WASHINGTON AREA BUS TRANSFORMATION PROJECT

Bus Transformation Project

Spring 2019 Public Feedback Report

Public Feedback Summary

Here is what we heard from the public in May 2019 when we asked for feedback on the recommendations in the Draft Bus Transformation Strategy:

- Provide more frequent service and give buses priority on the region's roads. Creating a faster and more reliable bus network was the top priority of the majority of respondents.
- Reduce the cost to ride, including free transfers between bus and Metrorail and lower-cost fare products for low-income riders.
- A plurality of survey respondents in all jurisdictions prioritized dedicated lanes and free transfers between bus and Metrorail, for faster and cheaper travel around the region.
- Unify the bus system with passes and mobile apps that work across all agencies and have consistent data standards regionwide.
- Most survey respondents believed that the BTP recommendations could transform bus in the region if implemented.
- Survey takers strongly supported spending public funds on implementing the recommendations.
- In the survey, people age 65 or over, Spanish-language respondents, and low-income riders prioritized safety and accessibility of bus stops and discounted fare products for low-income riders.
- Commenters prioritized the quality of bus service over caring about which agency operates the service.

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1. Introduction

1.1 About the Project and Draft Strategy Outreach Process

The Washington Area Bus Transformation Project (BTP) is an effort to transform the DC region's local bus service. Engagement with the public is critical for understanding what the public wants from bus service in the region, which is important for the project's success. An initial round of public outreach was conducted in Fall 2018, and, upon release of the Draft Bus Transformation Strategy in May 2019, a second round of public outreach was conducted to gather feedback from key stakeholders and the general public about the recommendations in the Draft Strategy and how they would prioritize improvements to local bus service in the region. Three different engagement techniques were used in this round of outreach: an online survey, pop-up events, and open houses.

1.1.1 About the Online Survey

The project team conducted a survey hosted on the QuestionPro platform which was open from May 6 - June 6, 2019. The survey asked members of the public to prioritize some of the recommendations in the Draft Strategy and provided an opportunity for open-ended comment on the elements within the Draft Strategy. It also included two questions asking for participants' general opinions of the BTP recommendations as well as optional demographic questions. The survey, which was intended for both regular bus riders and non-riders, was available in both English and Spanish through the project website.

The survey was promoted through a combination of methods. Thirteen pop-up events were held at targeted locations throughout the region to reach a diverse sample of respondents. At the pop-up events people could take the survey on tablet computers and speak with team members. Three public open house events were held, at which members of the public could learn more about the project and respond to the survey on tablet computers. In addition to the two types of events, the project team posted on the project Facebook page[1] and paid for Facebook ads and boosted Facebook event pages, encouraging people to take the survey. The project team also reached out to community-based organizations and jurisdictional public information officers (PIOs) to spread the word about the survey to their networks. WMATA sent an e-mail blast to SmarTrip® card holders encouraging them to participate in the survey. All survey respondents had the opportunity to share their email address for the chance to win a $50 SmarTrip® card.

1.1.2 About the Pop-up Events

As noted in the previous section, 13 pop-up events were held throughout the DC Metro Area in May 2019. **Figure 1** shows the locations of the pop-up events throughout the region and **Table 1** contains a list of these events with their location, date, and time. Pop-up events were held at Metrorail stations, transit centers, and community gathering areas throughout the region, with consideration given to reaching a diverse cross-section of the region's population as well as to the success of pop-ups in each location during the Fall 2018 round of outreach. Weekday pop-ups were held from 3:00 PM to 7:00 PM to coincide with the evening rush hour and reach the largest possible number of people. Pop-ups held on weekends were held at various times in the day, to coincide with the busiest time of day in each location. At least

[1] https://www.facebook.com/BusTransformationProject/

one Spanish-speaking staff member was on hand at every pop-up, with additional Spanish speakers sent to locations with substantial Spanish-speaking populations.

At the pop-up events the project team handed out postcards to passersby and encouraged them to take the survey in person on tablet computers. The postcards contained a link to the survey that people could respond to from their computer or smartphone, basic information about the project, and information about the open house events.

