



**FRIENDSHIP HEIGHTS
TRANSPORTATION MANAGEMENT DISTRICT
ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**AGENDA
Friendship Heights Transportation Management District
Advisory Committee Meeting – Teams Format
January 9, 2024**

8:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.

Staff Contact: Jim Carlson / (240) 777- 8382 Office (301) 318-0328 Mobile
james.carlson@montgomerycountymd.gov

- 8:30 1. Introductions/Agenda Review** **Jim Carlson/All**
Welcome to New Commuter Services Staff:
Samuel Damesa > TDM Administration & Compliance Coordinator
Kevin Obike> Travel Smart Ambassador Program
- 2. Review of Meeting Minutes** **All**
November (©2)
- 3. Presentation – Friendship Heights Urban Design Study** **Atara Margolies
Larissa Klevan
Elza Hisel-McCoy
Montgomery County Planning Dept.**
- 4. Metro Update** **Gary Erenrich
MCDOT**
- 5. Marketing Outreach Update** **Shelley Mann
TMD Outreach Staff**
- 6. TMD/DOT/Other County Updates** **Sandra Brecher
Jim Carlson**

10:00 Adjourn
Next meeting: Tuesday, March 12, 2024

Information Items

*Montgomery County and WSSC Water Launch 2024 Salt Wise Campaign
Ride On Schedule Changes Begin Sunday, Jan. 14
Metro Announces Travel Alternatives During Blue, Orange, and Silver Line Construction Over MLK Holiday Weekend
NTSB chair critical of WMATA, FTA in briefing on Metrorail derailment report*

**Friendship Heights
Transportation Management District
Advisory Committee
November 14, 2023**



Voting Members

Bob Banach	Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights
Elizabeth Demetra Harris	Friendship Heights Village
Shannon Rovak	Town of Somerset

Non-Voting Members

Sandra L. Brecher	MCDOT/Transportation Policy-Commuter Services
Peter Fosselman	B-CC Services Center

TMD Staff

Jim Carlson	MCDOT/Transportation Policy-Commuter Services
Nakengi Byrd	MCDOT/Transportation Policy-Commuter Services

Absent

Chief John Fitzgerald	Chevy Chase Village Police
Ahkeia Payne	GEICO

Guests

Natalie Avery	Friendship Heights Alliance
Rachel Davis	Walnut Street Creative
Thomas Dant	Bethesda Urban District
Gary Erenrich	MCDOT
Larissa Klevan	M-NCPPC
Shelley Monique Mann	TMD Outreach
Julian Mansfield	Friendship Heights Village
David Proctor	TMD Outreach
Tom Quinn	ANC-3
Jeffrey Slavin	Mayor – Town of Somerset
Jason Winans	Chevy Chase Land Co.



Item 1 & 2- Introductions/ Minutes review: Jim Carlson called meeting to order, members & guests introduced themselves. July’s meeting minutes were reviewed.

Item 3- Friendship Heights Alliance – Update: Natalie Avery, Executive Director of the Friendship Heights Alliance, presented information about the Alliance. The organization is a place based non-profit funded by both DC & Maryland jurisdictions and by a commercial fee paid by business and property owners. It is a unified organization of two jurisdictions with one board of directors funded by the Business Improvement & Urban District (BID). She explained that the new planter program provides street plants with Alliance logo, and there is an urban team to maintain the basic needs of the community.

The Alliance will use social media to elevated the BID's operations to the community, eventually lead to positive changes.

- Some duties of the Alliance include stakeholder & community engagement via surveys and focus groups on both sides of the MD/DC border.
- Duties not performed by the Alliance are leasing, government actions such as zoning - they do not have the power to enact laws but can influence public policy via community action building.
- Community outreach events include film series, public history installments focusing on the displacement of Blacks in the Community, pop-up markets and a winter speaker series.
- Fall planting of tulips w/logo planters - replanting of median entering DC from MD that was full of weeds.
- A Safety & Security meeting on December 20th with area police, security forces, property managers and other community members discussing the unhoused population.
- Other DC/MD collaboration engagement and planning efforts include email list, traffic & pedestrian safety and a newsletter distribution at hello@Friendshipheights.com

Q&A + Stakeholder Suggestions:

