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**Network Redesign:** Engagement on the Draft Visionary Network



## About the Project

Network Redesign: Engagement on the Draft Visionary Network

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## Buses keep our region moving, connecting more than 500,000 customers every day to the places they want to go. The Better Bus Network Redesign project is an initiative to rethink, redesign, and revitalize bus service to better serve the needs of customers in the region.

Metro launched the Network Redesign project—the region's first comprehensive redesign of the entire Metrobus network since its creation in 1973—as a critical piece of our Better Bus initiative. It's an opportunity to:



Keep up with our evolving region and the people who live here



Promote equity, inclusiveness, and access to opportunity

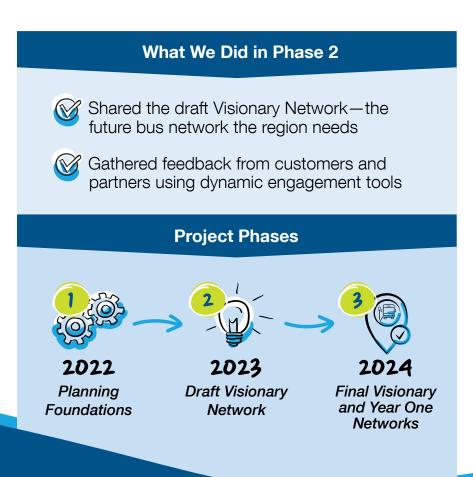


Better connect people to where they need to go



Create an easy-to-use network, no matter where customers are

With the Network Redesign project, Metro is putting customers at the forefront, using data-driven analysis and a robust, interactive public engagement process to evaluate Metrobus service and create a Better Bus network that is fast, frequent, reliable, and easier to understand.



SAVES



How can the bus work better for you? iCómo puede funcionar mejor el autobús para usted?

## Phase 2: The Draft Visionary Network Launch

AccessiBility

**Network Redesign:** Engagement on the Draft Visionary Network **3** 

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### The Basics

### Goals

- Obtain public and stakeholder input on the draft Visionary Network and better understand the priorities and needs of a diverse region
- Provide information that is accessible and understandable
- Provide engaging and dynamic tools to gather input
- Empower internal and external partners to become advocates for the Visionary Network
- Ensure ongoing awareness of the project by communicating how we used input from Phase 1 and how we will use input from Phase 2

### **Target Audiences**

#### **Stakeholders**

- Project Partners: Prince George's County and City of Fairfax
- Elected officials
- Local transportation and transit agencies
- Union leadership
- Community-based organizations
- Advocacy groups
- Major regional employers and institutions

#### Public

- Current bus customers
- Lapsed bus customers
- Potential customers who live in areas proposed for new service
- Potential customers outside the service area

#### **Metro Employees**

- Bus operations staff
- Metro staff

\* Metro defines equity as an outcome where anyone can use the transit system to access the region's opportunities and resources, acknowledging difference in lived experiences. The agency acknowledges that some populations, particularly those of color, low-income, and/or with disabilities, disproportionately experience injustice across several facets of life due to longstanding structural challenges. As such, Equity Focus Communities, defined as Census Block Groups with a high concentration of people from low-income households, people of color, and people with disabilities, were a focus for engagement.

#### We also focused on historically underrepresented communities:

People from low-income households, people of color, people with disabilities, seniors, youth, people with limited English proficiency, and people without smartphones\*

Network Redesign: Engagement on the Draft Visionary Network

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### The Approach

### **Communications** and **Engagement** Plan

Metro's Public Participation Plan and Language Assistance Plan guided our approach, which was designed to reach customers where it's most convenient for them—on their bus routes, in their communities, or online. The campaign delivered targeted multilingual communications to a diverse customer and stakeholder base to increase awareness, provide key project information, and gather feedback.

### **Objectives and Tactics**

Research-based strategies, timely communications, and targeted calls-to-action to customers and stakeholders guided Phase 2 communications and engagement. We deployed comprehensive tactics to increase project awareness and engage target audiences. **Tactics included in-person experiences, social media campaigns, print and digital advertisements, employee communications and events, and more.** 





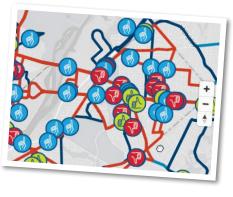


### Customer Research

### **Testing of Phase 2 Engagement Tools**

We conducted focus groups with customers to test our messaging and digital tools before launching public engagement efforts. Among many findings, we learned that maps need to be simple and information needs to answer "what does this mean for me?" We adjusted our approach to make our engagement tools easier to understand, which yielded higher-quality input.





16 in-depth interviews conducted with focus group participants

<b>3</b> different tools tested
Maps
Static Maps
Trip Planner Tool

### **Youth Focus Groups**

Metro provides transportation for youth across the region, especially in Washington, DC, where Metrobus provides critical transportation options for students. In

partnership with Metro's Youth Advisory Council and the Metro Transit Police Department, Metro conducted eight focus groups with high school students across the District of Columbia.