Figure 1: May 2019 Outreach Events

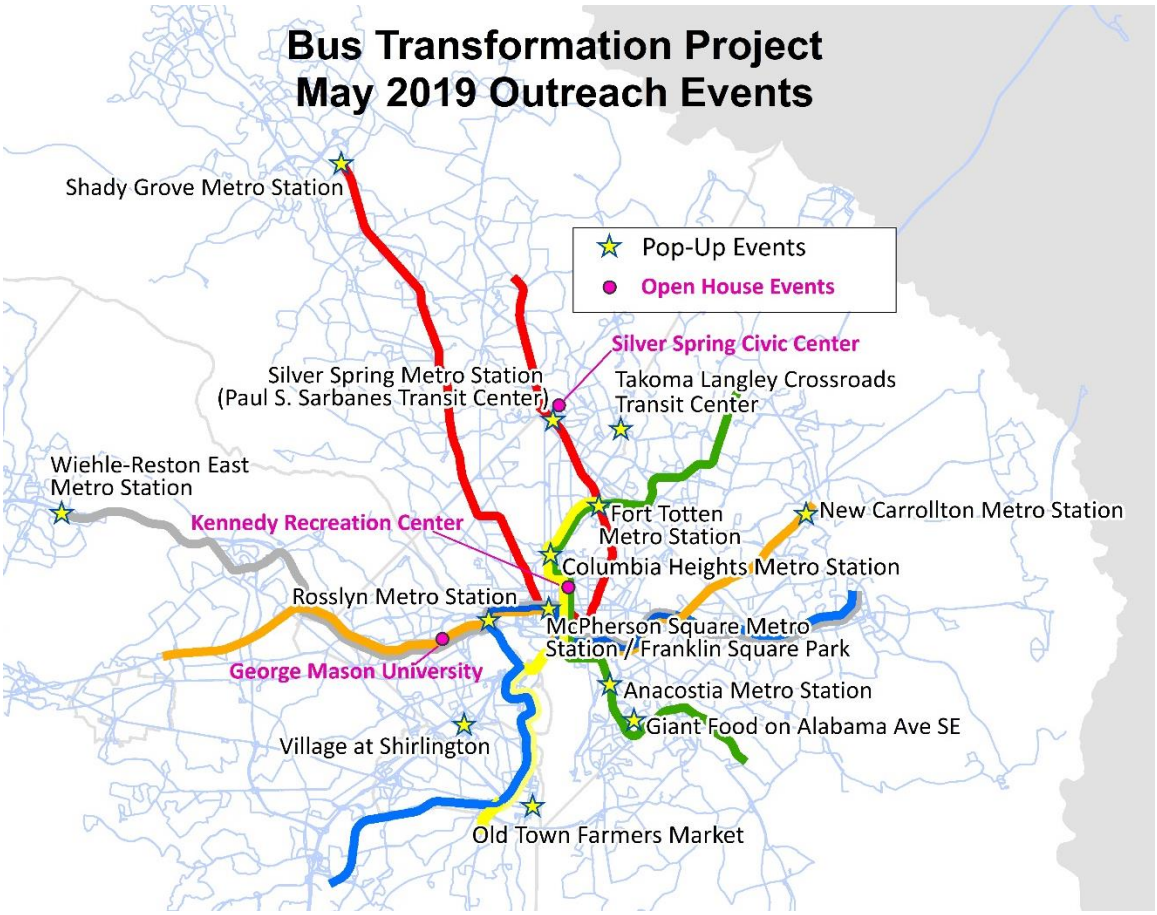


Table 1: Spring 2019 Pop-up Events

Location	Jurisdiction	Date and Time
Takoma Langley Crossroads Transit Center	Prince George's County	May 6 (Monday), 3:00 PM-7:00 PM
Silver Spring (Paul S. Sarbanes Transit Center)	Montgomery County	May 7 (Tuesday), 3:00 PM-7:00 PM
Wiehle-Reston East Station	Fairfax County	May 8 (Wednesday), 3:00 PM-7:00 PM
Rosslyn Metro Station	Arlington County	May 9 (Thursday), 3:00 PM-7:00 PM
McPherson/Franklin Square Park	Washington DC, NW	May 10 (Friday), 3:00 PM-7:00 PM
Giant Food on Alabama Ave SE	Washington DC, SE	May 11 (Saturday), 12:00 PM-4:00 PM
Columbia Heights Metro Station	Washington DC, NW	May 13 (Monday), 3:00 PM-7:00 PM
New Carrollton Metro Station	Prince George's County	May 14 (Tuesday), 3:00 PM-7:00 PM
Anacostia Metro Station	Washington DC, NE	May 15 (Wednesday), 3:00 PM-7:00 PM
Shady Grove Metro Station	Montgomery County	May 16 (Thursday), 3:00 PM-7:00 PM
Fort Totten Metro Station	Washington DC, NE	May 17 (Friday), 3:00 PM-7:00 PM
Village at Shirlington	Arlington County	May 18 (Saturday), 5:00 PM-9:00 PM
Old Town Farmers Market	City of Alexandria	May 18 (Sunday), 7:00 AM-12:00 PM

