



Safety and Operations Committee

Board Information Item III-A

Better Bus Update



Board Document

OVERVIEW			
PRESENTATION NAME	Update on the New Metrobus Network	DOCUMENT NO.	300060
ACTION OR INFORMATION	Information		
STRATEGIC TRANSFORMATION PLAN GOAL	Service excellence; Regional opportunity and partnership;		
RESOLUTION	No		
EXECUTIVE OWNER			
EXECUTIVE TEAM OWNER	Webster, Thomas J.;		
ORGANIZATION	Planning and Performance		
DOCUMENT INITIATOR	Mike R. Collins		
OTHER INFORMATION			
COMMITTEE	Safety and Operations Committee	COMMITTEE DATE	9/25/2025
PURPOSE/KEY HIGHLIGHTS	Provide a summary of the Better Bus Network launch and outreach and engagement efforts, as well as how Metro is gathering feedback and continuing to make improvements to the network, service performance, and customer information.		
DISCUSSION	Metro wants to take this opportunity to thank our customers, operators and front-line staff, partners, and staff for a successful launch of the new Metrobus network. We appreciate your continued feedback, patience, and ridership. The launch on June 29th was the beginning of Better Bus, not the end, and we are continuing to make improvements to the network, routes, customer information, and engagement.		



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Launch Summary

The new Metrobus network operates 125 routes and was launched with 7 percent more service for the same funding. Below is a summary of the various activities that Metro undertook to prepare customers and staff for the launch of the new network. This data is summarized for the period between the network's adoption in November 2024 and the start of the school year in August 2025:

- 74 percent of bus customers indicated awareness of the new network from surveys conducted in the months leading up to launch;
- 376 outreach events were held, including bus stop chats, ride alongs, pop-ups, and partnerships with organizations to participate in events like Open Streets, World Pride and Cherry Blossom Festival;
- 460 Metro office-based staff from across the organization supported weekday and weekend outreach to ensure customers had what they needed for their trip.
- 37 Back-to-School events and bus stop chats to ensure students, parents, and administrators had what they needed for the start of school;
- 109 Better Bus Partners, such as the Prince George's County Department of Parks and Recreation, multiple local libraries, and many community organizations, with 259 locations;
- 250 elected officials, their staff, and jurisdictional partners were briefed on the new network and tools available to support constituents;
- 250 route profiles and route handouts were created in both English and Spanish;
- 50 neighborhood profiles were created to explain differences between the legacy and new network;
- 450,000 take-ones covering 14 languages were printed, with over 20 percent of our interactions during outreach were in languages other than English;
- 111 unique maps were designed for the network and bus bays and worked with jurisdictions to add maps in bus shelters;
- 8,500+ bus stop flags were designed, fabricated, and installed;
- 20,000 secondary signs were printed and posted on bus stop poles at eye level to indicate that change is coming; and
- 2,800+ staff were trained on the new network, including bus operators, station managers, transit police, and call center staff.

Outreach and Engagement

Metro's outreach and engagement – to customers, community



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partners, elected officials, jurisdictional staff, and everyone in between – ensured that 74 percent of bus customers knew about the launch of the new network on June 29, 2025. Metro recruited, trained and deployed the Better Bus Squad, the largest staff volunteer team in the last ten years. The Squad engaged customers at bus stops and transit centers across the region and were supported by daily dedicated Teams chat, real-time support, digital and printed materials, and branded attire. Starting in the summer of 2024, a full year before launch, we started engaging over 3,000 community partners through Metro Message, the Better Bus Dispatch, and other touch points. Consistently hearing about the launch, with more information as the launch got closer, ensured community partners and their clients were aware. 109 of the partners joined our Better Bus Partner program to help amplify outreach and information at 259 locations. These partners had dedicated support, a communications toolkit, print materials and signage to display at their locations, and branded swag. Finally, to support students, parents, and school employees, we held 37 Back-to-School events, including 10 bus stop chats on the first day of school for the District of Columbia.

