

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



February 13, 2020

Office of the Board Secretary  
Metropolitan Washington Area Transit Authority  
600 Fifth Street NW  
Washington, DC 20001

**RE: DOCKET B20-02: Proposed FY2021 Operating Budget  
and Related Service and Fare Proposals**

Dear Chairman and Members of the Board:

As the Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC3B) serving Glover Park and Cathedral Heights, we want to share our community's strong opposition to WMATA's proposals to change services on Metrobus routes affecting our area: D1, D2, 30 S, 30N, and 37. From the time we saw the initial announcement of the proposed changes, we were concerned about potential reductions in Metrobus service in our area, and since then we have heard from hundreds of residents—more of our constituents than have spoken out about any issue in recent memory. There is virtually no support whatsoever for any of these proposed changes.

Glover Park and Cathedral Heights depend on Metrobus for public transit service because we do not have Metrorail within close walking distance. We have thousands of riders using Metrobus service day after day, to and from our neighborhood. The buses serving ANC3B are often crowded, particularly during morning and evening rush hours, and the service is vital for people to reach jobs, schools, shopping, medical appointments, tourist destinations, museums, restaurants, and other businesses. Access to public transit is essential for people to be able to continue to live in the area, for the community to attract visitors and businesses, and for employers to get customers and employees. Land values and quality of life would decline significantly without adequate bus service.

The ANC strongly advocates maintaining adequate public transit service as an effective way to provide access to jobs and economic and educational opportunities at a reasonable price, reduce traffic congestion associated with cars on the roads, save energy, cut greenhouse gas emissions, decrease demand for parking facilities downtown and around the city that use valuable land and create additional pollution, stormwater run-off and “heat islands.” Public transit also provides increased mobility for seniors, families with children, people with disabilities, households living with low incomes or those that do not want to purchase or use a personal motor vehicle. Effective, reliable, convenient, accessible public transit has many benefits for residents, businesses, and the city as a whole.

We want to see quality bus service continue to our constituents, including maintaining or improving frequencies, capacity, and travel time. The Commission does not have expertise in bus operations and cannot offer expert advice on designing routes, scheduling buses, or making trade-offs between spending options. But we do know that our area needs more public transportation, not less. We have looked into the details of WMATA’s proposals for Metrobus service changes affecting our community and **it is our firm belief that our current services meet public transportation needs much better than what WMATA is proposing.** We have found numerous shortcomings in WMATA’s proposed changes:

**D1 Glover Park-Franklin Square weekday one-way rush hour service.**  
PROPOSED FOR ELIMINATION

The D1 is very important for workers (as well as Hardy Middle School students) to get inbound to their destinations in the morning and outbound in the afternoon rush hour.

- On the D1 and D2 combined, buses currently operate on that route every 5 minutes in morning rush hour v. every 9 minutes on the combined D2/G2 route WMATA has proposed to substitute for the D1 and D2.
- The D1 provides major additions to the capacity of bus service on the Glover Park-Dupont Circle route in peak times, easing the pressure on the D2 services which are already crowded. Decreasing rush hour frequency as proposed from the current 5 minutes on D1/D2 to the proposed 9 minutes on a combined D2/G2 route would be a serious reduction in capacity and quality of service.
- D1 also gives commuters one-trip access to destinations beyond Dupont Circle, including Farragut Square, McPherson Square, and Franklin Square. WMATA estimates that without the D1, over 230 riders/day (60% of D1 riders) would have to make a transfer to reach their destinations.

**RECOMMENDATION:** ANC3B recommends rejecting the proposal for elimination of the D1. We believe it provides essential and heavily-used service that would not be replaced by any other routes at close to the same frequency or with one-route service to the same destinations, leaving large numbers of people without good Metrobus options.

**D2 Glover Park-Dupont Circle daily all-day service** PROPOSED FOR RESTRUCTURING  
by combining the D2 with G2 Georgetown-LeDroit Park/Howard University

The D2 is essential for residents in Glover Park, including students at Hardy Middle School as well as hundreds of students at Duke Ellington High School.

- The D2 buses make a short round-trip between Dupont Circle and Glover Park, though congestion can make on-time performance difficult.

- The proposed combined D2/G2 route would include a long extension to the route, running east from Dupont Circle along P Street to 4th Street NW and then north to Howard University. Many of those blocks have severe traffic congestion at most times of day, which would create even more problems for reliability and on-time performance of Metrobus service to Glover Park.
- Ongoing utility work on 4th Street NW through the next two years would further reduce reliability as well as the chance to use higher capacity buses WMATA wanted to assign to the D2/G2.