1.1.3 About the Open Houses

Three open houses were held during the week of May 20-24, 2019, with one each held Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia (shown in **Figure 1**). Each event was held on a weekday evening in a transit-accessible location. The list of public open houses is in **Table 2**, complete with each location, date, and time. At the open houses, each element of the Draft Strategy had its own station with poster boards describing the recommendations and interactive opportunities to provide feedback. At some stations participants were asked to use dot stickers to answer multiple choice questions (see **Section 4.2**), and at other stations participants were asked to provide open-ended comments on post-it notes (see **Section 3**). The final station asked participants to offer general comments on the project, including which elements they particularly favored or opposed, and provided the opportunity to take the online survey on tablet computers. The project team was available throughout the event at all the stations to answer questions from participants and discuss any thoughts they wished to share. Activities for children and snacks were also available.

Table 2: Spring 2019 Public Open House Events

Date	Location	Jurisdiction
May 20, 2019	George Mason University, Arlington, VA	Virginia
May 21, 2019	Kennedy Recreation Center, Washington, DC	Washington, DC
May 23, 2019	Silver Spring Civic Center, Silver Spring, MD	Maryland

1.2 About this Report

This report summarizes the feedback gathered through both the online survey and the open houses, including both quantitative and qualitative feedback. The summary which appears on page 1 before the Table of Contents summarizes the overall feedback received from all the input methods.

Section 2 provides an overview of the people who provided feedback during this public engagement period.

Section 3 summarizes the findings from the open-ended feedback received. Open-ended comments from the survey and the open houses were combined and then organized by element where relevant. The comments were grouped by sentiment: positive, negative, or neutral. The comments were then further divided by the specific recommendation or concept they addressed. This method allowed the project team to understand the relative appeal of each specific recommendation. The comments provide a window into the public's attitudes about each recommendation, answering questions such as: Which recommendations are people most excited about? Which recommendations are people more skeptical about? Which recommendations do people want more details about?

Section 4 summarizes the quantitative feedback received on the Draft Strategy, which was gathered in two ways: the interactive dot sticker activities at the open houses and the prioritization and general opinions questions from the online survey. Analyzing the responses to these questions allows the project team to identify the recommendations within the Draft Strategy that had the most or least support. For the responses to the survey questions it is also possible to understand if and how sub-sets of the population would prioritize recommendations differently based on frequency of bus ridership, location of residence, income, and race/ethnicity.

2. About the Participants

2.1 Open House Participants

Three open houses were held to gather feedback on the Draft Strategy, one in each of DC, Maryland, and Virginia. These open houses drew a total of 134 people, as shown in **Table 3**. Participants at open houses were not asked for demographic information.

Table 3: Public Open House Attendance

Date	Location	Number of Participants
May 20, 2019	George Mason University, Arlington, VA	27
May 21, 2019	Kennedy Recreation Center, Washington, DC	58
May 23, 2019	Silver Spring Civic Center, Silver Spring, MD	49