## We hosted eight focus groups at public high schools, each with 6–10 students, and we heard that they:

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Experience issues with **reliability**, impacting timely arrivals to important events and school



Feel that **close proximity** to others on the bus can make them uncomfortable—most notably among female students



Are concerned about **crowding** due to **inadequate frequency of buses** 

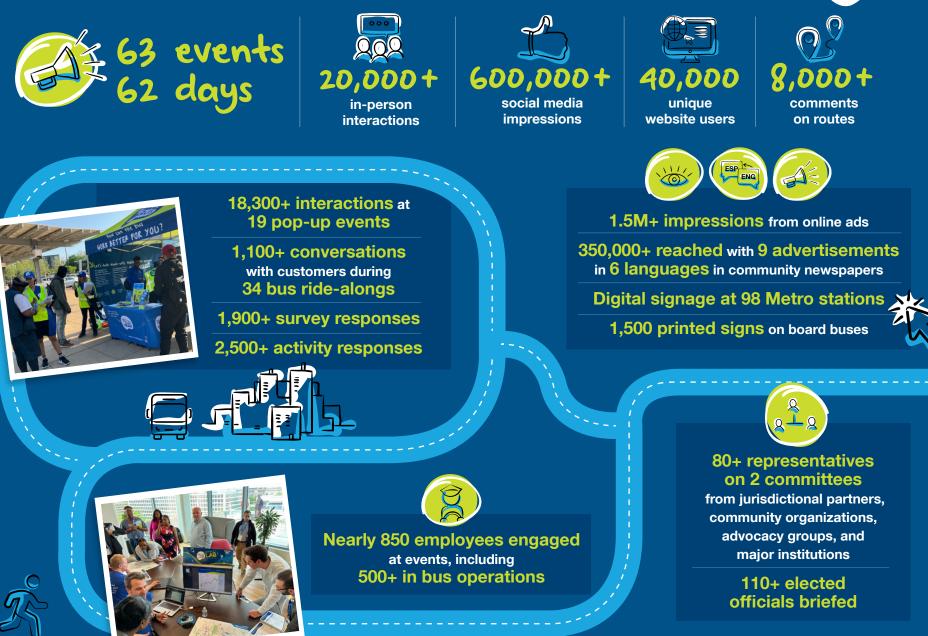


Are **excited about adding more-frequent services**, allowing them to visit more places in the city and across the region

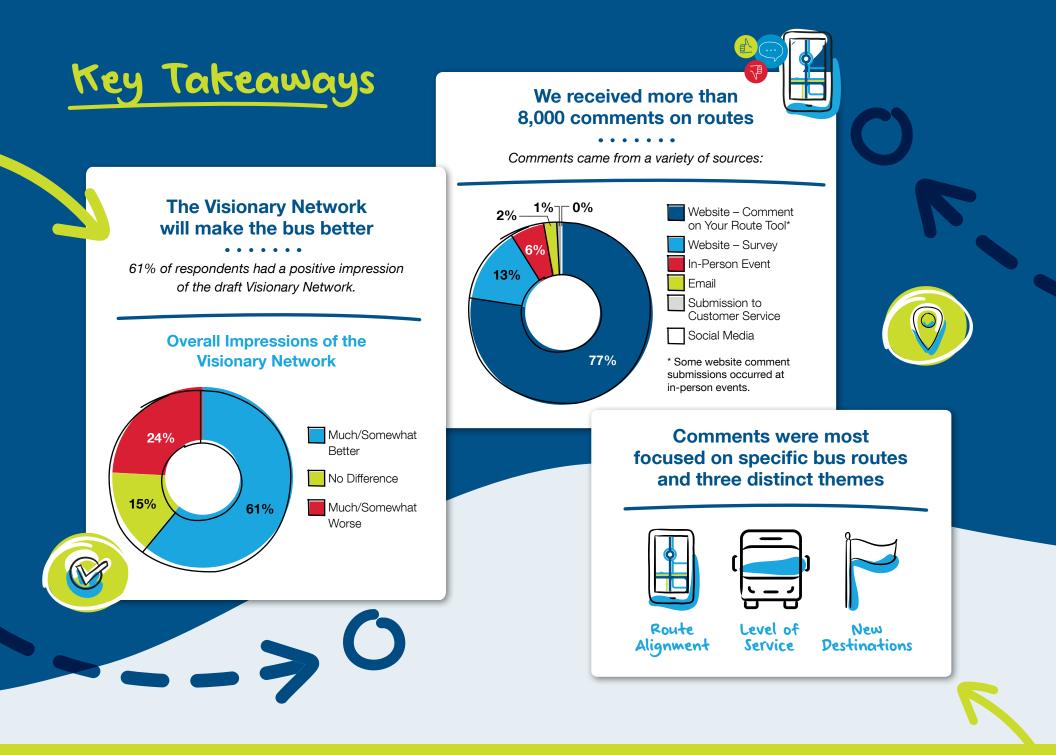
### By the Numbers



7









### Key Takeaways

#### In-person events and online tools played a big role in informing people about the project

Nearly 50% of survey respondents received project information at an in-person event.