- Inviting Transit Police via WMATA's Charlie Scott, to have a discussion with FH Alliance regarding safety & unhoused issues - how has Silver Spring Station dealt with the issue of homelessness.
- How the Alliance measures success via survey recommendations with word cloud, conducting activities to drive leasing that debunk the "ghost town" narrative and social media growth with a 60% growth rate - 20% is the normal rate.
- Federal Realty Investment Trust (FRIT) project is being held up 2-3 years due to an appeal - stressing the need for more housing and the Alliance's role in community smart development & growth.
- Compiling a list of infrastructure improvements to submit for a Federal Land grant that offers awards up to \$80,000 – applications are due in March and the jurisdiction must apply for the organization.
- The Federal grant cannot be used for new bike lanes but can provide funds for marketing & signage - since the Alliance is in startup mode, it will be overwhelming to applying currently, next year is better.

Item 4 – Metro Update: Gary Erenrich announced that the Metro board will meet this month to discuss the pending financial deficit. Its capital budget has \$5-6 billion-dollars for a 6-year period and with financial distress looming, many projects will be deferred, such as the Friendship Heights Western Garage relocation project. Also reported:

- Public meetings will be held starting January 2023 to address WMATA's budget shortfall.
- The Western Avenue entrance was broken into and a party held on the premises, highlighting security issues and lack of management of vacant properties
- Funding issues causing lack of system expansion such as the non-purchase of new rail cars
- Moving capital funding to pay for operational costs however capital costs are needed for preventive maintenance measures.
- One jurisdiction sets the funding limit for the other two jurisdictions; since their contributions are limited to three percent per year, that makes it difficult for the state-led legislation to change contribution amount

- Transportation Secretary Paul Wiedefeld announced a \$2 billion shortfall in Maryland transportation funding - no new transportation projects in Montgomery County and deferring other projects
- Discussion regarding using the state legislature to find solutions to debt crisis, which could see layoffs of up to 50 percent of Metro's 6,000 employee workforce

Mr. Erenrich discussed other WMATA exploration of other cost saving measures:

- Utilizing federal assistance via the Federal Transit Administration grants
- If the Federal workforce returns to the office, it will increase revenue to \$50 million
- Metro is hoping the trending decrease in inflation will assist in closing \$700 million budget gap

Mr. Erenrich report continued:

- Capital budget meeting this Thursday the 17th - Metro's General Manager will introduce budget in December with public hearings to follow
- Red Line closure from Dupont circle to Gallery Place the last two weeks in December is under review as alternatives are being explored
- The new fare gates to deter fare jumping has seen an increase in ridership revenue

Item 5 – Marketing Outreach Update: Shelley Mann reported:

- The Walk & Ride contest went well as they will soon distribute prize winnings
- Commuter Information Day (CID) was held at Washington Eye Associates
- Encouraged committee members to visit “Junction” as businesses in the Barlow Building are seeing a decline.

Item 6 – Updates:

- The County Executive is conducting FY25 Budget Forums around the county
- Council of Governments (COG) Employer Recognition Awards in June 2024 – January deadline for nominations
- The new Climate Change Officer briefing with the County Executive on Monday Nov. 27th regarding progress of the Climate Action Plan
- The Walk & Ride program was extended to County employees this year
- Commuter Survey that is conducted biannually showed the Non-Auto Driver Mode Share (NADMS) goal of 39 percent for the Friendship Heights area was met and exceeded – 48 percent pre-Covid, increased to 63 percent post pandemic

Around the Room: **Tom Quinn** (DC ANC-3 Rep) announced:

- Comments are due tomorrow regarding project on Wisconsin Avenue that is planned for unit development- streamlining the approval process for buildings going up to 150 feet
- There was an appeal filed for the FRIT project on 1533 Wisconsin Avenue, and FRIT is in negotiations with the filer.
- Construction has started for the Lisner Senior Home project located at Western & Livingston
- Traffic calming measures on Military Road at 43rd Street requested by FRIT are not approved by DDOT as they do not meet the minor arterial criterion of 30 feet

Adjourn: Next meeting: Tuesday, January 9, 2024



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Montgomery County and WSSC Water Launch 2024 Salt Wise Campaign: A Call for Responsible Winter Salt Use

For Immediate Release: Thursday, January 4, 2024

The Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) and WSSC Water proudly announce the launch of the 2024 Salt Wise Campaign. This initiative aims to raise awareness about the impacts to our environment and drinking water from excessive salt use during winter weather and encourages residents to be "Salt Wise."