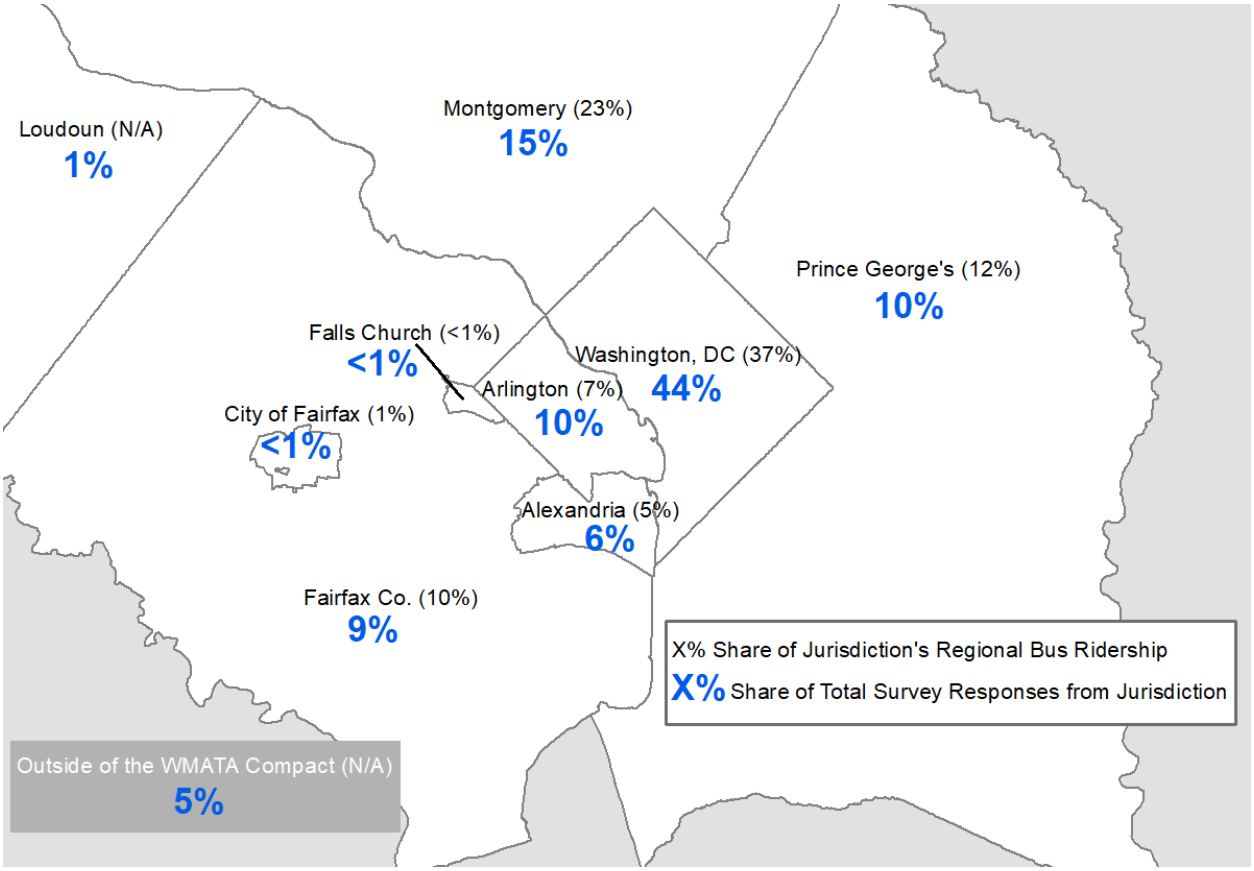
2.2 Survey Respondents

The survey was taken by 3,123 people: 2,968 (95 percent) of them took the survey in English, and 155 (five percent) took the survey in Spanish. Of those who responded to the question about frequency of bus ridership, 63 percent reported riding the bus at least once per week, while 37 percent ride the bus less than once per week. As a point of comparison, 49 percent of bus riders regionwide ride at least once per week, and they account for 91 percent of all trips on the region's bus systems.

When compared to the profile of regular bus riders in the region, survey respondents are disproportionately whiter and higher-income. Fifteen percent of survey respondents reported having annual household incomes below $30,000 per year (the threshold WMATA uses for low-income), while 52 percent of the region's bus riders are low-income. While non-white individuals make up 81 percent of Metrobus ridership, they comprised just 53 percent of survey respondents, while white non-Hispanic survey respondents comprised 47 percent of the sample.

Figure 2 shows the breakdown of survey respondents by jurisdiction, compared to the share of regional bus ridership from that jurisdiction. It shows that DC residents are slightly overrepresented in the survey responses, as they make up 44 percent of survey takers and just 37 percent of regional bus riders. Montgomery County is slightly underrepresented, with 15 percent of survey takers and 20 percent of regional bus ridership. All other jurisdictions are represented relatively proportionately to their share of the region's bus ridership.

