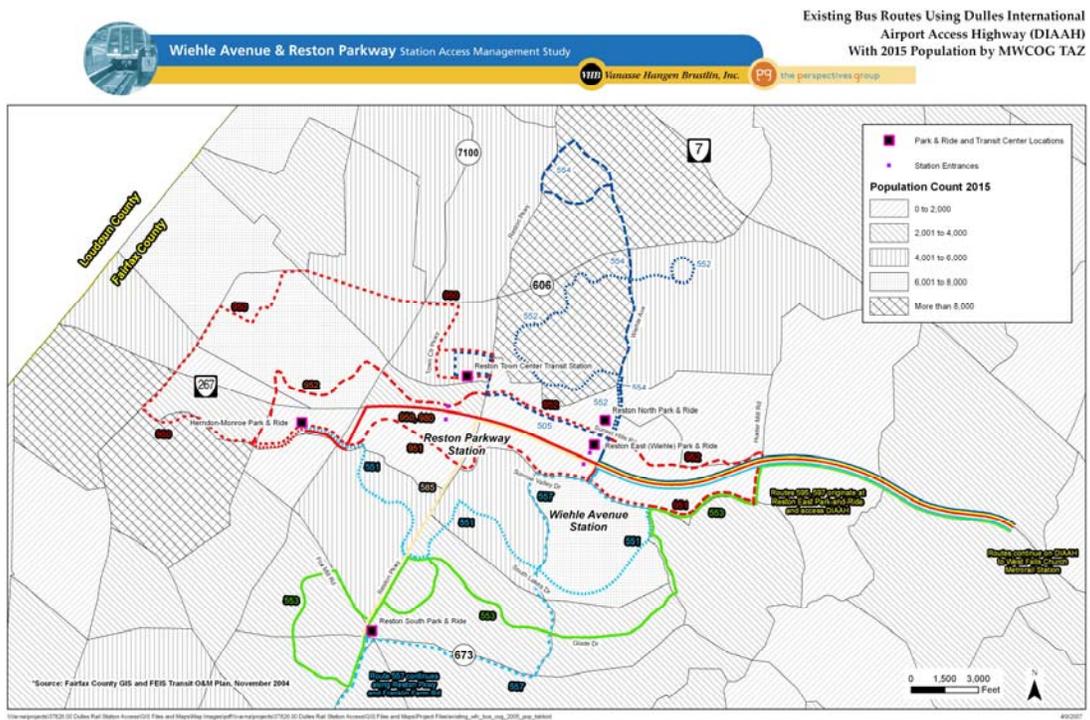


Figure 8

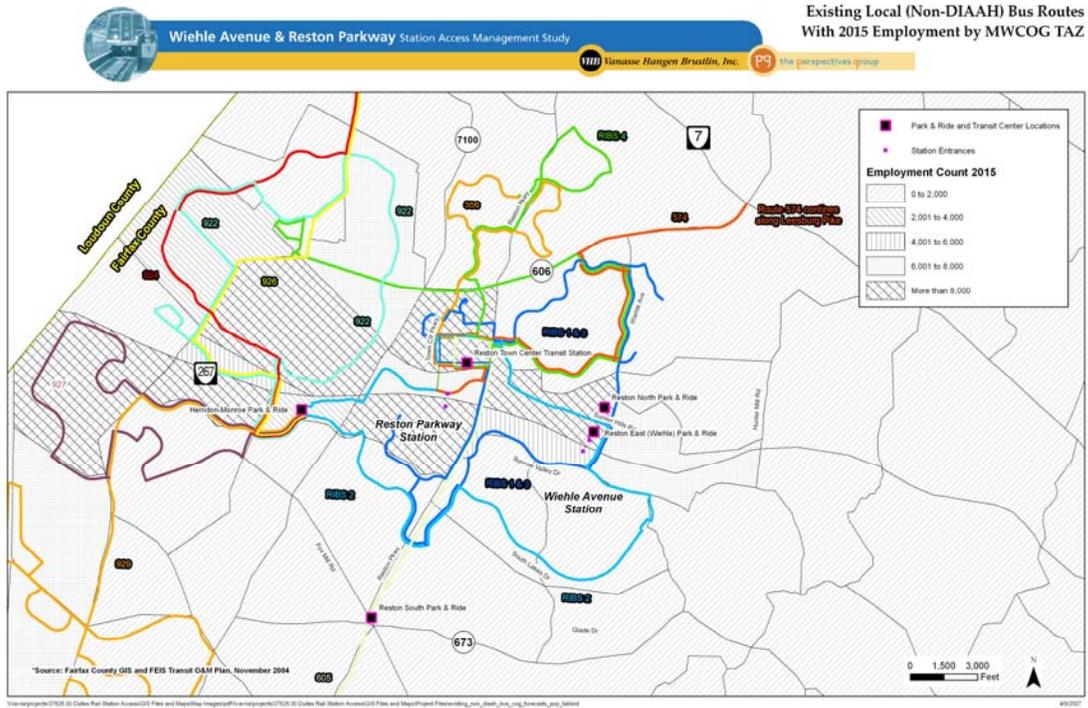


Figure 9

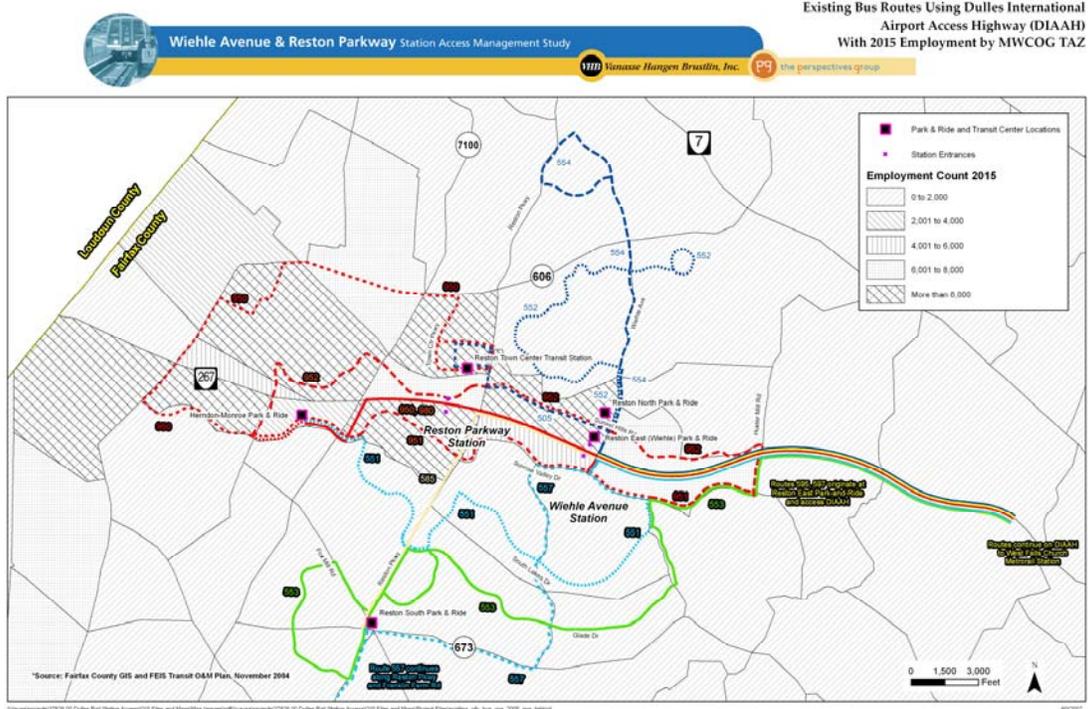


Figure 10