. . . . . . .

#### **How Respondents Received Information\***

Workshop, Pop-Up, or Ride-Along 16% Project Website 16% Word of Mouth 13% Social Media/Ad New Trip Planner Tool 11% Comment On Your Route Tool 11% Better Bus Dispatch E-Newsletter 10% **Bus Info Center Sign** 8% Route Profile 6% Rail Station Digital Screen 3%

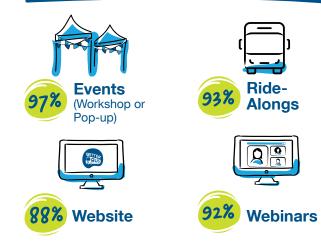
\*More than one option could be selected by respondents

### Phase 2 engagement events and the website were well-received

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On average, engagement efforts had a high satisfaction rating, with a majority of attendees finding them "somewhat helpful," "very helpful," or "extremely helpful."



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## The Better Bus Experience

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### The Better Bus Experience

Phase 2 engagement was tied together by an overarching theme—**the Better Bus Experience**—that set a cohesive, positive, and memorable tone for our audiences whether they interacted with the project in person or online.

### 63 62 Events Days

Better Bus Experience LIVE! featured a series of public workshops, pop-ups, ride-alongs, and webinars



Visit • Discover • Share

Experience

### **40,000 +** Unique Website Users

explored the new draft routes and provided feedback with easy-to-use, online interactive tools



### **Meeting People in Their Communities**

We held workshops across the region to engage with bus customers and community members in their neighborhoods to get their feedback on the draft Visionary Network. These highly interactive regional events provided customers an opportunity to experience an expert-guided tour of the draft network and provide in-depth feedback in a celebratory atmosphere that featured local small businesses and entertainment.



### What People Said About Our Experience LIVE! Workshops



"This is an excellent outreach to the community for input, thank you!"

"This was an informative and interactive way to educate the public about these changes. Thanks!"





"What a fabulous event!"

Network Redesign: Engagement on the Draft Visionary Network



BUS HELPS KEEP MILLER DEE

Timeliness

IS MY TRANSPORTATION

ACCESS

P.G. PLAZE

Affordability

*pependable* 

### **Visual Notetaking: Bringing Customer Comments to Life**

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MORE NFORMATION about WHERE the BUS is...

OISE

CAN WE

MAKE the BUS

BE

Each of our five Experience LIVE! workshops featured visual notetakers-artists who transformed the comments from attendees into an impactful community mural to serve as the workshop's visual artifact, calling attention to the community's shared priorities.

> WHAT DOES **FER BUS**

MEAN to YOU?

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CONSISTENCY

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Accessibility

WITHOUT CAPS

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Space

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The BUS is GOOD to ME

The BUS is EVER THING!

MORY

Cleanliness

NO PERFECT

A BUS FASTER

than a CAR ... that WOULD LET ME LEAVE MY CAR IN the GARAGE

The FUS WOULD have LEAST CARS/MONEY



IDUS ME!

COMMUNITY and

ENJOY LIFE!

SHELTERSI

Jim Nuttle / DAWLING WITH MAPPERS

COMPARED & METRORALL

GO OUT IN the

West Hyattsville Library

NEANS MORE

Visit our website to download your very own community mural desktop wallpaper! Turkey Thicket Rec Center

HYATTSVILLE

MAY 6, 2023

ME TO GO PLACES

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IN AREAS WITH

AXI SERVICE

M

THINGS

Arlington Central Library

Creative Suitland

Arts Center

HAT DOES

THEARC Launch Party

BETTER BUS MEAN







### 18,300+

Interactions (18% Spanish, 3% Other Non-English Languages)



Feedback

Activities

Completed



67 Video Testimonials



### **Meeting People Where They Are**

Metro held a series of pop-up events across the region that were accessible, engaging, and convenient. Bilingual teams hosted 19 events at locations across the region to get feedback on the draft Visionary Network. Featuring a branded booth setup, these events included informative tent sidewalls with project information and interactive feedback activities. The booth also provided route-level information on large printed bilingual posters to ensure the content was in an easy-to-use format.

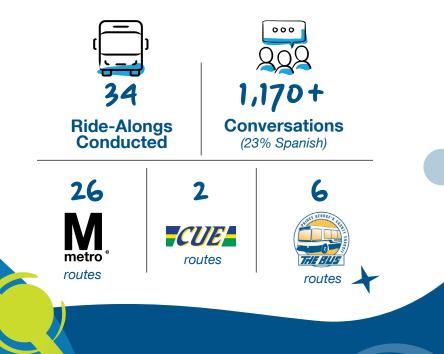


### Bus Ride-Alongs



### **Meeting People on Their Bus**

We rode the bus with our customers to get their input on the draft Visionary Network and how it could affect their trips. Our specially trained staff connected with riders through one-on-one interactions, providing information customized for their specific route.