Figure 2: Survey Responses by Jurisdiction in Comparison to Share of Regional Bus Ridership



3. Comments on Draft Strategy Elements

3.1 Key Takeaways from Comments

- Overwhelmingly, commenters expressed a desire to improve the existing bus system by providing more frequent and reliable service and giving buses priority on the region's roads.

- Commenters broadly supported recommendations that focused on reducing the cost to ride.
- A more unified system was strongly desired, via passes and mobile apps that work across all providers, consolidating back-office functions, and consistent data standards.
- Commenters were more interested in improving the quality of bus service than they were in who operates bus service.
- Broad support was expressed for better cooperation and accountability, with a focus on improving accountability and quality of service from currently existing entities, as opposed to establishing new ones.

3.2 Introduction

This section summarizes public feedback on the Draft Strategy received both through the online survey available to the public in May and June 2019 as well as at public open houses held in Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia during the week of May 20-24, 2019. Feedback is grouped by Strategy Element, and by whether the feedback was positive, negative, or neutral, and then further analyzed by specific comment topic and sentiment. In concert with quantitative survey data, these comments provide a nuanced understanding of public reaction to the Draft Strategy; a complete understanding of the public's response to the Draft Strategy requires an analysis of both the survey data and the public comments, as summarized in the overall summary on page 1.

3.3 Element 1: Customer Focused

> ***"IT'S MADDENING WHEN BUSES SHOW UP 15 OR 20 MINUTES LATE OR DON'T SHOW UP AT ALL." – 2019 PUBLIC COMMENT ON DRAFT STRATEGY***

The recommendations in this element were broadly popular. Positive comments outnumber negative comments by nearly five to one, with 181 positive comments to 44 negative comments. Some of the most popular recommendations were within the theme of reducing the cost to ride the bus, including recommendations to make transfers between bus and rail free and to introduce a reduced-fare product for low-income individuals. All 32 comments about introducing free transfers had positive sentiment. As one commenter put it: **"Free transfers to Metrorail is critical. The region's transit system is built around being multi-modal. Why penalize people for using the system as designed?"** An additional ten comments addressed a reduced-price fare product for low-income riders, and eight of those were in favor of this proposal.

Recommendations addressing bus safety and ease of use were also quite popular, such as the recommendations to introduce a pass product that would work on all of the region's bus systems, mobile apps for real-time info and payment, and safer bus stops. All 18 comments about a universal pass product expressed at least partial support. Each of the 20 comments focusing on bus stop safety were supportive, though these comments addressed several different aspects of bus stop safety, including pedestrian safety getting to bus stops, safe access for riders with disabilities, and lighting at stops. Twenty-nine comments addressed the importance of having mobile apps with real-time bus arrival info, though several also noted equity issues related to the availability of smartphones.

Many commenters expressed frustration that this element, while focusing on improving the rider experience, does not address bus level of service. Eighteen commenters specifically called for more bus service in their comments on this element. As one puts it: **"Buses need to be more reliable and come more often. I can't wait 20 plus minutes for a bus when commuting especially when they aren't running on the timetable. On top of this the rides are extremely slow."** Many of these comments expressed the sentiment that providing more service, and more reliable service, would improve bus ridership, and they wanted this concept to be more explicitly incorporated into this element. Additionally, 37 commenters used their comments on Element 1 to advocate for dedicated bus lanes throughout the region.

Commenters expressed mixed feelings about some other recommendations in this element. The recommendation to improve maps was addressed in 48 comments, of which roughly one-fifth are skeptical of how improving maps will improve the bus system and suggested that this recommendation is less important than creating simpler, straighter routes or introducing a more intuitive route numbering system. Additionally, only a slim majority of comments mentioning marketing supported the recommendation, with those opposed to the recommendation seeing marketing as unnecessary or a waste of money.

Other recommendations in this element were the subject of very few comments. For instance, only eight commenters addressed modernizing the region's bus fleet and only five addressed employer transit benefits. This could be ascribed to a lower amount of interest in these recommendations or fewer extreme reactions to them. Additionally, a few commenters suggested that this element has too many recommendations, and that this element would be improved with a narrower focus on a smaller number of high priority recommendations.