Feedback

Since the new network launched, feedback has been collected from customers, operators, as well as Metro staff who have been riding the new routes. Metro's Customer Call Center has received over 5,200 comments since launch and while that is higher than this time last year, the rate of comments has steadily declined since implementation. These comments have focused on:

- 54% operational (crowding, delays, no shows, missed trips)
- 20% bus stops (discontinued stops, incorrect stop information)
- 10% routing/service (alignment, hours of operation, frequency)
- 16% other issues (trip planning help, requesting schedules, real-time data concerns)

An Operator Survey was deployed to gather feedback from bus operators about how the new routes are functioning and opportunities to improve. To date, we have received over 200 responses focused on:

- 50% runtime / schedule
- 30% stop locations or flags
- 25% route design or alignment



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Improvements implemented since Launch Day

We continue to incrementally improve the network based on feedback, from routings, to stops, to data and announcements. Examples of We have made changes to routes to improve safety and operations, such as:

- C29 (Anacostia – Southern Av): Shifted route to Alabama Av SE instead of Mississippi Av SE
- C31 (Minnesota Av): Shifted WB route to directly turn from Nannie Helen Burroughs Av to Minnesota Av NE
- C37 (Lincoln Hts – Potomac Av): Shifted route to continue on Southern Av instead of using 41st Street SE
- C63 (Deanwood – Washington Hospital Center): Directly serves the bus loop at the front door of the VA Medical Center to provide direct access
- C83 (Barnaby Woods – Friendship Heights): Directly serves the Knollwood Retirement Community
- D72 (Connecticut Av – Mt Pleasant): Shifted route so that all buses serve the Mt Pleasant terminal
- D90 (Massachusetts Av – Tenleytown): Shifted WB/NB route to serve Idaho Av
- P31 (New Carrollton – Takoma Langley): Shifted route to serve Lebanon St instead of Merrimac Dr

In addition, we have corrected data, maps, bus stop flags, and removed the flags for stops that are no longer served to improve customers' experience. Data for apps, buses, and back-end systems were updated on July 27 and September 14 to correct on-board announcements and station bay assignments, add information for extra trips for days school is in service, and update the route changes noted above. We have deployed temporary bus bay signage in shelters and across bus loops and removed much of the legacy bus signage. Finally, we have corrected 215 bus stop flags since launch, removed flags for stops that are no longer served, and adjusted a stop on the C53 to ensure safe pedestrian crossing.

Early Performance and Ridership of the New Network

After a short adjustment period in the first week after the launch, the new network's performance indicators are similar to summer of 2024. This reflects the experience of peer agencies that have launched new networks. Reliability indicators like on time performance (OTP) and service delivered are trending up as



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operators and customers become more comfortable with the new system. Prediction availability and accuracy remained strong since launch as missed trips decreased. Finally, the calls and texts to the call center peaked the week of launch and have steadily declined, with an increase again leading up to the first day of DC public schools at the end of August.

Missed trips from operator availability are at similar levels to last summer. Missed trips typically increase in July and August in part because operators are encouraged to take vacations during lower ridership periods of the year. Metro is increasing our operator hiring to increase training class sizes by 36 percent, from 55 to 75 trainees, starting in October to increase available operators.

Bus ridership was 8 percent lower in July and August than last year, which was expected as customers adjust to the new network. Customers are already benefitting from the new network. With more service added to the Frequent Service Network, 47 percent of customer trips have had scheduled wait times of 12 min or less, compared to 44 percent in the old network. The C11 provides a new connection between the District and employment and retail centers in Maryland. More than 4,000 people used the C11 to get to National Harbor, a 50 percent increase in trips there. Finally, almost 3,000 trips used the P12's new weekend service to Laurel in July.

Continuously improving and identifying investments to ensure quality service and improve the network

Metro makes service changes each fiscal year in December and June and through these improvements, we will be building toward the Visionary Network. The December 2025 investments and FY2027 service proposals will focus on improving performance and incrementally increasing service based on performance and ridership data and customer, operator, and partner comments. The December service investments will mainly focus on improvements to reliability, running time, crowding, and first or last trip times of a route to better align with ridership patterns. The potential service changes for the FY2027 budget will build on those performance-based changes as we will have substantially more data during higher ridership and traffic periods to assess crowding and reliability. In addition, we are identifying frequency and span improvements and opportunities to make service more consistent. Potential service improvements will be considered during the FY2027 budget process.



