



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

JANESE LEWIS GEORGE

Ward 4 Councilmember
Chair of the Committee on
Facilities and Family Services

COMMITTEE MEMBER

Committee on Transportation and the Environment
Committee on Executive Administration and Labor
Committee on Public Works and Operations

July 12, 2024

WMATA Board of Directors
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
600 Fifth Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear WMATA Board:

I am writing to you on behalf of Ward 4 residents, to bring our community's needs to your attention as you revise the Proposed 2025 Better Bus Network.

Members of the Ward 4 community rely heavily on WMATA's bus network; not only are buses essential for our residents commuting to/from work, they also provide critical connections between neighbors and their community. Buses take us to doctors' appointments, connect residential neighborhoods with commercial centers, and help residents without access to cars travel throughout the city.

Since the Proposed 2025 Better Bus Network was released in early May, I have worked closely with my constituents to identify revisions necessary for maintaining or improving the level of transit service in our neighborhoods. During this process, I have heard residents consistently express concerns along two themes.

Access to Schools

Direct connections between the residential neighborhoods where our students live and the schools that they attend are uniquely important to the District, where so many of our students rely on public transportation to get to and from school. Although this is particularly impactful for our secondary school students, many of whom commute by themselves, these connections are also essential for parents of primary school students who use WMATA buses to take their children to/from school. As I engaged with my community, residents across Ward 4 expressed serious concerns about how the proposed network will affect their children's commute.

The Proposed 2025 Better Bus Network design seeks to make transfers between buses, and transfers between buses and other modes of transit (such as metro), an integral part of the network. The Proposed Network also seeks to provide more consistent service throughout the week, at the expense of some rush hour service. However, parents

expressed concerns about any changes that would require their children to make transfers during their commute to/from school, and about any reductions to rush hour service for routes serving schools. Particularly when commuting in the mornings, our children's safe and timely arrival often depends on having reliable and direct access to their schools. **I urge you to consider frequent and direct connections between neighborhoods and the schools that serve them as a top priority when revising the Proposed Better Bus Network design.** In Ward 4, I am particularly concerned about students traveling to Coolidge High School, Ida B. Wells Middle School, Lafayette Elementary School, Deal Middle School, Jackson-Reed High School, Washington Latin PCS, Capital City PCS, and Paul PCS, as well as students traveling from the Crestwood, Shepherd Park, Lamond Riggs and Riggs Park, and South Manor Park neighborhoods.

Engaging with school communities will be essential to ensuring the redesign does not prevent our students from safely getting to and from school. **As you revise the Better Bus Network design, I also urge you to continue working with DCPS and DC Public Charter Schools, and to engage directly with parents and school community groups.**

Access to Residential Neighborhoods

One of the most pressing concerns I heard throughout the Ward is that in some communities, the Proposed Better Bus Network cuts off residential neighborhoods from directly accessing the routes and destinations their residents need. Although there are good reasons for prioritizing bus service along major transit corridors, buses also provide critical access for people living in deeply residential neighborhoods. Many District residents, particularly those who intend to age in place, plan their living arrangements around access to public transit; for these residents, a seemingly minor change could be catastrophic to their ability to travel throughout the city. **When considering bus stop eliminations, and routing buses around residential neighborhoods, I urge you to be considerate of seniors, people with disabilities, and other residents who may not be able to accommodate having to walk farther to access their bus routes.**

SPECIFIC ISSUES IDENTIFIED:

The concerns described above were expressed to me by residents across Ward 4, and about many different individual bus routes. But there were several specific issues that were repeatedly brought to my attention by residents, and that deserve more focused attention by WMATA.

Residents of Lamond Riggs and Riggs Park strongly oppose the proposed discontinuation of E4 (proposed as the C83) service in their neighborhoods. Although the proposed new P32 service would serve the Lamond Riggs and Riggs Park community, this bus would connect them directly with Hyattsville, and residents would need to transfer to the C83 in order to travel crosstown. Residents have made it clear that although they do not have a need to be directly connected with Hyattsville, many of them do need direct access to Friendship Heights and the Ward 4 neighborhoods served in-between; this

connection is essential for Lamond Riggs and Riggs Park residents to access employment, medical services, commercial corridors, and other community centers.

Residents of Lamond Riggs, Riggs Park, and Takoma also strongly oppose the proposed discontinuation of the K2 route between the Takoma and Fort Totten Metro stations. The elimination of this route without a proposed alternative will isolate residents living between these neighborhoods, limiting their access to our transit network. The K2 also runs nearby several schools, and eliminating this route without an alternative will hurt access for students and parents commuting to/from school.

Finally, **residents in Barnaby Woods and Chevy Chase strongly oppose the lack of bus service in their neighborhoods.** Since the discontinuation of the E6 in 2021, residents in Barnaby Woods and Chevy Chase – particularly those living at Knollwood Retirement Home, have repeatedly requested that WMATA reinstate service between their neighborhoods and Friendship Heights. The proposed new C85 line would still require residents to transfer at Tenleytown in order to access medical offices at Friendship Heights, and still does not provide ANY weekend service. The proposed new C85 provides no transit access for students and parents to reach Lafayette Elementary School and Lafayette-Pointer Park; it also only proposes trips every 30 minutes during rush hour, which would make it challenging for students to rely on that route for transportation to Deal Middle School or Jackson-Reed High School. Additionally, the proposed new C83 route (replacing the E4) removes service from McKinley Street, and would not provide weekend service, further isolating residents in Chevy Chase and Barnaby Woods from our transit network.

Sincerely,



Janeese Lewis George
Ward 4 Councilmember