3.4 Element 2: Bus Priority

> ***"Buses must be given priority on more corridors across the region. It is essential to moving more people, more quickly, and more equitably." – 2019 Public Comment on Draft Strategy***

The most popular recommendation within Element 2 was bus priority. Sixty-nine commenters want buses to have higher priority on the region's roads, while 22 want transit signal priority and 165 want dedicated bus lanes. Another 11 commenters want more limited-stop and BRT-style services in the region. Many commenters believe that Element 2 should be a higher priority than Element 1 because of a belief that it would do more to improve the customer experience than Element 1 would.

Commenters expressed that coordination across the region in the form of agreements, policies, and guidelines will be essential to the success of this element. Fifty-eight commenters noted that several aspects of this element would require regional prioritization and coordination, such as congestion pricing that is not restricted by jurisdictional boundaries, common standards for bus lane and priority infrastructure, and better region-wide enforcement from local authorities.

Enforcement of bus-only space was a major concern of commenters. Many believe that a lack of enforcement has doomed past efforts at prioritizing bus on the region's roadways. Fifty-six commenters see proper enforcement of bus infrastructure, including bus-only lanes and no-parking zones at bus stops, as crucial to improving bus service. As one commenter says, **"Please emphasize the importance of enforcement - particularly automated. There aren't enough police available to patrol and deter violations - it needs to be automated."**

Some commenters misunderstood the idea of congestion pricing, believing it to be more akin to peak-hour pricing on buses, similar to the peak-hour fares changed on Metrorail. However, 15 commenters support congestion pricing based on the intended definition of the element (charging autos fees to travel on certain roads or in certain areas during peak commuting times).

3.5 Element 3: Frequent and Convenient Bus Service

> ***"Frequent service that is available seven days a week is critical to building a useful transit network that people can rely on for all their needs." – 2019 Public Comment on Draft Strategy***

Comments on this element focused on providing more and better bus service, with an overwhelming sentiment to make the existing system function better by providing more frequent and more reliable service. Sixty-one commenters seek increased frequency to improve existing routes and corridors. As one commenter put it, **"Frequent needs to be reliably frequent. The bus needs to arrive when it's supposed to arrive. The failure to do so is probably the most frustrating thing about riding the bus, and the thing that keeps some people from doing it at all."**

In fifteen comments people expressed frustration at the lack of schedule coordination around the region, the difficulty of having to use multiple apps to plan trips or view real-time information, and the lack of consistent fares and fare media. Commenters found the inability to easily transfer between different routes and providers to be a deterrent to using the bus.

Comments generally supported the idea of a bus network redesign to realign routes to better meet travel needs and make the system easier to understand and use. Thirty-six commenters want a network redesign, with ten suggesting that the right amount of service should be based on land use and measures of transit demand, rather than basing it on current bus ridership, on the theory that more people would ride a better-designed transit network.

Commenters noted that building a better bus network requires stronger cooperation between agencies. Thirty-eight discussed the critical importance of better regional coordination, including setting common frequency standards and consistent service planning guidelines. Many commenters also addressed what they see as flaws of the current network: nineteen commenters want bus service to provide more direct connections rather than focusing on connecting Metrorail stations, forty commenters want more late-night service, and another 20 want more off-peak service in general. Late-night bus service as a substitute for Metrorail when it does not operate was particularly popular.

Flexible on-demand service drew mixed reactions from commenters. Fifty-seven were optimistic about using it as a substitute for fixed-route service for some populations or transit use cases. Fourteen had concerns about the extent to which the Strategy focuses on it, while sixteen believed it would be too difficult to implement and not cost-effective. Fourteen others opposed transit subsidies for companies such as Uber or Lyft, while an additional six worried about the accessibility of flexible service.

3.6 Element 4: Balance Local and Regional Provider Responsibilities

> *"As a user, I don't really care who is responsible for my bus, I just want to be able to use my SmarTrip card to access buses and that my bus comes on time." – 2019 Public Comment on Draft Strategy*

Commenters were much more concerned with the quality of service than the identity of the bus provider (Metrobus or local providers), with 36 comments expressing this explicitly. These commenters worry that attempts to change which operators run specific routes may reduce overall levels of service. Additionally, eight commenters were concerned about the ability of local providers to take on additional routes.