"While salt is crucial for maintaining safe winter conditions, excessive use can have detrimental effects on our environment and water supply," said County Executive Marc Elrich. "Salt runs off into storm drains, local streams, and eventually, to the Potomac and Patuxent rivers, which are drinking water sources for people in Montgomery County. Salt can corrode concrete and masonry, harm pets, damage surrounding plants and lawns and adversely impact resident's health through impacts to the water supply, which is why we need to all use it sparingly and clean it up after storms whenever possible."

The Salt Wise campaign is a simple three-step method for residents to keep sidewalks and driveways safe while also reducing harm to the environment.

Community members can take the following three steps to be Salt Wise:

1. Shovel ice and snow early and often.
2. Use one 12-ounce cup of salt for 10 sidewalk squares or for a 20-foot driveway.
3. After storm events, sweep up excess salt for reuse.

Be Salt-Wise! It's Easy as 1-2-3

1
Shovel Right Away

2
Use Less Salt
Melts 10 Sidewalk Squares = 12 OZ.

3
Sweep & Reuse

Learn more at MontgomeryCountyMD.gov/salt

The Salt Wise campaign is a joint effort between Montgomery County and WSSC Water, a collaboration that underscores the shared commitment to environmental sustainability and responsible winter maintenance practices.

“Over the past three decades, salt levels have increased dramatically in our drinking water sources - the Potomac and Patuxent rivers,” said WSSC Water General Manager and CEO Kishia L. Powell. “And because our filtration process does not remove salt, higher levels end up in the drinking water. While our water is safe, increased salt levels in water can be a health concern for people on sodium-restrictive diets. With the threat of snow in the forecast, it’s perfect timing to remind people to use less salt by being salt wise.”





“Salt is a key component in making our sidewalks, driveways and roads safe during winter storms,” said DEP Director, Jon Monger. “However, too much salt has adverse impacts on our drinking water supply and our local streams posing a risk to sensitive wildlife. By practicing moderation with salt use and being Salt Wise, we can find a balance between protecting the public, our environment and our water sources.”

MCDOT manages the County’s snowstorm response and has implemented steps to reduce salt overuse.

“We apply the minimum amount of salt necessary to ensure public safety during snow events,” said MCDOT Director Chris Conklin. “We activate a Storm Operations Center, known as SOC, where staff is regularly checking and reporting out conditions and pavement temperatures around the county during snowstorms and we keep a close eye on the forecast. This allows us to determine if using salt is necessary in specific locations. We have implemented rubber tipped plow blades on all our plows, allowing for earlier plowing. We also use salt brine, a 23 percent salt to water solution to reduce the need for salt use.”

Residents can take action if they see piles of salt accidentally spilled onto roadways. MCDOT, who maintains County roads, advises residents to call 240-777-0311, or 311 from within the county, if they see a need for salt cleanup after a storm. Operators will contact the department responsible for a cleanup. MCDOT manages County roadways, the Maryland Department of Transportation manages state roads, Montgomery County Public Schools contracts for their properties, and the Department of General Services manages public facilities such as County libraries. For more information on how to effectively address salt use on residential and commercial properties, go to [MontgomeryCountyMD.gov/salt](https://montgomerycountymd.gov/salt).

Check the County’s Winter Storm Information Portal for information on snow plowing schedules, where to park your car safely, how to identify county-maintained versus state-maintained roadways, and more.

Salt Wise campaign videos and storm preparation b-roll are available for media use.

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Release ID: 24-003

Media Contact: Emily DeTitta, 240-372-2282

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Ride On Bus Schedule Changes Begin Sunday, Jan. 14

For Immediate Release: Monday, December 18, 2023



The Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) will adjust 23 Ride On bus route schedules starting Sunday, Jan. 14, 2024, to improve efficiency and on-time performance. Although service levels are staying relatively the same, the changes reflect a shift of resources to allow for more reliable service where there is higher demand. The new schedules will be available at rideonbus.com and in print.