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INTERESTED PARTIES	For conflict-of-interest purposes, staff has identified the following contractors and interested parties involved in the Better Bus Network Redesign: Kimley-Horn, Foursquare Integrated Transportation Planning, NeoNiche Strategies, ITA-Idle Time Advertising, Potomac Construction.
RECOMMENDATION/NEXT STEPS	Launching the new network was just the beginning of Better Bus. Metro is committed to continuous improvement for the network, service, and customer information. We will continue to monitor performance, analyze ridership, and review feedback to propose improvements for FY2027 and beyond. For permanent flags, maps, and signs, Metro is building the process and tools to manage permanent information, including developing a regional bus stop flag program. Metro will build on the success of the community outreach and engagement and staff volunteer program with deeper partnerships and a consistent program for staff volunteers.
FUNDING IMPACT	<p>Planning and launching the Better Bus Network involved a substantial investment of resources and time by Metro, our jurisdictional partners, community groups, elected officials, and customers across the region. Metro is grateful for the ongoing efforts across the region to build a Better Bus system.</p> <p>The service changes will be integrated with the annual budget process. Permanent bus flags, maps, and other signage is incorporated in the capital program.</p>

Update on the New Metro Bus Network



Safety and Operations Committee
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
September 25, 2025

Service Excellence, a Strategic Goal From Your Metro, the Way Forward

Service excellence

Deliver safe, reliable, convenient, accessible, and enjoyable service for customers.

Talented teams

Attract, develop, and retain top talent where individuals feel valued, supported, and proud of their contribution.

Regional opportunity & partnership

Design transit service to move more people and connect a growing region

Financial stewardship and resource management

Manage resources responsibly to achieve a sustainable operating, capital, and energy-efficient model.

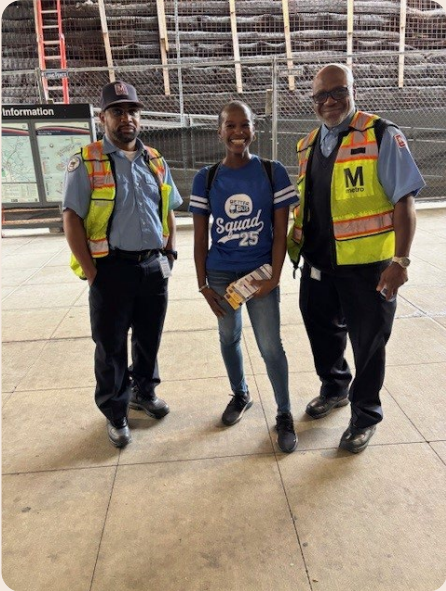
Objectives of Service Excellence Goal

- **Reliability** | Provide dependable service that the community trusts.
- **Convenience** | Deliver frequent and accessible service that modernizes and enhances the customer experience.

Objectives of Regional Partnership Goal

- **Regional Network and Partner Service Optimization** | Align regional service networks... to increase convenience, use of transit.
- **Reliability** | Provide dependable service that the community trusts.

Thank you to our customers, operators, partners, and staff for your feedback, patience, and ridership. We appreciate you!



Better Bus Launch by the Numbers

125

New bus routes

376

Outreach events

109

Better Bus Partners with 259 locations

111

Unique maps for stations and jurisdictions

2,800+

Staff trained on the new network

7%

More service for the same funding

460+

Metro office-based staff supported outreach

250

Elected officials, staff, and jurisdiction partners briefed

50

Neighborhood profiles created

450K

Take-ones covering 14 languages

74%

Bus customer awareness of new network in CY2025 Q2

37

Back-to-School focused events and bus stop chats

8,500+

Bus flags fabricated and installed

250

Route profiles and handouts in English and Spanish

20,000

Secondary signs at eye level to indicate that change is coming

Outreach and engagement ensured that 74% of bus customers knew about Better Bus by Launch Day

- Recruited, trained, and deployed the Better Bus Squad, the **largest staff volunteer team in the last 10 years**
 - Enabled by daily dedicated Teams chat, real-time support, digital and printed materials, and branded attire
- **Engaged 3,000+** of Metro's community partners via routine emails and virtual meetings
- Created Better Bus Partners program to further **engage 109 partners, who amplified outreach efforts and increased awareness** at 259 locations
 - Enabled by dedicated support, communications toolkit, print materials and signage, and branded swag
- Held **37 Back-to-School events, including 10 bus stop chats** to make sure students knew what to do when school started



Customers and operators continue to provide feedback to help improve the network

We continue to receive and review comments from customers, operators, jurisdictional partners, and other stakeholders

Customers

Over 5,200 calls and texts to customer call center from launch through early September

