



County of Fairfax, Virginia

To protect and enrich the quality of life for the people, neighborhoods and diverse communities of Fairfax County

Board of Supervisors Transportation Committee Meeting Minutes

May 16, 2023

Conference Room 11, Government Center

Board of Supervisors Members Present:

Jeffrey C. McKay, Chairman
Penelope A. Gross, Mason District (Vice Chairman)
Walter Alcorn, Hunter Mill District (Committee Chairman)
Kathy L. Smith, Sully District (Committee Vice Chairman)
John W. Foust, Dranesville District
Patrick S. Herrity, Springfield District
Rodney Lusk, Franconia District
Dalia A. Palchik, Providence District
Daniel G. Storck, Mount Vernon District
James Walkinshaw, Braddock District

Board Members Absent: None

County Leadership:

Bryan J. Hill, County Executive
Rachel Flynn, Deputy County Executive
Elizabeth Teare, County Attorney

Link to agenda and presentation materials:

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/boardofsupervisors/board-supervisors-transportation-committee-meeting-may-16-2023>

Committee Chairman Alcorn called the meeting to order at 11:14 a.m.

1. Approval of Minutes

The meeting minutes of March 14, 2023, were accepted with no changes.

2. WMATA Bus Network Redesign for Fairfax County

Allison Davis, Vice President, Planning; and Peter Cafiero, Managing Director, Intermodal Planning, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), briefed the Committee on the proposed WMATA plan to redesign the Metrobus network in Fairfax County and the region. The Better Bus Network Redesign is a project to rethink, redesign, and revitalize bus service, including many ongoing and future efforts to improve bus service. The project's goals are:

- To better connect people to where they need to go
- To promote equity, inclusiveness, and access to job opportunities
- To keep up with the evolving region and the people that live here
- To create an easy-to-use network, no matter where you are

The public comment period for the draft Visionary Network was scheduled from April 17 to June 5, 2023. The draft Visionary Network works to deliver regional connectivity, quality customer and operator experience, address inequities, and increase access to opportunities for disenfranchised communities. The draft Network emphasizes non-commuter-oriented service that operates seven days a week with a frequency of at least every 30 minutes and a new 24-hour network connecting to key job and nightlife areas. The draft Network will be refined through public comments and input received in Spring 2023. If the Metro Board approves the final proposed bus network, implementation could start in 2024.

3. County Comments on Bus Network Redesign

Michael Felschow, Chief, Planning Section, Transit Services Division; Brent Riddle, Senior Transportation Planner, Coordination & Funding Division; and Hejun Kang, Senior Transportation Planner, Transit Services Division, Fairfax County Department of Transportation (FCDOT), provided the County staff perspective on the Bus Network Redesign plan. The County staff's role in the Better Bus Network Redesign planning process was as follows:

- Attended technical meetings
- Provided County's existing service information
- Provided County's future transit service plans
- Reviewed WMATA's preliminary service plans
- Used FCDOT's Transit Strategic Plan
 - Gap analysis
 - Travel demand patterns

The County's evaluation process included an assessment of FCDOT's Transit Strategic Plan and WMATA's Better Bus Network Redesign for improvements in mobility, equity, access, and to identify gaps and duplication. County staff will continue to work with WMATA to address issues, funding needs, and to ensure that the plan meets the goals and objectives of the County's Transit Strategic Plan and the County Comprehensive Plan.

Per Committee Chair Alcorn's request, the Committee held their questions until after the end of the two presentations.

Committee Chairman Alcorn noted that the WMATA plan being presented is a visionary plan that would result in a 35 percent increase in budget for the regions' bus systems. Chairman McKay also acknowledged the 35 percent funding increase required for the plan. He stated that it is important that the County's Transit Strategic Plan is the main focus and should be fully integrated into the WMATA plan. He asked for clarification if there were any future issues with services and whether or not they would preclude the Fairfax Connector from providing services along with the visionary plan. Mr. Cafiero responded that the ultimate plan would be based on the demand and which agency could provide the best service for customers. Chairman McKay

emphasized the flexibility of the plan and that it would ensure no gaps in service. Committee Chairman Alcorn noted that the Connector provides service to 60 percent of the bus routes in Fairfax County. He said the combination of services between Metro and Connector should provide the opportunity for better service.

