

**Arlington Transit Advisory Committee
Meeting Notes
March 12, 2024
7:00 PM
Microsoft Teams Meeting**

YouTube Meeting Video Link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ICgA4XQMkg&list=PLg2Yc0utvhQ8DUeoNQCfCbyibKh3jMpXb>

TAC Members Present:

John Carten	Alexa Mavroidis	David Sisson
James Davenport	Erika Chiang	Angelo Cocchiaro
Mariela Garcia-Colberg	Laura MacNeil	

Attendees Present:

Lynn Rivers (staff)	Pierre Holloman (staff)	Kirk Dand (staff)
Clinton Edwards (staff)	Paul Mounier (staff)	Diana Isaza (staff)
Diane Trent (staff)	Lauren Breyer (staff)	Ryan Jones (staff)
Josh Drucker (staff)	Ritesh Parikh (staff)	Edwin Montano (staff)
Francis Tetty (staff)	Andre Stafford (WMATA)	Maria Martinez
Kent Keyser	Jiaxin Tong	W. Gonçalves

Call to Order

- John Carten opened the meeting at 7:03 pm.

Introductions

- John Carten led roll call of TAC members present, Arlington staff, and others present.

Public Comment

- There were no public comments.

Approval of Minutes from the January 16, 2024, Meeting

- The meeting notes were approved unanimously.

Approval of Accessibility Subcommittee Nominees

- RoseAnn Ashby and Kent Keyser were both approved unanimously to serve on the Accessibility Subcommittee.

WMATA Proposed FY2025 Budget Update

- Kirk Dand provided an update of the proposed FY2025 WMATA budget. It was noted that in December of 2023, Metro presented a budget that included severe cuts and fare increases to address the FY25 structural operating deficit. On February 8, 2024, WMATA was able to revise the budget. The revised budget avoids the drastic severe service cuts and fare increases previously proposed. The revised budget achieves this by focusing on service optimization, sustainable fare increases and other actions that will help WMATA maintain a robust system. WMATA identified \$50 million in recurring administrative efficiencies through various measures, including reduced consulting services and improved asset management. WMATA will implement a salary and wage freeze in FY25, resulting in \$38 million in savings.
- WMATA plans to implement targeted service reductions across the system; this includes reducing frequencies on some rail lines and adjusting peak period service windows. Additionally, they'll examine reducing service on some holidays with lower ridership. WMATA will transfer \$104 million of preventive maintenance program costs from operating the capital to help close the FY25 operating funding gap. This while this provides short term relief, it reduces funding available for critical infrastructure projects. Rail service reductions will be implemented, including decreased frequencies, on some lines, peak period service windows will be adjusted to concentrate service during the busiest times of the day, and WMATA will also operate more 6 car trains instead of the eight car trains that we are used to; this will allow Metro to match capacity with ridership levels better and save on costs. WMATA is examining targeted realignments and reductions of service on some holidays, with lower ridership, Metrobus will remain largely unchanged until the introduction of the better bus network redesign.
- The revised FY25 budget includes fare increases. There will be a 12.5% base increase on Metrobus, Metro Rail, and MetroAccess fares that will also be an additional increase of up to 25% on late nights and weekends, with a cap of \$2.50 per trip.
- WMATA will address the FY25 gap through several measures, aggressive expense management and oversight will keep FY25 Gross, expenses at the FY24 levels. WMATA will also transfer some funds from our preventive maintenance program to help close the gap. However, this will decrease funding available for critical infrastructure projects. WMATA's funding jurisdictions have communicated a total of \$480 million in additional funding for FY25. This funding is above the 3% cap that was previously in place. Maryland is providing \$150 million. Virginia is providing \$130 million and the District of Columbia is providing \$200 million.
- The TAC asked if the \$130 million from the Commonwealth included contributions from Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, Alexandria, and the state. It was noted that the \$130 million included contributions local and state with about \$65 million coming from the Commonwealth and local jurisdictions making up the remaining share.

Arlington Transit Proposed Service Changes as Part of Proposed FY2025 Budget

- Clinton Edwards gave an overview of the proposed service changes which are part of Arlington's FY2025 proposed budget. The proposed service changes include:
 - Eliminating the western portion of Route 53 between East Falls Church and the Madison Community Center
 - Eliminating Route 61
 - Extending the eastern half of Route 53 to Rosslyn via Clarendon/Wilson Blvd and the southern alignment of Route 61

- Eliminate Route 62
- The total value of savings with the proposed changes is about \$700,000. The reasons for the suggested service changes were due to a looking at performance metrics such as weekday passengers per revenue mile and passengers per revenue hour. The 53, 61, and 62 all rank in the bottom quadrant of all Arlington Transit routes. In terms of Title VI analysis, there was not a disparate impact regarding impact to minority populations for all three routes. However, there was impact in terms of low-income populations, though with Title VI, mitigation factors are applied which involve route alignments and walking distances.