Our team designed the draft Visionary Network to better serve Equity Focus Communities. In getting input through ride-alongs, we selected routes to reach those most affected by the proposed changes, especially:

#### People of Color

87% of ride-along route customers are people of color, compared to 81% across the Metrobus system

#### People from Low-Income Households

62% of ride-along route customers are low-income, compared to 50% across the Metrobus system

### Lunch and Learn Webinars



### **Meeting People Online**

Virtual "Lunch

and Learn"

Webinars Held

Metro introduced new virtual events, branded as "Lunch and Learn" webinars. These webinars provided access and critical information about the draft Visionary Network to those who were unable to attend in-person events.

We held four webinars—one each that focused on Washington DC, Maryland, and Virginia, and one held in partnership with the Coalition for Smarter Growth.

Virtual

Vith a focus on ... Maryland Virginia Washington, DC

Webinars

199

Webinar

Attendees

ich and Learn

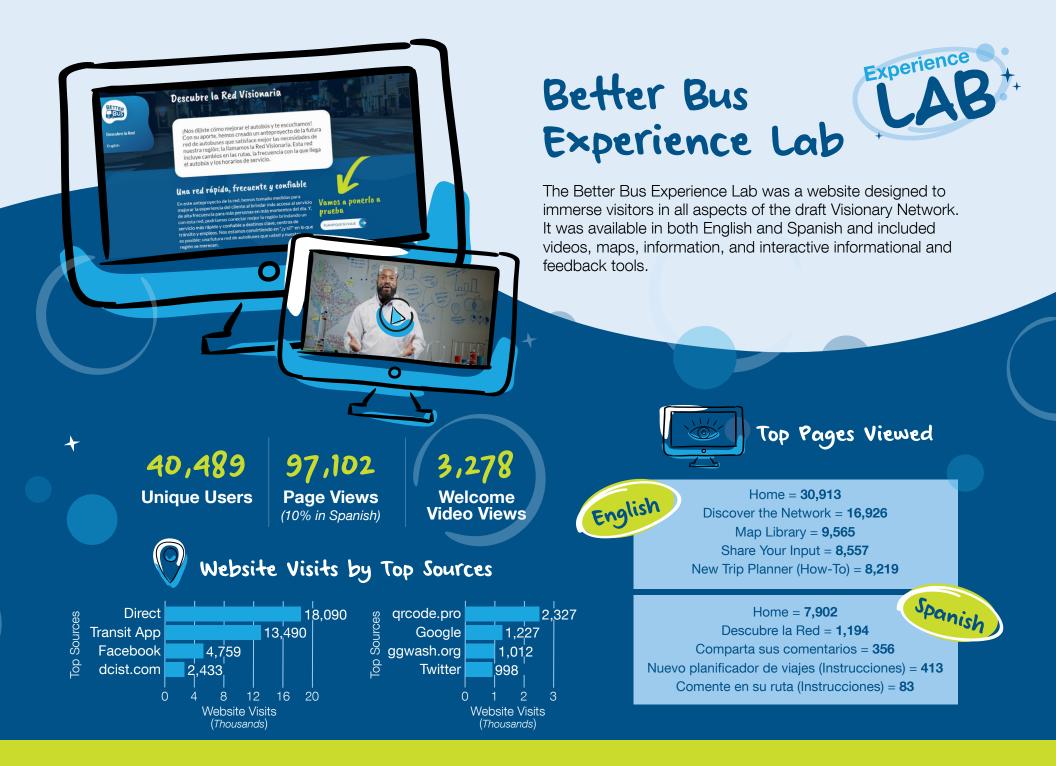
BETTER

570+

YouTube

Views





### New Trip Planner Tool



### **Effectively Communicating Potential Changes**

6,700 unique visitors explored the New Trip Planner—a fun, interactive digital tool that gave visitors the opportunity to compare their trip on the current network versus the draft Visionary Network.



•	Starting Point	
$\mathbf{O}($	Destination	





The Map Library featured downloadable PDFs illustrating the draft Visionary Network, including system maps for DC, Maryland, and Virginia; a 24-hour service map; and 178 route profile maps (one for each draft Visionary Network route)

31,834 Downloads

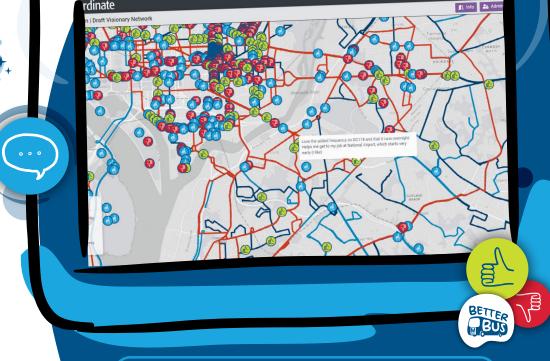
### Experience Comment on Your Route Tool

### **Effectively Communicating Potential Changes**

The Comment on Your Route interactive map gave visitors a tool to view and comment on individual draft Visionary Network routes or other locations where they wanted to see new or improved service.









