

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION 3B
GLOVER PARK AND CATHEDRAL HEIGHTS



May 22, 2023

Randy Clarke
General Manager and CEO
WMATA
200 7th St SW
Washington DC 20024

Via Email

Dear Mr. Clarke,

ANC3B has reviewed WMATA's Better Bus Visionary Plan as well as comments and concerns voiced by residents and businesses in the ANC's area of responsibility, which includes all of Glover Park, part of Cathedral Heights, and part of Wesley Heights.

In general, ANC3B believes that WMATA should be investing in the future of public transportation instead of reducing service. The District's stated goal of reducing the dependency on personal vehicle use will never be realized if buses don't take people where they need to go and operate frequently enough to provide a reliable transportation option. Expanding the Metro underground is likely not an option, but making buses work for the people they carry is not only possible but should be a priority for WMATA and the DMV region.

ANC3B's chief concern is that WMATA's proposed bus plan does not meet the needs of residents of ANC3B. WMATA is once again cutting bus service to an area that is already woefully underserved by public transportation.

ANC3B is asking WMATA to:

(1) Create more accessible options for recording comments and extend the comment period for this phase of planning by at least 30 days to allow more people to comment; very few people are aware of these proposed changes. Many of them are not digitally linked in and the ways of reaching them take time to implement.

(2) Consider the following ANC3B-specific concerns that highlight why the new bus route proposals have received strong negative reactions from local bus riders.

- ANC3B represents the most densely populated part of Ward 3 and has a greater concentration of bus riders who are dependent on bus service than other parts of the ward. Yet, WMATA proposes to reduce bus access here.

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3B04
CATHEDRAL HEIGHTS
J. KEVIN CARROLL

3B05
S. GLOVER PARK
GUPI HOWIE

3B06
CATHEDRAL HEIGHTS
BEN BERGMANN

This area has a high proportion of apartment buildings, condo buildings, and rowhouses and very few detached single-family homes. High density means that the available street and alley parking options are limited. Many residents do not have cars; in fact, according to census data, 25% of households in census tracts 3 and 7.02 (roughly Glover Park east of the park and west of Wisconsin) do not have access to a car. This is comparable to the District as a whole, but reflects lower car ownership than the rest of Ward 3.

Residents are mostly seniors, families with young children, young professionals, and college or graduate students, roughly in that order of prevalence. ANC3B has a greater concentration of people per capita who are dependent on bus service than other parts of Ward 3. Local census data from 2021 reports that 1,000 people used public transit to get to work, which is 18% of workers — 50% higher than the rate of DC as a whole. Despite a clear need for public transportation, this area appears to be among the most negatively impacted by the proposed bus route changes.

- The topography of the area has a critical impact on the area's public transportation needs. But proposed new bus routes take away access from affected residents.

Many residents of ANC3B are housed in large multi-unit buildings are located along Wisconsin, Cathedral, New Mexico, and Massachusetts avenues, as well as Tunlaw Road. But thousands of residents of the discrete neighborhood of Glover Park have limited access to those key streets because Glover Park is surrounded by woodland (Glover Archbold Park). Access is further limited by the steep grade from the back of Glover Park along the woodlands to its front on Wisconsin Avenue. The steep hills make walking from interior Glover Park to a key street difficult to impossible for seniors, families with young children, and people who are disabled. Currently, the D2 bus, which WMATA proposes to cut, reaches into the interior of Glover Park offering service to people who would otherwise be unable to traverse the steep inclines and distances to reach a bus stop on a key street.

- Residents of ANC3B rely on buses to get to a central downtown location where connections may be made to other parts of the city. The D2 bus fulfilled that need but the proposed new 201 bus route does not.

For most residents, their primary destinations are a convenient (downtown-headed) Metro stop, a nearby commercial area, or downtown. Students and teachers living all over the city rely on the D2 bus to get them to and from Hardy Middle School, Stoddert Elementary School, and Duke Ellington High School, via the Dupont Metro. Students living in ANC3B take buses to and from their schools every day. Parents take the bus to work after dropping their children off at Stoddert.

- Businesses and other facilities in ANC3B rely on buses to bring workers, clients, and customers to the Glover Park commercial center along Wisconsin Avenue. The proposal to cut the number and frequency of the 30-series buses reduces access along a major north-south route, which compounds the long-standing issue of having no crosstown bus access.

Workers living all across the city who are employed by local businesses (e.g., Safeway, Trader Joe's, Whole Foods, Kindercare, Communikids and many other smaller businesses) rely on buses to get to and from their jobs in Glover Park since there is no Metro stop within walking distance. In addition, the relocation of MedStar's internist practice to Glover Park furthers the need for direct public transportation to Glover Park for patients living elsewhere.

- The new bus vision takes away the meager access that worked for all these people. The proposed new 201 bus route is not a useful replacement for the D2.