- 54% runtime / schedule / crowding / delays
- 20% bus stop and customer information issues
- 10% routing/alignment issues
- 16% other issues

Operators

Over 200 comments from operators have been received since mid-July

- 50% runtime / schedule
- 30% stop locations or flags
- 25% route design or alignment*

*Percentages sum to more than 100% due to some comments being ascribed to more than one category

The launch of Better Bus was just the beginning. We are continuing to improve bus service

Feedback from customers, operators, and partners are already improving safety and operations of the new network

Route	Name	Change
C29	Anacostia – Southern Av	Shifted route to Alabama Av SE instead of Mississippi Av SE
C31	Minnesota Av	Shifted WB route to directly turn from Nannie Helen Burroughs Av to Minnesota Av NE
C37	Lincoln Hts – Potomac Av	Shifted route to continue on Southern Av instead of using 41 st Street SE
C63	Deanwood – Washington Hospital Center	Directly serves the bus loop at the VA Medical Center to provide direct access
C83	Barnaby Woods – Friendship Heights	Directly serves the Knollwood Retirement Community
D72	Connecticut Av – Mt Pleasant	Shifted route so that all buses serve the Mt Pleasant terminal
D90	Massachusetts Av – Tenleytown	Shifted WB/NB route to serve Idaho Av
P31	New Carrollton – Takoma Langley	Shifted route to serve Lebanon St instead of Merrimac Dr



We continue to improve customer experience and information

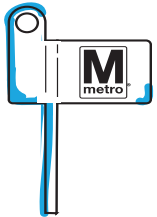
Fixing data, maps, bus stop flags and removing old flags has improved customers' experience



- Data for apps, buses and back-end systems updated on July 27 and September 14
- **Corrected on-board announcements and station bay assignments** and added extra trips for school days



- Removed or covered outdated signage at stations and shelters
- **Deployed temporary bus bay signage** in shelters and across bus loops



- **Corrected ~215 bus stop flags** since launch
- Adjusted stop for C53 to improve pedestrian safety
- **Removed flags from stops that are no longer served**



Metro and DDOT relocated the C53 stop on 8th Street SE at Pennsylvania Avenue to address pedestrian concerns



Relocated e-paper signs to new stops such as 24th and Pennsylvania, NW

Early service performance has been mostly positive

After a short adjustment period in the first week, the new network's performance is similar to a typical summer month

- Reliability (e.g. on-time performance (OTP) and service delivered) is trending up as operators and customers become more comfortable with the new network
- Missed trips caused by operator availability continue to impact service delivered, but have improved since launch
- Bus ridership in July was 8% lower than last year. This is expected based on peer agencies' experience since it takes time for customers to adapt to changes



Customers are already benefitting from the new network

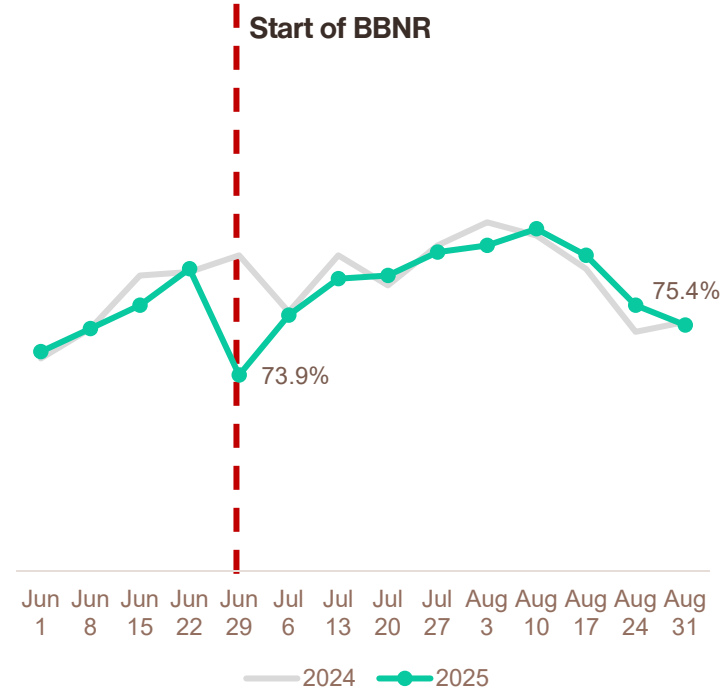
- With more service added to the **Frequent Service Network**, 47% of customer trips have had scheduled wait times of 12 min or less, compared to 44% in the old network
- The C11 provides a **new connection** between DC and employment and retail centers in Maryland. More than 4,000 people used the C11 to get to National Harbor, a 50% increase in trips there.
- Almost 3,000 trips used the P12's **new weekend service** to Laurel in July



