

**PRESS RELEASE  
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**PHASE 1 OF STUDY TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO GEORGETOWN FROM THE REGIONAL METRORAIL SYSTEM  
CONCLUDES**

*Study Identifies Bus and Gondola Transit Alternatives to Improve Transit Connections between  
Georgetown and the Metrorail System*

**Washington, DC (October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023)** – Study concludes Georgetown needs dedicated transit connection to Metrorail and narrows wide range of Alternatives to two Bus Alternatives, and an aerial Gondola Alternative, and identifies subsequent technical analysis to advance Study Alternatives.

The Georgetown Business Improvement District (Georgetown BID), Federal City Council, and District Department of Transportation formed a partnership in 2021 to study dedicated infrastructure Alternatives to improve transit reliability, frequency and attractiveness between Georgetown and the Metrorail system. This \$250,000 Study of transit Alternatives was funded by the District of Columbia Department of Transportation. The National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) served as the lead federal agency for the purposes of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The project was managed by the Federal City Council, who engaged VHB Metro DC, with its partner SCJ Alliance.

The goal of the Study was to identify a preliminary range of Alternatives that would provide workers, students, residents, and visitors with a reliable, frequent, safe, and sustainable non-auto connection between Georgetown and the Metrorail system. Over the course of the two-year project, the consultant team, VHB Metro DC, conducted rigorous Alternatives analysis to identify potential transportation infrastructure solutions that provide the most meaningful improvements to increase access between Georgetown’s major jobs and activity centers and nearby Metrorail stations. The preliminary range of Alternatives was developed and screened to address the Study’s Purpose and Need.

The development and screening of Alternatives leveraged robust stakeholder input and relevant studies and analyses that have been done since the completion of the 2016 Georgetown-Rosslyn Gondola Feasibility Study, including the WMATA Blue, Orange, Silver Line Study; 2019 Core of Rosslyn Transportation Study; and others. The project team also focused on creating meaningful opportunities for public involvement and feedback to inform the Study framework, analysis, and conclusions. Of note, the two public questionnaires that were used to solicit public input on the project, received just over 4,000 individual responses combined.

The Study identified three compelling Alternatives that scored best on the various screening criteria. The first two are Bus Rapid Transit Alternatives (Study Alternatives 3 and 10) as the most meaningful Alternatives to serve the Georgetown Hospital and what the project team defined as the study “Core”

employment area. This area triangulated a node that better addressed the many employment opportunities related to Georgetown's retail core, closer to Wisconsin Avenue and the waterfront. The third Alternative is a combined set of aerial Gondola Alternatives (Study Alternatives Gondola Alignments A and B). These two alignments for an aerial gondola system from Rosslyn to Georgetown were the only alternatives to meaningfully increase access to Georgetown University, as well as the Georgetown Hospital. No amount of dedicated bus infrastructure or multimodal connections at the surface level could alleviate the key chokepoint of the intersection of M Street NW and Key Bridge.

Both the quantitative technical analysis conducted by VHB Metro DC Study team, as well as the qualitative, agency stakeholder and public engagement components of the Study validate the un-met demand for frequent, reliable, competitive transit access to and from Georgetown. The Study's combined Bus and Gondola Alternatives created a strong foundation for public discourse around transit enhancements to the area. Two Bus Alternatives emerged as highly beneficial to two of the three Study nodes. Study analysis demonstrated that no surface transit solutions at the Key Bridge and M St. bottleneck provide nearly close to the same levels of access improvement to as the aerial gondola alternative. Given historic federal infrastructure investment for projects like this in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, and the lack of impact to the surface fixed-space trade-offs, the Gondola Alternative remains a viable, attractive Alternative, especially when combined with one or both Bus Alternatives.

This work is pre-NEPA, and Environmental Impact Study. Impacts on historic, environmental, and cultural resources need to be evaluated. The partners have agreed that to advance any one Alternative, or combination of Alternatives, further development of the two-bus rapid transit, and aerial gondola Alternatives is required. Stakeholders and the public requested the next phase of the Study's analysis include Alternatives that combine the Bus and aerial Gondola Alternatives to understand the combined impact of implementing two, or three Alternatives as a single Alternative to be analyzed for its combined impact.

At this time, the partners do not have any funding dedicated to moving forward any of the Alternatives for further development. DDOT is advancing work to continue to compliment the advancement of the Study's goals and Alternatives and has two parallel efforts to improve access and safety in Georgetown: the Georgetown Access and Circulation Study; and the DDOT Bus Transit Alternatives Study.

**For questions, please contact the project manager:**

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#### **QUOTES:**

##### **District Department of Transportation (DDOT):**

"The District of Columbia government is committed to building a more sustainable and resilient city. The DDOT team believes this project demonstrates the continued demand for easier, safer, reliable transit connections to Georgetown. We appreciate the engagement from the public and stakeholders in the Study. It is clear there is real enthusiasm to solve this problem, and this first phase of work resulted in a compelling set of initial Alternatives that deserve additional analysis of impacts and opportunities to implement more equitable, energy-efficient, and climate-friendly connections between Georgetown's jobs and the region's workers who are trying to reach them."

- Everett Lott, Director of DDOT

##### **Georgetown Business Improvement District (Georgetown BID):**

“Georgetown is the largest employment center in DC without a Metrorail Station. Making it more transit accessible will open our job market to a larger and more diverse population. This study’s identification of concrete ways to improve Georgetown’s transit access - combining improved bus service with an aerial Gondola – is an important step toward creating a more accessible neighborhood and advancing the District’s transportation equity, environmental and economic development goals.”

- Joe Sternlieb, President & CEO of Georgetown BID

**Federal City Council:**

“The Federal City Council was pleased to serve as the project manager for this important regional transit Study. We view this as a component of our larger focus on regional infrastructure that supports a healthy regional business community.”

- Anthony Williams, CEO and Executive Director of the Federal City Council