Route changes include:

- 21 routes have timetable changes: 8, 9, 10, 15, 20, 21, 23, 31, 32, 37, 38, 45, 46, 47, 53, 55, 57, 64, 76, 83 and 90.
- Four routes have slight map changes: 17, 18, 53 and 76.

Here are details of each route affected:

- Route 8: Trip time changes on weekdays, Saturdays, and Sundays.

- Route 9: Trip time changes on weekdays, Saturdays, and Sundays.
- Route 10: Trip time changes on weekdays, Saturdays, and Sundays.
- Route 15: Trip time changes on weekdays, Saturdays, and Sundays.
- Route 17: Map and bus stop changes on weekdays, Saturdays, and Sundays.
- Route 18: Map and bus stop changes on weekdays, Saturdays, and Sundays.
- Route 20: Trip time changes on weekdays, Saturdays, and Sundays.
- Route 21: Trip time changes on weekdays.
- Route 23: Trip time changes on weekdays.
- Route 31: Trip time changes on weekdays.
- Route 32: Trip time changes on weekdays.
- Route 37: Trip time changes on weekdays.
- Route 38: Trip time changes on weekdays.
- Route 45: Trip time changes on weekdays.
- Route 46: Trip time changes on Sundays.
- Route 47: Trip time changes on weekdays, Saturdays, and Sundays.
- Route 53: Increased trips on weekdays and map change.
- Route 55: Trip time changes on weekdays, Saturdays, and Sundays.
- Route 57: Trip time changes on weekdays, Saturdays, and Sundays.
- Route 64: Trip time changes on weekdays, Saturdays, and Sundays.
- Route 76: Move stop at Quince Orchard High School to State Route 28 in front of the McDonalds, extend service to Poolesville Crossvines Golf Club.
- Route 83: Trip time changes on weekdays.
- Route 90: Trip time changes on weekdays.

Ride On bus fare is only \$1 and monthly passes are \$22.50 using SmarTrip, cash, or tokens. Seniors age 65 or older, persons with disabilities and youth ages 18 and under all ride free using specialized SmarTrip cards.

Riders can plan trips online using the free Ride On Trip Planner App.

For the most up-to-date service information, riders should follow @RideOnMCT on X, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. In addition, information is available at rideonbus.com, by subscribing to receive email alerts, or by texting MONTGOMERY RIDEON to 468311 to receive text alerts.

For information on MCDOT programs and services visit montgomerycountymd.gov/mcdot, follow @MCDOTNow on X, Facebook and Instagram and subscribe to MCDOT's "Go Montgomery!" newsletter.

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Release ID: 23-145

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For immediate release: January 5, 2024

Metro announces travel alternatives during four-day Blue, Orange, and Silver line construction over Martin Luther King Jr. Day weekend

Metro today announced travel alternatives to help customers plan for track work and maintenance over the Martin Luther King Jr. Day weekend that will close a portion of the Blue, Orange, and Silver lines on Friday, Jan. 12 through Monday, Jan. 15.

During the four-day closure, buses will replace trains with no rail service between Foggy Bottom-GWU and Arlington Cemetery on the Blue Line; and between Foggy Bottom-GWU and Clarendon on the Orange and Silver lines. The Rosslyn and Court House stations will be closed. Customers traveling through the work zone should expect significant delays and allow at least 30 minutes of additional travel time to account for shuttle buses.

Work crews will replace rail, rebuild concrete grout pads that support the rail, run fiber-optic cables, install platform edge lighting, and other maintenance activity. Without the closure, the work would have caused major disruptions over multiple weekends, as trains would single track every 26 minutes or with truncated service.

Metro will continue to run normal service on the Yellow and Green lines, and supplement Blue Line service between Foggy Bottom-GWU and Downtown Largo and on the Silver Line between Ashburn and Clarendon.

During the winter months, Arlington Cemetery Station typically closes at 7 p.m. to align with Arlington National Cemetery's hours. However, Metro will keep the station open through closing during the four-day construction project to accommodate shuttle bus customers.

Shuttle buses will be available for connections to the last trains on the Blue, Orange, and Silver lines. Last train times may be adjusted with some inbound trains departing the end of the line earlier than normal, and the last outbound trains may arrive later than normal.