"It would be really beneficial to the residents of this area to have a line that goes more directly to Union Station. This would provide much more convenient access to Amtrak and the Red Line!"

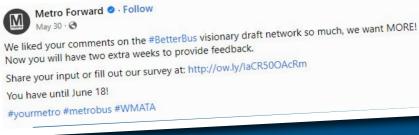


"This turn from Quincy to Michigan causes traffic issues and causes buses to have to creep into oncoming traffic. Can you route differently to Brookland station?"



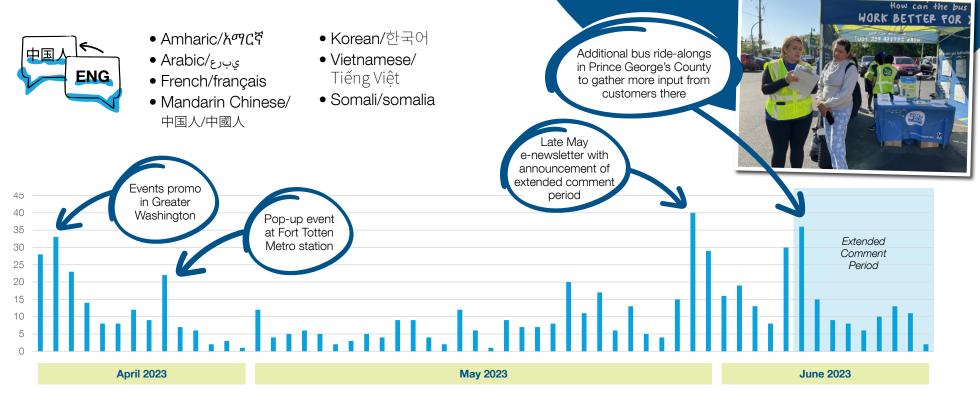


Metro conducted a public survey from April 17 to June 18, 2023, which provided valuable insight on how customers and the community perceived the draft Visionary Network and different types of trade-offs. People could take the survey online or on paper at events in English or Spanish. Links were prominently featured across the Experience Lab webpages and QR codes displayed on systemwide print and digital signage. The public survey also was made available in the following languages:



Metro promoted the survey at workshops and popup events, via the e-newsletter, and through paid advertisements on social media, print and digital publications, Spanish radio stations, and the Transit App.

...



#### Survey Responses by Day

### Public Survey

Opinions on the draft Visionary Network varied by geography and demographic. Notably, more lowincome respondents and people of color indicated that the draft Visionary Network would be better than the current system.



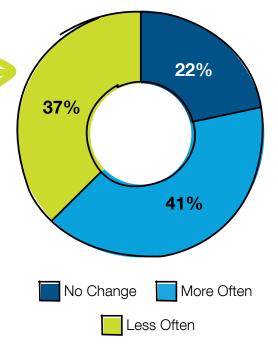
People of color were more likely to feel that the draft Visionary Network would be much or somewhat better than the existing network:

**68%** of people of color indicated it would be much or somewhat better vs. **47%** of white respondents

**78%** of Black/African American respondents indicated it would be much or somewhat better



Respondents with **annual incomes of less than \$30,000** were more likely to find the draft Visionary Network to be **much or somewhat better** (70%) than their higher-income counterparts



Respondents were split on whether the draft Visionary Network will cause them to use the bus more or less often, but...

#### 56% of people of color who

responded said the they would ride the bus more often.

Only **37%** of **white** respondents agreed

**62%** of **low-income**\* respondents said the they would ride the bus more often.

 Only 37% of high-income\* respondents agreed

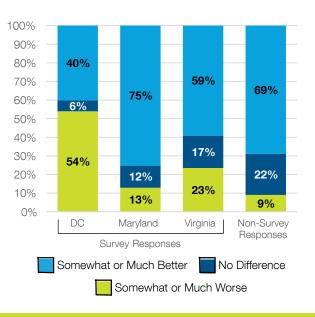
\* Low-income = annual household income less than \$30K High-income = annual household income of \$100K or greater

**Maryland residents** had the most positive perception of the draft Visionary Network.

• **75%** said they thought it was somewhat or much better than the existing network

**DC residents** had a more negative perception of the draft Visionary Network.

 Only **40%** said they thought it was somewhat or much better than the existing network



### Engaging our Employees

### **Bus Operations Preview Parties**

Bus operators and other operations employees have a large stake in the project.

Metro held "Preview Parties" at all nine Metrobus operating divisions and at the CUE and TheBus divisions to provide frontline employees with a sneak peek of the draft Visionary Network before it launched to the public. These fun, informal events had a festive atmosphere to honor our employees and get their valuable feedback. We left behind maps, route profiles, and feedback forms at all bus divisions so operators could review and comment on the network on an ongoing basis.

> General Manager/CEO Randy Clarke attended two Preview Parties to express appreciation for Metrobus operations staff and their contributions to the project.