Supervisor Walkinshaw noted that the plan would improve service, especially for the Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) campus in Annandale. He also noted that bus services are not usually planned 20 to 30 years out from now, i.e., services that might help people from central Annandale get to the Tysons and Reston area. He observed that WMATA's plan appears to improve current bus-designed routes but is more limited when considering new service areas in the future. Mr. Cafiero said that cross-county or cross-town routes will become important as the region becomes more decentralized. He mentioned the improved Route 28A, the Tysons-Bethesda route as the continuation of Maryland's Purple Line in bus form, and the George Mason to Tysons route. Mr. Felschow stated that Connector staff was also planning for future routes such as Route 313 (from Burke area to the Monument facility), Route 400 (Gallows Road in Franconia to Tysons), Route 401 and 402 (Gallows Road to Tysons), Route 315 (Braddock Road corridor to Vienna). He said that the Connector has been taking more interest in serving the Braddock area corridor to the north-south direction, while Metro has plans for the east-west direction.

Supervisor Palchik noted that other agencies like NVTA and NVTC also are developing transit service plans for the region and the need to improve services in smaller areas such as Falls Church. She made an observation that the proposed maps have fewer routes than the current maps. Mr. Cafiero stated that WMATA is working with the local jurisdictions to incorporate their routes into the proposed network redesign project. He said the online map tools show the system routes better than those in the presentations. Mr. Felschow said that Connector staff started with the equity concept to ensure no gaps in service existed. FCDOT staff combed through 13,000 comments to analyze the origins and destinations based on the surveys. They designed the local routes based on where the customers wanted to go and transferred to whatever systems they wanted to connect. He mentioned that the new 660 Route travels from Centreville to the Government Center, Vienna, and Tysons. It will link local routes to regional routes and the Metro stations. Fairfax Connector service is designed by layering routes to work with the Metro routes for regional connectivity.

Supervisor Lusk asked about the location of nightlife areas and then provided the thought process behind his question. He suggested nightlife areas were prime opportunities for transit service. Ms. Davis replied that the plan is to connect end-of-line stations, and address demand by expanding night-time rail service. Bus service will help fill the demand for activity centers in Washington, D.C., or from Tysons to Bethesda, or at Union Station, Dulles, and Washington Reagan National Airports, where nightlife and employment centers often co-exist. Supervisor Lusk mentioned that the presentation did not mention the new incoming Inova Franconia-Springfield Hospital, in addition to the new Inova Alexandria Hospital.

Supervisor Gross stated that there is a need to have more Metrobus routes in Fairfax County. She raised a concern with the parking issues in the neighborhoods near a Metrobus route and asked how WMATA tracks commuters who park their vehicles in those areas. On technology improvements, she suggested having WIFI availability on Metro buses. In response, Ms. Davis spoke about having more frequency at high-demand locations versus expanding the service network for more coverage. She noted that about 20 percent of trips are work-related. The

majority of the trips are personal trips and for social events. Regarding the technology on the buses, she said they are focusing on signal priority to help speed up the bus and make them more reliable.

Supervisor Storck asked for the source for the statistic that 20 percent of trips are work-related trips. Ms. Davis said the information came from the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) Transportation Planning Board and cell phone data.

Supervisor Herrity stated that the challenge is getting people who do not take a bus to use the bus. He said a quicker trip and reliable service are the keys to attracting people. He noted that the plan does not have a strategy to appeal to customer services such as free WIFI or a new bus design. He cautioned about having too much frequency, which could result in fewer riders per bus which could negatively impact the region's carbon footprint. He recommended that the buses with WIFI connectivity travel on existing toll lanes on I-66 and I-495.

4. Cut Through Permit Program

Due to time constraints, the presentation was deferred to the next BTC meeting. Chairman McKay recommended that Supervisors send their questions to staff.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:04 p.m. The next Board Transportation Committee is scheduled for July 18, 2023, at 1:30 p.m.