In addition, due to construction for the MDOT MTA Purple Line Project on Saturday, Jan. 13 and Sunday, Jan. 14, Red Line service will be impacted with no train service between Takoma and Forest Glen. While the MDOT MTA work is unrelated to Metro, the closure will give Metro the opportunity to perform leak mitigation, replace rail ties, and perform switch maintenance.

SERVICE IMPACTS AND TRAVEL ALTERNATIVES

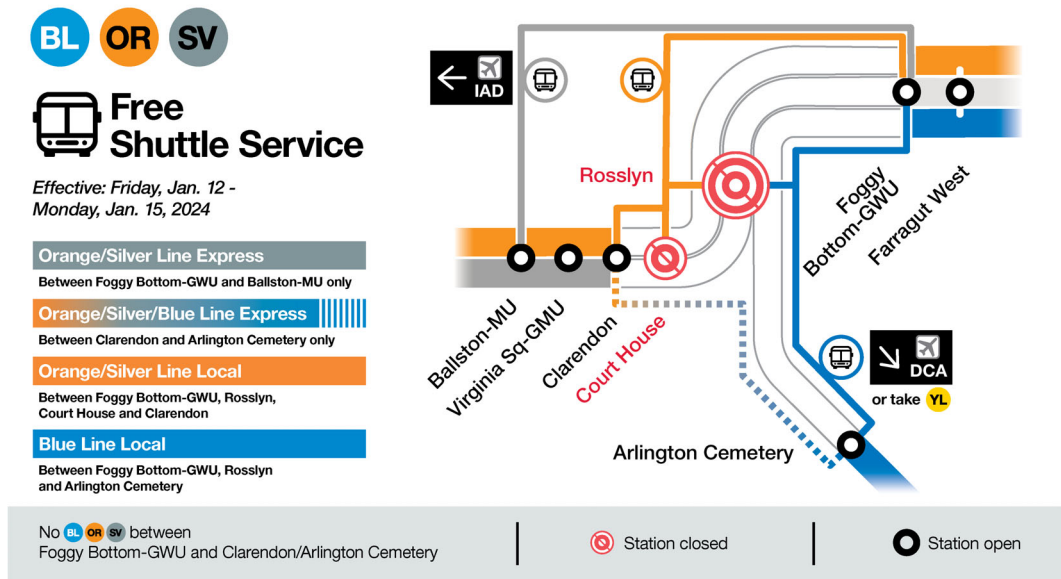
Blue Line Orange Line Silver Line Construction between Foggy Bottom-GWU and Arlington Cemetery/Clarendon
Friday, Jan 12 – Monday, Jan. 15

- Buses replace trains between Foggy Bottom-GWU and Arlington Cemetery/Clarendon
- Rosslyn and Court House stations closed

Blue Line Blue Line trains operate in two segments: between Franconia-Springfield and Arlington Cemetery every 12 minutes (daytime) and 15 minutes (evening); and between Foggy Bottom-GWU and Downtown Largo every 10 minutes (daytime) and 15 minutes (evening).

Orange Line Orange Line trains operate in two segments: between Vienna and Clarendon every 10 minutes (daytime) and 15 minutes (evening); and between Foggy Bottom-GWU and New Carrollton every 10 minutes (daytime) and 15 minutes (evening).

Silver Line Silver Line trains operate between Ashburn and Clarendon only, every 10 minutes (daytime) and 15 minutes (evening).



BUS ALTERNATIVES

Free Express & Local Shuttle Buses

Orange Line Silver Line Orange/Silver Line Express Shuttle

- Express service between Ballston and Foggy Bottom-GWU.
- Customers traveling into DC should exit at Ballston-MU for Express Shuttle Bus to Foggy Bottom-GWU. Do not stay on the train to Clarendon. Only local shuttle buses, stopping at all affected stations, will be available from Clarendon.

Blue Line Orange Line Silver Line Blue/Orange/Silver Line Express Shuttle

- Express service between Arlington Cemetery and Clarendon.
- Customers traveling to/from stations south of Arlington Cemetery and west of Clarendon on the Orange and Silver lines should use the Express Shuttle Bus between Arlington Cemetery and Clarendon to transfer between the Blue, Orange, and Silver lines.

Orange Line Silver Line Orange/Silver Line Local Shuttle

- Serves Clarendon, Court House, Rosslyn, and Foggy Bottom-GWU.