**SOD**+ Bus Operations Staff at 11 Preview Parties

> All nine Metrobus divisions, TheBus, and CUE

360+ Written Comments Received



## Engaging our Employees

### What We Heard

- **Operators desire longer breaks:** Long routes, excessive traffic, and crowded buses can result in short breaks
- Opinions vary about the desired length of routes: Some operators would like to see routes split, while others want routes extended to reach additional neighborhoods and destinations across the region
- Difficult maneuvering is a key concern: Operators voiced some maneuvering concerns on draft Visionary routes such as:
  - Tight turns
  - Narrow streets
  - Traffic blocking stops and turns
  - General congestion

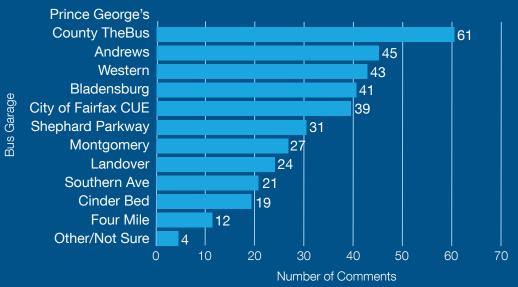


"New alignment is perfect, reduces difficult turns on S. Reynolds Street. Short turn into heavy traffic. New alignment works perfectly."

"Not enough ridership toward L'Enfant Plaza to justify always driving there, needs a cut southbound."

- Operators shared additional feedback, such as:
  - Weekend service frequencies should be adjusted to match demand
  - More buses should be utilized on lines that have higher ridership or are longer
  - More time should be allowed to complete routes, to account for traffic congestion and other delays

### **Comments By Bus Garage**



### Engaging our Employees

We took the Experience LIVE! brand to our employees by holding coffee chat events at our headquarters and main administrative center. Through this outreach, employees - many of whom are bus customers themselves-talked directly with planners, became stronger project partners, and provided feedback in a creative, engaging atmosphere.

### **Employee Coffee** Chat Events (L'Enfant and New Carrollton office buildings) 330+ **Employee Coffee Chat Attendees**





Coffee. Swag. Treats. you!

M

BETTER

### 12,000+ Metro employees

received timely and targeted updates on the project and how to provide their own input on the draft Visionary Network.



A project-specific webpage on Metroweb employee intranet



Special features in the MetroVoices employee podcast and newsletter





Our recent episode of Meoro Voices is still hat with Better Bus Network Project Team Manager Weath Johns and ou after Paris Penry-Gay from the Four Mile Bus Division to get an update ou letter Bus Network Redexign project and learn about the exciting things (in in Phase 2. Learn how you can view the draft Visionary Network and Team Manager Wittam Jones and Bus

THIS EPISODE HER

## ¡Descubre un Mejor Autobús!

Through the **Better Bus** initiative, Metro is taking a fresh and detailed look at our bus service and routes to serve you better. We're developing a fast, frequent, bus network that is

tend.

s network

A través de la iniciativa de **Better** Bus, Metro está analizando de nanera fresca y detallada nuestro servicio de autobuses y rutas para prindarle un mejor servicio. Estamos desarrollando una red de autobuses ápida, frecuente y confiable que sea más fácil de entender.

Esta Red Visionaria es la futura red de buses que necesita la región.

tter Bus Network

and Curren servic ow to make the bus better cómo mejorar el autobús...

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## Spreading the Word Across the Region

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## Engaging Partners with Purpose

### **Technical Committee**

The project's Technical Committee includes Metro staff and staff from other transit agencies in the region, including partner jurisdictions Prince George's County and the City of Fairfax. During Phase 2, Technical Committee members offered input on the draft Visionary Network and participated in several service planning workshops.

### **Community Connections Committee**

The project's Community Connections Committee includes representatives from transit advocacy groups, major employers and institutions, service and interest groups connected to non-English speaking communities and Equity Focus Communities, and more. During Phase 2, the committee met twice and members were asked to provide input on engagement strategies and help amplify public engagement opportunities to members of their communities.



#### **Service Planning Workshops**

Metro held **six service design workshops** with technical staff from jurisdictions across the region in early 2023 that focused on the development of the draft Visionary Network.





## Engaging Partners with Purpose

### **Community-Based Organizations**

We engaged and partnered with community-based organizations (CBOs)-many of which also have representation on the CCC-that serve as trusted pillars in their communities.



We provided more than 400 CBOs customized digital materials, as well as physical printed materials upon request, to distribute to their constituents.



Metro encouraged CBOs to use the resources in the project's **Digital Communications Toolkit** to spread the word in their communities.



Through engagement with our CCC members, we held events with individual partner organizations that were customized to their needs, including with House of Ruth, So Others Might Eat, and the Dar Al-Hijrah Islamic Center.



#### Metro **Committee** Engagement

Metro engaged its Riders' Advisory Council (RAC), Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC), and Youth Advisory Council at key points to provide updates, introduce the draft Visionary Network, and increase awareness about public engagement opportunities.

