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TIME FOR BETTER TRANSIT

MetroNow Releases Bus Transformation Project Progress Report to Refocus the Region's Leaders on the Urgency of Better Bus

In response to the region's critical transit needs, leading transportation coalition launches the Bus Champions Roundtable, a series of targeted discussions with regional leaders to align priorities and accelerate bus transformation progress.

PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Washington, D.C. — The MetroNow Coalition—comprised of the Coalition for Smarter Growth, Federal City Council, Greater Washington Board of Trade, Greater Washington Partnership, Northern Virginia Chamber of Commerce, Prince George's Chamber of Commerce, the 2030 Group, and Tysons Partnership—today released the MetroNow Bus Transformation Project Progress Report, which inventories and analyzes two years of progress by WMATA and the DC region's nine bus providers against the 2019 Washington Area Bus Transformation Project (BTP) Strategy and Action Plan. The report is being shared today with the WMATA Board, General Manager and staff, and state and local officials.

*"The last two years laid bare just how big a role the bus plays in the health of our region's economy," said **Tony Williams, CEO and Executive Director of the Federal City Council**, "Better bus service has huge implications for improving people's quality of life. The path to a strong, equitable economic recovery for our region starts with faster, more frequent, more reliable bus service."*

The Progress Report enables readers to assess the progress each agency has made advancing the Bus Transformation Project's four strategies and twenty-six initiatives, uplifts the work done by the region's elected and transportation workforce over the last two years to improve the region's bus systems, and highlights key projects to inspire regional action. The report also identifies key gaps in the 2019 strategy that should be addressed based on the rapidly evolving landscape over the past two years.



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Transforming bus service will require a combination of sustained political will, and operating and capital funding. In developing the inaugural MetroNow Bus Transformation Project Progress Report, the MetroNow Coalition identified six key better bus initiatives for the region to prioritize in 2022:

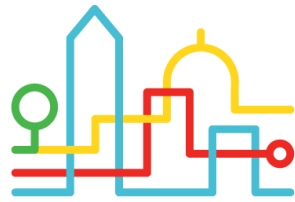
1. Support WMATA's Regional Bus Network Redesign Process
2. Build Ten Miles of New Bus Lanes & Implement Bus Enforcement Strategy
3. Create a Regional Strategy to Recruit & Retain Bus Operators
4. Create a Strategy for Zero Emissions Infrastructure & Workforce
5. Consolidate Regional Data on Bus Operations & Best Practices
6. Create a Regional Strategy to Address the Transit Funding Cliff

A key finding of the report is that while progress has been made, most of the Bus Transformation Project's recommendations are off schedule or have seen limited attention over the past two years - understandable given the impact of the pandemic on transit operations. The progress report is a call to action for our region's leaders to put the Bus Transformation Project back on schedule, and to serve as a tool for readers to hold elected officials and transportation leaders accountable.

In 2022, MetroNow will host the Bus Champions Roundtable, a series of targeted discussions with the region's key business, transportation, elected leaders and advocates to cultivate a generation of "bus champions" focused on accelerating regional bus transformation.

*"Despite the pandemic upending all of our lives and the best laid plans, the report shows we've made a lot of progress, but makes clear that we have far more work to do to realize the high-quality, inclusive and rapid bus network this region needs to compete on the global stage," **said JB Holston, CEO of the Greater Washington.** "The pandemic, ongoing Metrorail saga and a looming FY24 operating budget fiscal cliff facing our transit agencies shows that it is more important than ever that we double down on the transformation of the bus, and build a more efficient, effective, and resilient transit system. We have the plan, our transit agencies have the talent, and we even have new funding opportunities from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. With increased political will, our region is ready to go full-speed ahead on implementation."*

Each Bus Champions Roundtable conversation will focus on one or more of the six key initiatives identified in the Progress Report and the coalition will promote attendance to a wide array of stakeholders. In addition, the coalition encourages people to consider adding their names [to the growing list of Bus Champions today](#) to receive tailored community updates and receive invitations to webinars, events, and other opportunities to take action to support the bus.



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QUOTES FROM METRONOW LEADERS

“Bus is a regional issue. Virginians in places like Tysons and Fairfax County need better bus service. We all have a role to play in elevating our region’s commitment to the Bus Transformation Project to ensure WMATA and our local transit agencies have the funding and political support they need to transform bus service,” said **Richard Bradley, Acting Executive Director of the Tysons Partnership.**

“Everything we’ve learned from the COVID crisis about the critical role that the bus plays in our transportation system reinforces the urgency of the Bus Transformation Project Strategy,” said **Bob Buchanan, President of The 2030 Group.** *“As we look ahead, we must move beyond a crisis after crisis mindset and create a strategy that addresses the series of existential threats to our transit system, and works to create a long-term sustainable model for public transit. Our first step should be doing everything we can to accelerate and implement this strategy, and unlock the massive potential of a better bus system.”*

“We need the highest levels of focus and dedication from our region’s leaders to ensure the bus gets priority on our roadways, and in our budgets,” said **Julie Coons, President and CEO of the Northern Virginia Chamber of Commerce.** *“The time is now to take action for a better bus today.”*

“81% of Metrobus riders are people of color and 46% are low-income. And according to WMATA there are more businesses and jobs located within walking distance to a bus stop than Metro stations. WMATA’s data also shows that unlike rail customers, bus customers have continued to ride the bus to commute to work throughout the pandemic. We can’t talk about an equitable, inclusive economic recovery without talking about making the service faster, more frequent, and more reliable for bus customers,” said **David Harrington, President and CEO of the Prince George’s Chamber of Commerce.**

“In 2019, DC spent \$40M of its annual Metrobus subsidy on buses stuck in traffic. Investments that make our bus system more effective, such as dedicated bus lanes and automated bus lane enforcement, are simply smart business decisions,” said **Jack McDougle, President and CEO of the Greater Washington Board of Trade.** *“Ensuring adequate transportation for all communities including faster, more reliable bus service, is key to our long-term economic competitiveness and fundamental to making our region a more attractive place to live and work.”*



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“We know that better bus service is one of the tools we have to address inequities in our region in terms of affordable access to jobs and opportunity. Which is why the MetroNow Coalition is not resting with this report, but launching the Bus Champions Roundtable to highlight the six key initiatives the region needs to move forward in 2022.” **said Stewart Schwartz, Executive Director of the Coalition for Smarter Growth (CSG).**

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About the MetroNow Coalition

The MetroNow Coalition is a group of regional leaders from organizations representing businesses and non-profit advocates who came together to ensure that action was taken to put Metro—the backbone of Greater Washington’s transportation infrastructure—on a safe, smart and sustainable path forward. We are dedicated to securing comprehensive improvement of Metro’s governance, funding and operational structures. Since our successful 2018 campaign for dedicated capital funding for Metrorail from each jurisdiction, we doubled-down on our commitment to regional mobility by expanding our focus to include making the region’s bus systems more frequent, reliable, faster, and affordable.

Visit www.MetroNow.com for more information, and get the monthly roundup of the region’s top transit news straight to your inbox by [subscribing to the MetroNow Dispatch](#) today.