Blue Line Blue Line Local Shuttle

- Serves Arlington Cemetery, Rosslyn, and Foggy Bottom-GWU.

Customers should allow at least 30 minutes of additional travel time for shuttle buses, subject to road and traffic conditions.

Metrobus

38B Ballston – Rosslyn – Farragut North & West stations

4B Seven Corners – Court House – Rosslyn

RAIL ALTERNATIVES

- Blue Line customers traveling to/from Virginia and the District should consider using the Yellow Line instead. Customers may transfer back to the Blue Line at L'Enfant Plaza.

Yellow Line trains will operate every 6 minutes during peak periods on Friday, and every 8 minutes all other times including the federal holiday.

ADDITIONAL BUS AND RAIL OPTIONS

**All routes may not operate seven days a week or on the holiday. Check with the transit providers for schedule information.*

- **Virginia Railway Express (VRE)**
 - [Manassas Line \(https://www.vre.org/service/schedules/\)](https://www.vre.org/service/schedules/) – Customers may transfer to Metro at King St., Crystal City, L'Enfant Plaza, or Union Station.
- **DC Circulator**
 - [Rosslyn – Georgetown – Dupont Circle \(https://dccirculator.com/explore/where-we-go/dupont-circle-georgetown-rosslyn/\)](https://dccirculator.com/explore/where-we-go/dupont-circle-georgetown-rosslyn/)
Customers traveling to/from Foggy Bottom-GWU Station should use the eastbound stop at 24th & L streets NW and westbound stop at 24th & M streets NW. The stops are a short 2-3 block walk from the Foggy Bottom-GWU Station.
- **Arlington Transit (ART)**
 - [ART 41 – Columbia Pike - Ballston - Court House \(https://www.arlingtontransit.com/art-routes/art-41/\)](https://www.arlingtontransit.com/art-routes/art-41/)
Pike Ride route with service between the Columbia Pike west area and Clarendon and Courthouse.
 - [ART 42 – Ballston - Pentagon \(https://www.arlingtontransit.com/art-routes/art-42/\)](https://www.arlingtontransit.com/art-routes/art-42/)
Weekday service between the Ballston Metro and Pentagon Metro stations. Stops at Virginia Square, Clarendon, Courthouse Road, and Navy Annex. *Weekend service goes to Pentagon City instead of the Pentagon Metro.
 - [ART 43 Crystal City - Rosslyn - Courthouse \(https://www.arlingtontransit.com/art-routes/art-43/\)](https://www.arlingtontransit.com/art-routes/art-43/)
Limited stop service between Crystal City and Courthouse. Stops are at the Crystal City VRE Station, Crystal City Metro, Rosslyn Metro and Courthouse Metro.
 - [ART 61 – Rosslyn - Court House Metro Shuttle \(https://www.arlingtontransit.com/art-routes/art-61/\)](https://www.arlingtontransit.com/art-routes/art-61/)
Service between the Rosslyn and Court House Metro stations.
 - [ART 62 – Court House Metro - Lorcom Lane - Ballston Metro \(https://www.arlingtontransit.com/art-routes/art-62/\)](https://www.arlingtontransit.com/art-routes/art-62/)
Service between North Arlington and the Ballston, Clarendon, and Court House Metro stations, every 30 minutes during weekday rush hours.
 - [ART 77 – Shirlington - Lyon Park - Courthouse \(https://www.arlingtontransit.com/art-routes/art-77/\)](https://www.arlingtontransit.com/art-routes/art-77/)
Service between Shirlington Bus Station and the Clarendon and Court House Metro stations, every 30 minutes Monday through Friday.

AIRPORT TRAVELERS

Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport

From Maryland and DC

- Use the Yellow Line via Gallery Place or L'Enfant Plaza.

From Virginia

- Normal Blue and Yellow line service to the airport will be available for customers traveling south of Arlington National Cemetery.
- Take the VRE Manassas Line to Alexandria. Transfer to Yellow or Blue lines at King St – Old Town.
- Orange and Silver line customers should use the express shuttle bus between Clarendon and Arlington Cemetery. Transfer to the Blue Line at Arlington Cemetery.