#### **Digital Communications Toolkit**

The toolkit-housed on the Better Bus webpage-provided multilingual collateral, sample newsletter and social media text, and photos for use by Metro partners through their own communications channels, social media pages, and distribution lists.







#### Commuter Connections · Follow May 30 . 🕥

...

Metro is continuing its work to build a better bus network for you.

Metro is drafting a new bus network — a vision for our region's faster, more frequent, and reliable bus service. It is not too late to provide input on this visionary bus network which will be used to develop the final product!

Metro is offering many ways to share your input. Participate in Better Bus Experience Live! at one of 50 events in 50 days from April through June! Or visit the Better Bus Experience Lab to explore maps and routes, play with a new trip planner, and share your input in fun, interactive ways.

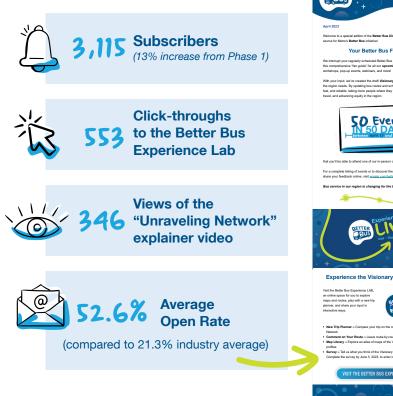
For more information and to participate in either Experience Lab or Experience Live! visit wmata.com/betterbus.



## Digital Engagement

### **Better Bus Dispatch e-Newsletter**

The monthly Better Bus Dispatch e-newsletter delivered timely and important project updates and event information, giving subscribers the latest information on how to provide feedback. Three issues of the newsletter—including a special events edition—featured links to the Better Bus Experience Lab, an explainer video, events photo gallery, and interactive polls to increase engagement.



# Dispatch Your Better Bus Fan Guide O Events BETTER LAB

### **Video Highlights**

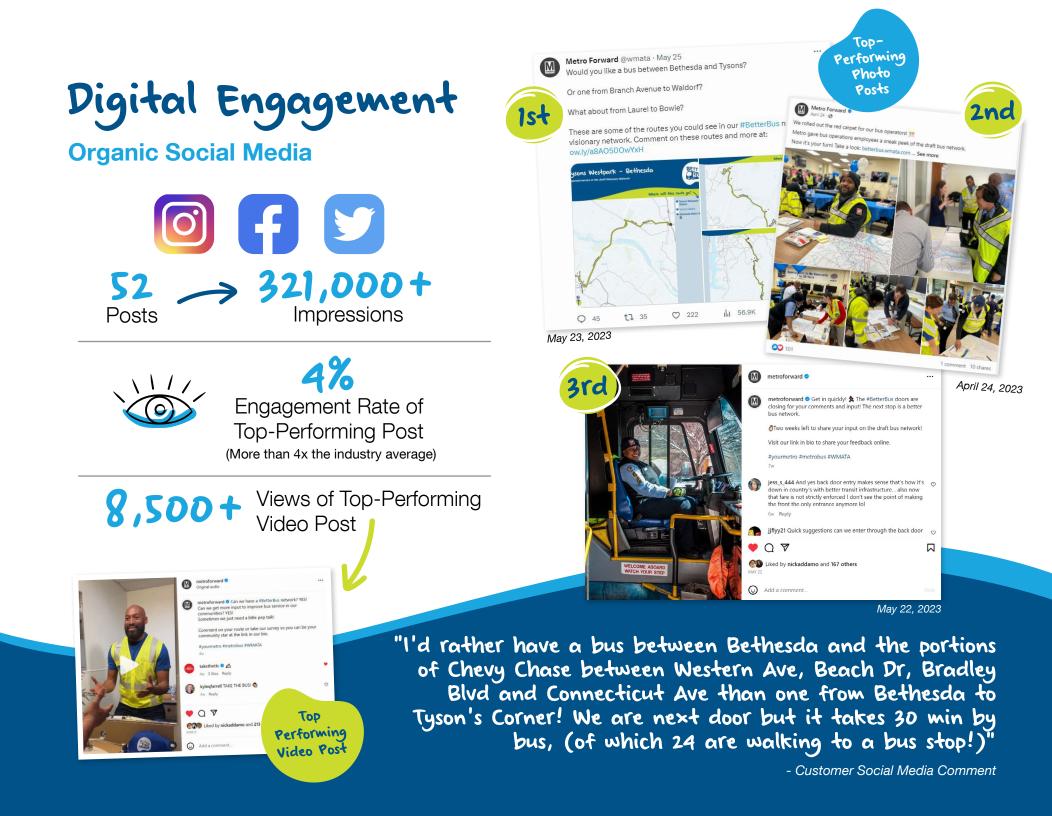
Our engagement featured a collection of videos that explain the project, provide information on technical process, and highlight community partners that brought our experiences to life. *Click on a thumbnail to watch!* 



Unraveling the Network

What Better Bus Means to Me

> Behind the Scenes: Visual Notetakers



## Digital Engagement

### **Paid Social Media**

We ran a paid social media campaign on Facebook and Instagram in English and Spanish as a way to direct customers to the Better Bus Experience Lab.