On time performance and real time prediction are similar to summer of 2024

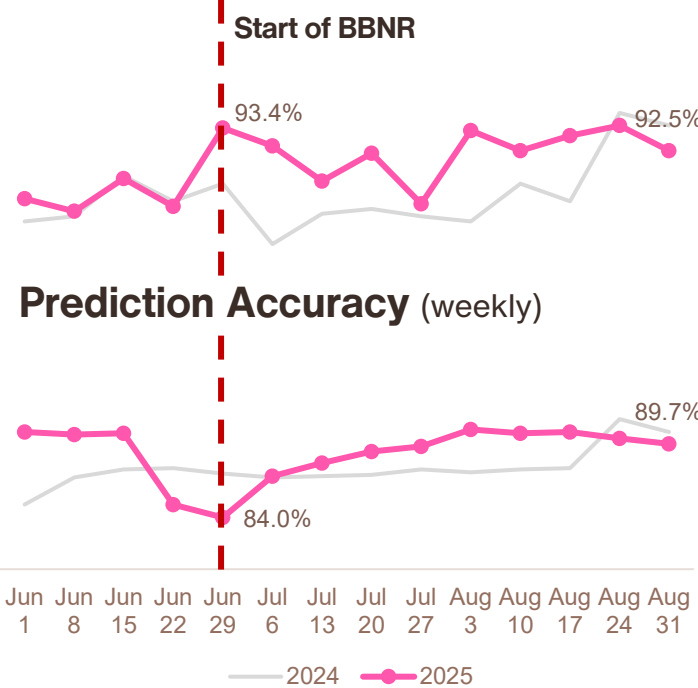
On Time Performance (OTP) stabilized after a dip in the first few days, matching performance with July and August 2024.

OTP (weekly)

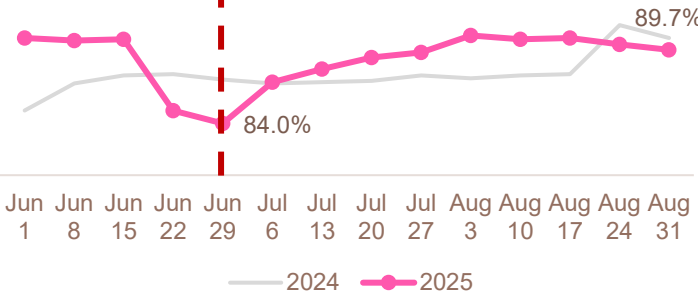


Prediction availability* has remained strong since launch as missed trips decreased. Prediction accuracy* steadily improved with OTP.

Prediction Availability (weekly)



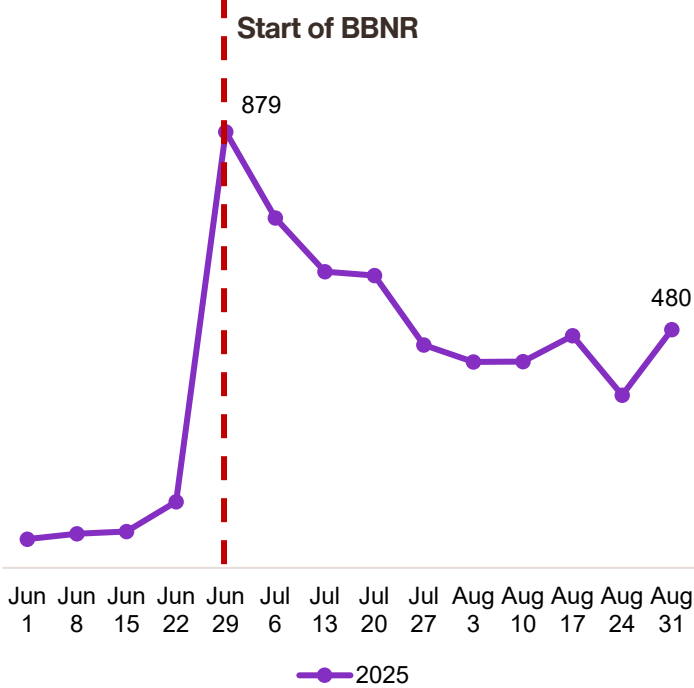
Prediction Accuracy (weekly)



*Prediction availability measures scheduled trips that show real-time predictions. Prediction accuracy measures the quality of the real-time predictions

Customer comments peaked during launch, has steadily decreased, and increased slightly at the start of the school year.