Washington Dulles International Airport

From Maryland and DC

- Use Express Shuttle Bus between Foggy Bottom-GWU and Ballston to transfer to/from the Silver Line. Allow at least 30 minutes of additional travel time due to shuttle bus.

From Virginia

- Normal Orange and Silver line service will operate to all stations west of Clarendon. Transfer to the Silver Line at East Falls Church.
- Customers traveling to/from areas south of Arlington Cemetery should use the Express Shuttle Bus between Arlington Cemetery and Clarendon to transfer to/from the Silver Line. Allow at least 30 minutes of additional travel time to account for shuttle buses.
- Customers may also consider using the park & ride from Wiehle-Reston East on the Silver Line. Multi-day parking is available.

Red Line **Red Line closure between Takoma and Forest Glen for MDOT MTA Purple Line construction**
Saturday, Jan. 13 and Sunday, Jan. 14

- Buses replace trains with no rail service between Takoma and Forest Glen.
- Silver Spring Station closed.

Red Line Red Line trains will operate in two segments: between Shady Grove and Takoma every 6 minutes (daytime) and 10 minutes (evening); and between Forest Glen and Glenmont every 10 minutes.

FREE SHUTTLE BUS

- Free local and express shuttle buses will provide service between Takoma, Silver Spring, and Forest Glen.

Metrobus

- 70, 79 Silver Spring to Archives Station
- Q2, Q4 Silver Spring to Wheaton Station
- S2 and S9 Silver Spring to Federal Triangle/Franklin Square
- Y2, Y7, Y8 Silver Spring to Wheaton

*Metrobus fare is free when transferring to/from rail with transfer discount.

Ride On Montgomery County

- 12 Silver Spring to Takoma via Wayne Ave
- 16 Silver Spring to Takoma via New Hampshire Ave

Customers are encouraged to [sign up for MetroAlerts \(https://www.metroalerts.info/Login.aspx\)](https://www.metroalerts.info/Login.aspx) text or email messages for the latest service information or follow us on X [@wmata \(https://twitter.com/wmata\)](https://twitter.com/wmata), [@metrorailinfo \(https://twitter.com/metrorailinfo\)](https://twitter.com/metrorailinfo), [@metrobusinfo \(https://twitter.com/metrobusinfo\)](https://twitter.com/metrobusinfo). Metro's customer service team is also available to respond to social media, [email \(mailto:csvc@wmata.com\)](mailto:csvc@wmata.com), [chat \(https://wmata.custhelp.com/app/chat/chat_launch/request_source/8/survey_comp_id/1/survey_comp_auth\)](https://wmata.custhelp.com/app/chat/chat_launch/request_source/8/survey_comp_id/1/survey_comp_auth), or by phone at 202-637-7000 (automated information available 24/7) weekdays from 7 a.m. – 8 p.m. and weekends from 8 a.m. – 8 p.m.

NTSB chair critical of WMATA, FTA in briefing on Metrorail derailment report (additional updates)

By [David Lassen](#) | January 4, 2024

Final report on 2021 incident calls for transit agency to better track actions to address safety

WASHINGTON — National Transportation Safety Board chair Jennifer Homendy blasted the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority for its “poor safety culture” in a press briefing today (Thursday, Jan. 4) on the final report into the Oct. 12, 2021, derailment of a DC Metrorail train in Arlington, Va., saying the agency’s issues with WMATA include some 125 safety recommendations issued since 1970.

“It’s the same story again and again since 1970,” Homendy said. “In case after case, WMATA struggles to proactively identify safety hazards, including low-probability, high consequence risk. When they do identify risks, they’re not communicated within the organization; mitigations are put in place, but then those mitigations are not monitored or measured for effectiveness. And the hazards themselves aren’t tracked to see if there’s a trend over time and to see if more actions need to be taken.”

Homendy was equally critical of the Federal Transit Administration for failing to enforce safety regulations for rail transit systems, a power she said it gained under 2015’s Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act, or FAST Act, but has not used.

The repeated issues with WMATA are reflected — albeit in more restrained form — in the final report’s call for the transit agency to expand its use of trend analysis to identify and address safety issues, and that the Washington Metrorail Safety Council develop a program to support and monitor WMATA’s actions in this regard.