(compared to 0.90% industry average)

#### **All Audiences**

**3,000+** Clicks

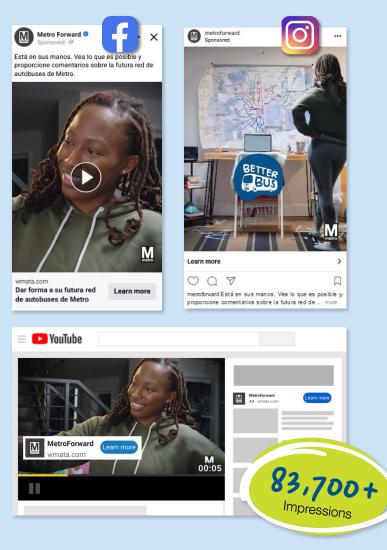
314,000+ Impressions

**1.22%** Average Click-Through Rate Targeted Audiences (Equity Focus Communities)

> 48.9% Of All Clicks

**50.4%** Of All Impressions

0.95% Average Click-Through Rate





### YouTube Video Advertising

We ran non-skippable ads on YouTube to increase awareness of the Network Redesign and direct customers to provide feedback.

### Print and Digital Promotion

Metro implemented a print and digital campaign across the Metrobus and Metrorail systems to encourage customers to attend an event, visit the online Experience Lab, and take the survey.



1,500 printed signs and 235,000 take-ones in English and Spanish on-board buses



Multilingual take-ones in eight languages at events





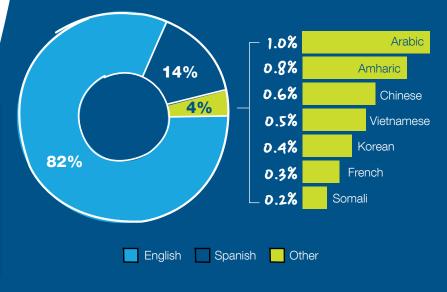
100 yard signs in English and Spanish at 41 Metro stations that are key bus transfer locations



We included QR codes on signs, in print collateral, and in print and digital advertising to provide immediate and convenient access to the Experience Lab, online tools, and events information as well as to track the effectiveness of the campaign.



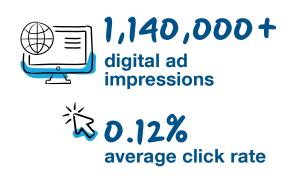
### 2,221 QR Code Scans

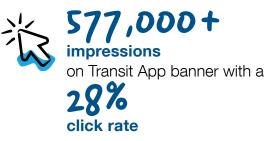


### Print and Digital Promotion



6 print ad placements with a circulation of 359,000 in non-English media







**148** radio ads on El Zol and El Nueva Spanish radio airwaves, reaching 184,900 listeners per week



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### **Media Coverage**

We proactively engaged with media outlets to help spread the word about engagement opportunities.

Metro issued a press release and held a media briefing on April 11 to provide an overview of the draft Visionary Network and how people could get engaged that led to seven features in the following 24 hours.

Media coverage included print, TV, and web-only sources and continued throughout the engagement phase, including into the extended comment period.

Metro Releases Proposed "Visionary" Bus Network Maps For The Region, Including 24-Hour Service www.w.f

METRO LAUNCHES WEBSITE FOR RIDERS TO

TEST PROPOSED BUS ROUTE CHANGES

ONEWS COVERING METRO

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Experience the Draft Network

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features in local, regional, and national news outlets

20.

The Washington Post

NEWS







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### Conclusion and Next Steps

### Measuring Success: A Look Back on Phase 2 Efforts



### Using a multichannel communications and

**engagement campaign,** we interacted with more than 20,000 customers, stakeholders, and employees and received more than 8,000 comments.



#### We used a community- and equity-focused

**approach** to reach our customers. More than 70% of our events were in Equity Focus Communities and 87% of customers on the routes we selected for ride-alongs are people of color.



### More than 20% of our conversations and comments were in languages other

**than English**—a direct outcome of reducing barriers to providing input by offering multilingual materials and bilingual staff at events.



**Testing our messaging and tools** through targeted focus groups ensured that our engagement materials were user-friendly and easy to understand, providing us with quality information on how customers and the community perceived the draft Visionary Network.



With a focus on collecting specific comments and an understanding of preferences, we now have the information we need to create the future bus network that the region deserves.

### **Moving Forward**

We thank everyone who reviewed the draft Visionary Network and shared their feedback, as well as community partners who were essential to the success of the campaign. The information gathered during this phase will be critical in updating the network.

Phase 3 will launch in early 2024 and will present a revised Visionary Network and a Year One Network that can be implemented right away.

Our focus will remain on **increasing awareness** and **getting feedback** from customers **across the region** to create the best possible bus network.