Proposed ART and STAR Fare Increases

- Clinton Edwards noted that as part of the proposed FY2025 County Operating Budget, the County Board will be considering the adoption fare increases for ART and STAR commensurate with the WMATA increase. WMATA current proposal is for a 12.5% increase, anticipated adoption of the FY25 WMATA budget on April 25, 2024. Moreover, the base fare for ART would increase from \$2.00 to \$2.25 while the fare for senior citizens and persons with disabilities would increase from \$1.00 to \$1.15. STAR Zone 1 fares would increase from \$4.00 to \$4.50, Zone 2 would increase from \$5.50 to \$6.20 and Zone 3 would increase from \$9.50 to \$10.70. It was noted that if persons want to comment on the proposed fare changes or any of the proposed service changes, the County Board will be having two public hearings and there is an online form which individuals will be able provide their feedback.

Arlington Transit Real Time Bus Arrival Update

- Josh Drucker gave an update on the challenge of “Ghost Buses” in Arlington Transit’s real time tracking system. When real time information is provided on apps saying that a bus is coming but, it does not come, that is classified as a Ghost Bus. Arlington Transit has been working on fixing this issue with Transit App, Google Maps, Apple Maps, Moovit and other apps. As part of this fix, staff have added some software capabilities to the current ART Alerts system. Staff built an extra platform for ART operations and dispatch teams to use which will essentially add code needed to upload data to the noted apps. Moreover, if a bus is removed from service due to various reasons such as mechanical breakdowns or stuck in traffic, that bus will no longer be shown on route on the apps. The customer will not see a bus coming as a result which will hopefully eliminate the misinformation for Ghost Buses. If a bus is not coming, there will be an alert noting that bus was taken out of service due to various reasons. This solution is expected to go live on April 1, 2024. It may take a few weeks for apps to update but staff will monitor the progress through April 2024.
- The TAC asked how many Ghost Buses does ART typically encounter. It was noted that it has been hard to determine the exact number; however, ART has received several complaints each week for several months. Moreover, staff is hoping this coding fix will help resolve this issue.

Arlington Transit Service and STAR Performance Update

- Clinton Edwards started off by sharing information received as part of an online public engagement and an in-person engagement for STAR on January 31, 2024, at the Central Library. With both the online and in-person engagements, STAR users and the public were asked about the level of importance of different features that should be focused on within the upcoming STAR RFP. The top in terms of level of importance based on the responses received included Zone 1 and Zone 2 trips, reliable service, ride tracking, safe-day trips, online scheduling, and online payments.

- Regarding ART, due to maintenance issues, ART has experienced spikes in missed trips in January, February, and the early part of March. The arrival of 15 new buses in the summer of 2024 will help in terms of the reliability of fleet and service. Regarding ridership, ART has seen double digit increases compared to 2023. It was noted that the ART Service Performance Dashboard is available online for all to view at arlingtontransit.com.

Report from the Accessibility Subcommittee

- Alexa Mavroidis stated that she recently accepted a new job which will require her to work nights; moreover, unless the Accessibility Subcommittee moved their meetings to Monday nights, she will not be able to attend. The Accessibility Subcommittee received a presentation on the STAR public online and in-person public engagement as well as the proposed service and fare changes. Concern was expressed regarding the process of incorporating the feedback received from the public engagement and Accessibility Subcommittee into the RFP as it was noted that staff has vowed to maintain a clear and transparent process.

Additional Items from Committee Members and Staff

- Kirk Dand noted that from March 20, 2024 – April 3, 2024, from 9:00 am – 5:00 pm daily, WMATA will have a mock-up of the 8000 series train as well as a battery electric bus on the National Mall for people to see. The 8000 series cars feature the ability to walk through each car, an open concept. Also noted was the upcoming WMATA Board meeting which will be held on March 21, 2024.

Adjournment

- The meeting was adjourned at 8:09 pm.

Next Meeting

- The next meeting will be online on Tuesday, May 14, 2024.