**RECOMMENDATION:** ANC3B recommends rejecting the proposal for combining the D2 with the G2. The resulting service would not provide sufficient frequency or capacity for riders to/from the ANC area at rush hour, and would raise major reliability issues because of the long extension of the route east of Dupont Circle. Traffic congestion along P Street and 4<sup>th</sup> Street NW is severe throughout the day, and utility work along 4<sup>th</sup> Street NW for the next two years will make it impossible to provide the needed seating capacity and also exacerbate congestion issues.

**30N Friendship Heights-Naylor Road and 30S Friendship Heights-Southern Avenue daily all-day service.** PROPOSED FOR ELIMINATION

The 30N and 30S are the only cross-city buses available for riders between upper Northwest/west of Rock Creek Park and areas east of the National Archives/south of the National Mall along Pennsylvania Avenue and across the Anacostia River.

- The 30N and 30S buses provide essential transportation for many residents, including commuters to and from jobs near L'Enfant Plaza, Capitol Hill, Eastern Market and beyond, as well as employees at businesses in our area, shoppers, students, museumgoers, tourists and visitors.
- WMATA estimates that without the 30N and 30S, 1000 riders each weekday would have to make a transfer downtown to complete their trip while now they can travel on only one bus directly from origin to destination.
- Even with the proposed free transfers between Metrobus and Metrorail, the cost in money and time for using alternatives to the 30N and 30S could be a serious burden, particularly for low income riders. Making a transfer also adds to trip time and the risk of missed connections. (The full trip is already 90 minutes, when the bus is on schedule.)
- Since the early 1970s the District has been committed to keeping up the 30-series Metrobus links between distant and disparate neighborhoods, not solely for mobility but for the links between people and communities. Eliminating the 30N and 30S represents not only a loss of a transit service but also a loss of social and economic and other connections.

**RECOMMENDATION:** ANC3B recommends rejecting the proposal to eliminate the 30N and 30S. These Metrobus routes are the only remaining cross-city buses connecting Southeast and Rock Creek West/upper Northwest Washington. which has been and remains a vital link between communities, as essential economical one-bus day-to-day transportation service for workers and students and visitors, and also as a practical and symbolic way to bring together the people of the District together as important parts of the same economic, social and cultural fabric of our city. District leaders for the past 50 years have underlined the importance of maintaining this connection, and turning our backs on this commitment would also leave an estimated 1000 people per day without one-bus service to make their journey to work, school and other essential destinations.

**37 Friendship Heights-Archives limited stop MetroExtra weekday rush hour service.**  
**PROPOSED FOR ELIMINATION**

The 37 bus offers the fastest transit trip for commuters and is a valuable resource for the community.

- The 37 cuts a full 15 minutes from the trip from Friendship Heights all the way to Archives (only 34 minutes compared to 49 minutes on the 30S or other Metrobus alternatives) during early morning rush hour.
- The 37 takes some of the burden from other 30-series buses at peak times, so without the 37 the rest of the buses would be even more crowded than they already are.
- WMATA estimates that 52% of current 37 riders (234 riders/day) would not be able to make the same trip on another Metrobus route. They would have to make a transfer or travel by a different mode.
- The 37 is carrying about 450 riders per day, but that represents a continuing decline in ridership, down 13% in the past year. The average ridership is now between 18 and 24 passengers per bus, which is low for a full-size bus, especially in peak hour.
- As a result of reduced ridership on the 37, its fare box recovery and overall productivity are well below WMATA averages and performance targets.
- With just 5 more passengers per bus, the 37 could meet WMATA thresholds on important productivity measures. That means that if each rider, ANC, and community on the 37 route could create even a small increase in awareness of the service and ridership, the 37 would not be on the list for elimination.
- WMATA has a commitment to offer MetroExtra service on all the major bus corridors in the District, and Wisconsin Avenue is one of the most heavily used corridors. On all other MetroExtra routes, WMATA is working on improving service in FY2021, while under the proposal the 37 route would not have any service. Without the 37, Wisconsin Avenue and all of Ward 3 would be without MetroExtra service.

**RECOMMENDATION:** ANC3B recommends rejecting the proposal to eliminate the 37 bus service. The 37 provides efficient rush-hour service that carries hundreds of commuters who would otherwise be adding to the overcrowding on the rest of the 30-series of buses. The area ANCs are committed to working together to increase awareness of the 37 service and build ridership so this valuable service can continue to be available. Until a more comprehensive plan for area bus service is developed to meet MoveDC and other goals for the future, we need to maintain the fabric of our bus service network so riders will keep using Metrobus and strengthen their sense that the service is there and designed to assist them in making essential trips. If the 37 cannot be sustained, then we strongly recommend that WMATA add limited stop MetroExtra service that follows a modified route to serve the major corridor in our area, along Wisconsin Avenue, which is one of the priority transit corridors in the city. The MetroExtra service was established to serve the city's priority transit corridors and WMATA has a commitment to operating high-performing MetroExtra service on all those corridors, which we support.