While the wheel should be flush against the bearing, this wheelset included a gap of 1.1 inches between the two on the right-side wheel. The left-side wheel had a gap of .63 inches. NTSB The cause of the 2021 derailment was a flaw that allowed a wheel to move outward on its axle, an issue identified early in the investigation that led to an NTSB recommendation and FTA advisory for other transit systems to check their equipment [see [“DC Metrorail issues spur FTA inspection advisory,”](#) *Trains News Wire*, Nov. 1, 2021]. It also led Metrorail to sideline its fleet of Kawasaki-built 7000-series railcars to address the flaw — a process that is still continuing [see [“DC Metrorail begins wheel replacement ...,”](#) *News Wire*, Dec. 5, 2023].

That out-of-specification wheelset on the fourth car of the eight-car train caused a wheel to leave the rail at a switch, according to the final report. The derailment occurred about 4:49 p.m.; none of the 188 people on board — an operator and 187 passengers — were injured. The NTSB found that the train had derailed and re-railed twice earlier in the day prior to incident near the Rosslyn station in Arlington [see [“Metrorail car in Arlington derailment had left tracks twice ...,”](#) *News*

Wire, Oct. 19, 2021], and found surveillance video showing both those incidents. (That video is included in [this YouTube recording](#) of today’s media briefing on the report’s release.

The agency also found that WMATA’s Office of the Chief Mechanical Officer, Rail, had first observed wheel migration issues on some equipment in 2014, and on the 7000-series cars in March 2017, but the problem had not been added to a “hot issues” list of significant problems because of a low number of occurrences. The issues on the 7000-series cars — discovered while deliveries were still in progress — led WMATA to change the specifications for pressing the wheels onto the axles, Homendy said. But the 66% of the cars that had already been delivered — including the one that derailed in the October 2021 incident — were left in service under the old specification, and wheel migration incidents continued to occur, even on cars operating under the new specification. (Ultimately, the wheel-pressing specification was increased further.)

“Had WMATA conducted a trend analysis to ensure the risk mitigations they put in place were effective, this incident may have been prevented,” Homendy said.

Homendy said issues with the FTA were illustrated in its submission on this incident, which “encourages” transit systems to increase the wheel-press specifications to freight rail standards, as WMATA has done.

“But you don’t need to recommend if you’re FTA,” she said. “You don’t need to encourage it. You need to mandate it. You have the authority to do so, just like we do for every other form of transportation. ... So I’m calling on FTA to take immediate action to regulate and enforce public safety on our nation’s rail transit systems. That’s something that we have recommended over and over and over again since the 1970s.”

WMATA, in [a statement issued on X](#), said it “fully supports” the NTSB report and “has issued a fleet defect notice to Kawasaki” regarding the wheel issue and that based on the contract between the two parties, “Kawasaki is responsible to pay all costs to fix this wheelset defect. We are confident that our current Wheelset Replacement program will address this wheelset defect as we work over the next several years to repress all 7000-series wheelsets at a higher press tonnage and increased interference fit.”

Kawasaki, however, responded in its own statement that “any suggestion that Kawasaki should absorb the cost of WMATA’s own failures regarding the wheelsets of the 7000 series trains is not rooted in reality.” The company said it met the design specifications established by WMATA, which “supplied the wheelset design for the 7000 series railcars to match their older railcars and then failed to alert Kawasaki when they increased the mounting pressure for those older railcars after they identified 33 instances of back-to-back failures in 2014 — *before the first 7000 series car was even delivered.* [Italics in the original statement.] The mismanagement by WMATA under prior leadership, cited in the NTSB’s final report, comes as no surprise to those who have followed the agency.”

Amalgamated Transit Union Local 689, which represents WMATA workers, said it is “troubled by the final report’s conclusions about the railcar’s wheel migration on and off the track that ultimately caused the derailment,” and that the union is committed to working with WMATA

and other stakeholders “to address the core roots of the accident and taking steps to prevent future ones.” The union also heralded WMATA’s inclusion of a union representative in the NTSB investigation process as “a great step in the right direction to improve transparency and the Union is hopeful this will be the case moving forward.”

The full report [is available here](#).

— *Updated at 2:40 p.m. with comments from NTSB press briefing revisions throughout; updated at 6:10 p.m. with Kawasaki statement.*