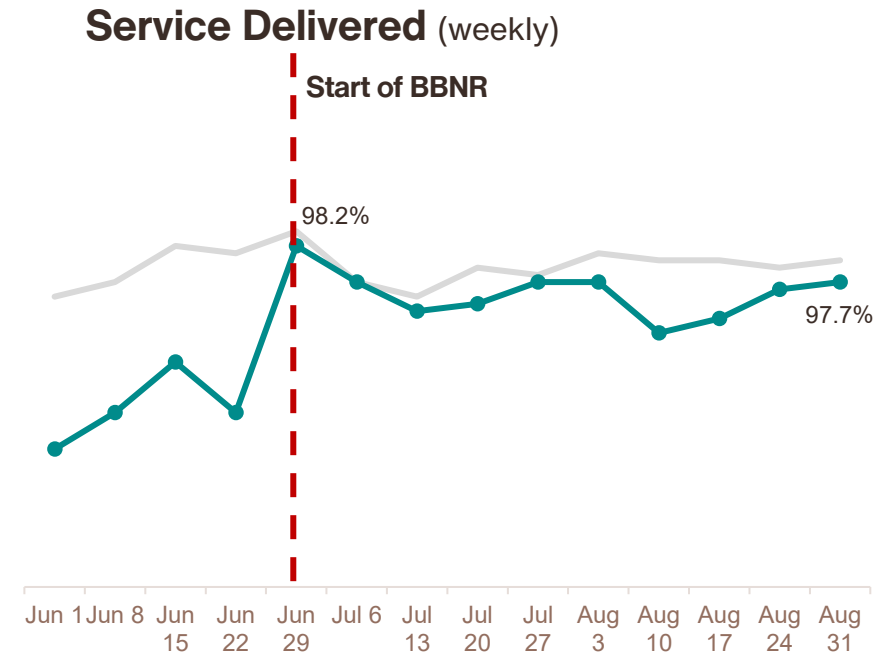
Total Comments Received (weekly)



Missed trips from operator availability are at similar levels to last summer

Metro is increasing bus operator hiring to increase operator availability and reduce missed trips

- Training operators on the new network contributed to increase in missed trips from February – June.
- In new network, overall scheduled service delivered has improved and missed trips due to operator availability have declined.
- Missed trips typically increase in July and August in part because operators are encouraged to take vacations during lower ridership periods
- Training classes are increasing by 20 operators (36%) starting in October



Looking ahead to ensure quality service and improve the network

December investments and FY2027 proposals will focus on improving performance and incrementally increasing service

Improve performance: Address critical crowding and reliability issues

- E.g.: Add early or late trip, adjust running times

Increase frequency: Frequency is a key driver of ridership and a top priority for customers.

- E.g.: Increase frequency to 20-min on routes with crowding

Provide consistent service: Service that is easy to understand that customers can rely on all day, seven days a week

- E.g.: Remove short turns at more times of the day/week

Example December service changes include

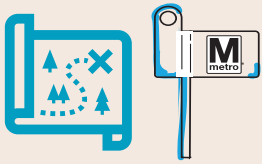
- **A25, A29:** Peak frequency and new peak route using Virginia Commuter Choice grant
- **Running time adjustments** on some routes
- **Spot fixes and hours of operation corrections** to align with pre-launch hours and address crowding
- **Routine adjustments** to address on-street projects, coordinate trip times, and minor route adjustments

Next steps to build a better bus system

Launching the new network was just the beginning of Better Bus



- Continue to monitor performance, analyze ridership, and review feedback
 - Implement December service changes
 - Develop FY2027 service improvements and multi-year service improvement plan
-



- Build process and tools to manage bus stops, flags, and signs
 - Develop regional bus stop flags program for implementation
 - Design bus maps and signage program for implementation
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- Develop staff and community partner outreach
- Develop deeper partnerships with organizations that serve critical communities
- Increase internal collaboration for teams that conduct outreach