Our city, and the region need quality public transit service to achieve our environmental goals, economic goals, housing goals, and a high quality of life for residents. Our ANC has similar goals for the environment, economic health, and quality of life for our community. **That is why we oppose all of these proposed changes.**

We will be pleased to see WMATA and its many stakeholders in the city and the region work together to develop a high-performing, coordinated network of bus services for the Washington

Metropolitan area. Success in that effort will have to be based on evaluating what the public needs and wants for transit service, achieving additional efficiencies, and attracting and retaining more bus riders. WMATA has been reporting declining bus ridership for the last five years. The nearly 125 million riders in FY2019 marked a 3.6% drop over forecasts, and WMATA is expecting only 120 million riders in FY2021, a year-to-year drop of 6.4%. Factors in the decline include increased trip times due to traffic congestion and roadwork, fewer transfers from Metrorail which has also lost riders because of trackwork and reduced travel demand, low gas prices, competition from alternatives such as ride-hailing services, e-scooters, bicycles, and walking, and loss of trust in the reliability and safety of WMATA services.

A final and related point is important for us to make on the process for getting to this point in the consideration of WMATA's budget and service proposals. As you are probably aware, residents in our area were among the first to contact WMATA in large numbers about the proposed changes in Metrobus service on the D1, D2 and 30-series routes. Residents from Glover Park-Cathedral Heights and nearby Burleith-Georgetown along those bus routes also participated in the December 12 and January 9 meetings of the WMATA Board to register their concerns about the proposals. Our ANC did not take a formal position but requested that WMATA schedule a community meeting to share details about the proposed changes with the wide range of riders and other stakeholders who would be affected. Beginning in December, we also contacted WMATA Government Relations office to request that WMATA staff attend an ANC3B public meeting to share additional information with us and with our constituents. We had a firm confirmation that WMATA staff would attend our January 9 meeting. Then when the WMATA Board deferred its timetable for approving release of the docket, we received a request that we defer the WMATA presentation to our February 13 public meeting, which led to an outcry in our community. We immediately got a firm confirmation that WMATA staff would attend that meeting.

Then on February 4, we received a letter by email from WMATA's Vice President for Government Relations saying that many ANCs had requested meetings with staff about the Metrobus service changes and therefore all ANC meetings were being canceled and we should instead attend a forum solely for ANC Commissioners on the evening of February 11 at WMATA Headquarters where we could hear presentations and talk one-to-one with WMATA planning staff to learn more about the proposals and take back the information to our constituents. In fact, the forum was quite useful and provided numerous details and context for the proposals that we might not have gotten in a community forum. Still, WMATA's decision left all ANCs and their constituents without any chance to hear directly about the proposed changes in Metrobus service, after two months of waiting to see the details. The docket posted online has never included sufficient information to allow anyone to assess what the list of route changes might mean. It has been extremely challenging to convey to the community what WMATA is proposing, because ANCs did not have adequate information and the process led to such anger, resentment and mistrust of WMATA's motives, reliability, and commitment to serving the public interest. This was not the planning staff's recommendation. They appeared to be placed in nearly as much difficulty as ANCs and riders by the decisions on how the proposals were presented. We recommend that the WMATA team, including those responsible for communications, learn from this experience and take steps to avoid ever repeating this disastrously deficient process, for the sake of better community relations, government relations, effective outreach and public engagement, and public trust in this essential part of our transportation system and the day-day lives of our residents, communities, and region.

In the meantime, we hope the staff and Board members will consider our recommendations and reasoning. WMATA needs to weigh the merits of saving a few hundred thousand dollars in operating costs at the expense of reducing service, leaving thousands of riders with poorer transit options, and as a result losing further Metrobus riders at a time we need to be building trust and interest in using public transit.

Sincerely,



Brian Turmail  
Chairman

cc. Mayor Muriel Bowser  
Chairman Phil Mendelson  
At-Large Councilmember Anita Bonds  
At-Large Councilmember David Grosso  
At-Large Councilmember Elissa Silverman  
At-Large Councilmember Robert C. White, Jr.  
Ward 1 Councilmember Brianne K. Nadeau  
Ward 3 Councilmember Mary M. Cheh  
Ward 4 Councilmember Brandon T. Todd  
Ward 5 Councilmember Kenyan R. McDuffie  
Ward 6 Councilmember Charles Allen  
Ward 7 Councilmember Vincent C. Gray  
Ward 8 Councilmember Trayon White  
Jeff Marootian, DDOT  
Raka Choudhury, DDOT

This letter was approved by a vote of 5-0 at a duly noticed regular public meeting of the Commission on February 13, 2020, at which a quorum was present. (Three of the Commissioners make a quorum.) By this vote, the Commission designated the Chairman or his designee to represent the Commission on this matter.)