The plan proposes to take away the D2, which reaches into the interior of Glover Park where service is needed and provides a direct link to the Metro in Dupont, the area's shortest, most convenient access to Metro. It proposes to create a new bus route that is designed to provide access to the new high school on MacArthur Boulevard but goes nowhere else people need to go — such as downtown or a convenient Metro stop (as opposed to Tenleytown which is located in the opposite direction from downtown or Foggy Bottom, which would involve a long trip along always congested M Street through Georgetown). Further, the 201 bypasses the heart of the neighborhood.

The plan also proposes to reduce the number of 30-series north-south buses on Wisconsin Avenue, and threatens the timeliness of them by stretching the northern end of the route beyond Friendship Heights into Bethesda. The proposed changes to the N4 and N6 radically cut service for the mostly senior residents of large multi-unit buildings along Cathedral Avenue by replacing their bus access to downtown and the Dupont Metro with a low frequency bus (every 30 minutes) that only goes to Woodley Park. The N-bus changes also leave residents on Massachusetts Avenue living between Ward Circle and Westmoreland Circle and along Western Avenue with only the proposed low-frequency DC300, which severely limits its use by commuters.

- ANC3B and the bus riders it represents urge WMATA to reassess some of its proposals, as follows:

(1) Restore the service provided by the D2 and preserve Glover Park's short, direct link to a centrally located, downtown-headed Metro stop. The proposed 201 does not replace the service provided by the D2 to the interior of Glover Park, nor does it take riders to a convenient Metro stop. The D2 was a heavily used line prior to the pandemic (as was the D1, which was cut during the pandemic shutdown). It is short-sighted to cut the only direct Glover Park bus route to downtown just as people are resuming their pre-pandemic commutes. The D2 bus line provides critical access for residents, workers, and students, both those who live in ANC3B and those who live elsewhere in the city.

(2) Redesign a bus route to provide local access to the new high school on MacArthur Boulevard that is short enough to be timely and reliable, and runs frequently before and after school hours. The contours of this route should be worked out to serve all the neighborhoods whose students are being shifted to the new high school. Local ANCs had envisioned a circular route with Tenleytown as its hub and without the extension beyond MacArthur Boulevard through Georgetown and onto Foggy Bottom; this concept was based on keeping the access provided by the D2.

(3) Re-assess the timing and frequency of buses along Wisconsin Avenue to meet the need at rush hours and school closing times, as well as their use by current and future businesses. There are regularly 10 or 20 people waiting at bus stops on Wisconsin. The District has listed Wisconsin Avenue as part of the Transit Priority Network in its Move DC plan. Wisconsin Avenue is the only priority north-south bus route west of Rock Creek Park. The city should be investing in public transit along Wisconsin Avenue, not reducing it.

(4) Evaluate changing the proposed DC300 into a circular route with more frequent service, particularly at rush hours, designed to create efficient connections to Metrorail stations, major avenues with frequent bus service, schools, and shopping. Instead of turning north on New Mexico Avenue, this revised route would turn south, proceeding along New Mexico/Tunlaw to Reservoir Road. At Reservoir, the bus would turn east towards Wisconsin Avenue. The bus would then run up Wisconsin until Garfield, where it would turn right. The bus would conclude its circular run at the Woodley Park station by turning off of Garfield onto Cleveland Avenue/Calvert Street. Absent this change, the 201 should be a High Frequency route and that should be evaluated for the 202 as well.

(5) Extend the DC202 from Ward Circle to Westmoreland Circle and have the line terminate at Friendship Heights (like the N lines do currently) instead of Tenleytown. This will better serve residents who live along Massachusetts Avenue and provide access to the Spring Valley shopping area, medical complex, and the AU building in the former law school. The frequency of the DC202 should be increased to High Frequency (meaning arrivals every 12 minutes) so that the line can again be used for commuting.

Given the short time-frame for commenting on this phase of WMATA's plan, ANC3B expects to have more comments to communicate. The ANC fears that the community remains largely unaware of the proposed changes due to WMATA's reliance on digital outreach, which often doesn't reach seniors and others. More time for commenting would yield a more comprehensive assessment of the proposed changes using input from more people in the ANC's purview who rely on bus service.

In conclusion, ANC3B finds the proposed bus routes in this phase of redesign are insufficient to meet the need for public transportation in Glover Park, Cathedral Heights and Wesley Heights and requests that WMATA increase transit options to this area rather than further reduce the meager service that currently exists. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Jackie Blumenthal
Chair, ANC3B

Commissioner Blumenthal or her designee is authorized to represent the Commission on this matter.

This Letter was APPROVED by a vote of 6-0 at a duly noticed public meeting of ANC3B on Thursday, May 11, 2023, at which a quorum was present. (A quorum is 4 of the 5 sitting members.)

CC: Ann Chisholm
Alison Davis
Al Hines
Melissa Kemp
Christine Marsh