Nineteen commenters suggested that regional services should be the focus of WMATA's service, particularly inter-jurisdictional connections. Commenters on this element generally supported consolidating service under a smaller number of providers or brand names. Six commenters suggested using a single "local" brand for bus service within jurisdictions and using the Metrobus brand for service connecting jurisdictions. However, nineteen called for reducing the number of operators, or moving to a single operator. As one commenter wrote, **"In an ideal world, I think our region would be better off with a single provider for all bus service, rather than the balkanized system we have now."**

3.7 Element 5: Optimize Back-Office Functions

> *"It would make a lot more sense to have one entity running the system, with appropriate oversight and equal funding prorated to the amount of ridership for each state." – 2019 Public Comment on Draft Strategy*

Commenters generally supported consolidating back office functions. Comments on this element were overwhelmingly positive (116 positive comments and 20 negative comments), with the most common theme being that consolidating back-office functions would reduce duplication of effort and promote cooperation between agencies. As one commenter puts it, **"There's no doubt that having 20**

companies running individual bus services is not cost-efficient and enhances discrepancies and discordance in the system." That said, some commenters expressed concern about the political challenges involved with consolidation, including the possibility that local bus systems and unions would oppose this effort. Commenters also generally supported data standardization—most of the 33 comments on this topic expressed the feeling that this is a "no-brainer" or expressed surprise that this is not already being done.

Commenters had mixed opinions on the Innovation Lab recommendation. Twelve supported it, while 13 opposed it, and 14 expressed a neutral opinion or a need for more information. Those who were opposed generally believed the idea would divert funding from improving the frequency and quality of bus service, which they see as higher priorities. Many of those in the middle wanted to know more about who would oversee operations of the Innovation Lab, what issues the Lab would focus on, and how its success would be measured.

3.8 Element 6: Regional Steward

> ***"THE DEVIL IS IN THE DETAILS ON THIS POINT. HOW WILL TRANSPORTATION AND TRANSIT AGENCIES BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE? THE FOCUS SHOULD BE ON SHARED GOALS AND CREATING INCENTIVES." – 2019 PUBLIC COMMENT ON DRAFT STRATEGY***

Most people who commented on Element 6 supported most of the recommendations in this element. Twenty-four comments asked for more details about the recommendations. Most commenters supported the recommendation to start a new regional task force to improve bus service, with many stressing the need for the task force to move quickly. Some commenters were skeptical, however, questioning whether the task force would be strong enough to keep the implementation on track, and 18 commenters wondered why an existing regional entity, such as the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB), cannot take on this responsibility, instead of creating a new bureaucracy.

Most commenters supported accountability, but many commenters wanted more details on what "accountability" means in this context and how it will be imposed. Forty-three commenters specifically demanded more accountability for transit providers, including WMATA and local providers. Some wanted the focus to be on shared goals and creating incentives to succeed. As one comment says, **"The effort should be hands-on, driven by local knowledge, cooperative, market-based, and not driven by regulations or penalties."** The bus scorecard idea was broadly popular: 29 comments mention the scorecard, with all but one at least partially supportive.

4. Quantitative Feedback

4.1 Key Takeaways from Quantitative Feedback

- Open house attendees were in favor of most BTP recommendations, especially those that would make travel in the region more affordable.
- Open house attendees were generally skeptical about how useful flexible transit service would be for meeting their transportation needs.
- Survey takers were generally enthusiastic about the BTP's recommendations.
- Survey respondents prioritized dedicated lanes for buses, free transfers between bus and Metrorail, and more service on busy routes above other recommendations, indicating that they are most concerned with faster, more reliable, seamless travel across the region.
- Safety and accessibility of bus stops and discounted fare products for low-income riders were high priorities for people aged 65 or over, Spanish-language survey respondents, and low-income respondents.
- A plurality of survey respondents in all jurisdictions prioritized dedicated lanes and free transfers to and from Metrorail for faster and cheaper travel around the region.
- Most survey respondents believe that the BTP recommendations could transform bus in the region if implemented, a result that held across all demographic subgroups. Survey takers strongly supported spending public funds on implementing the recommendations.

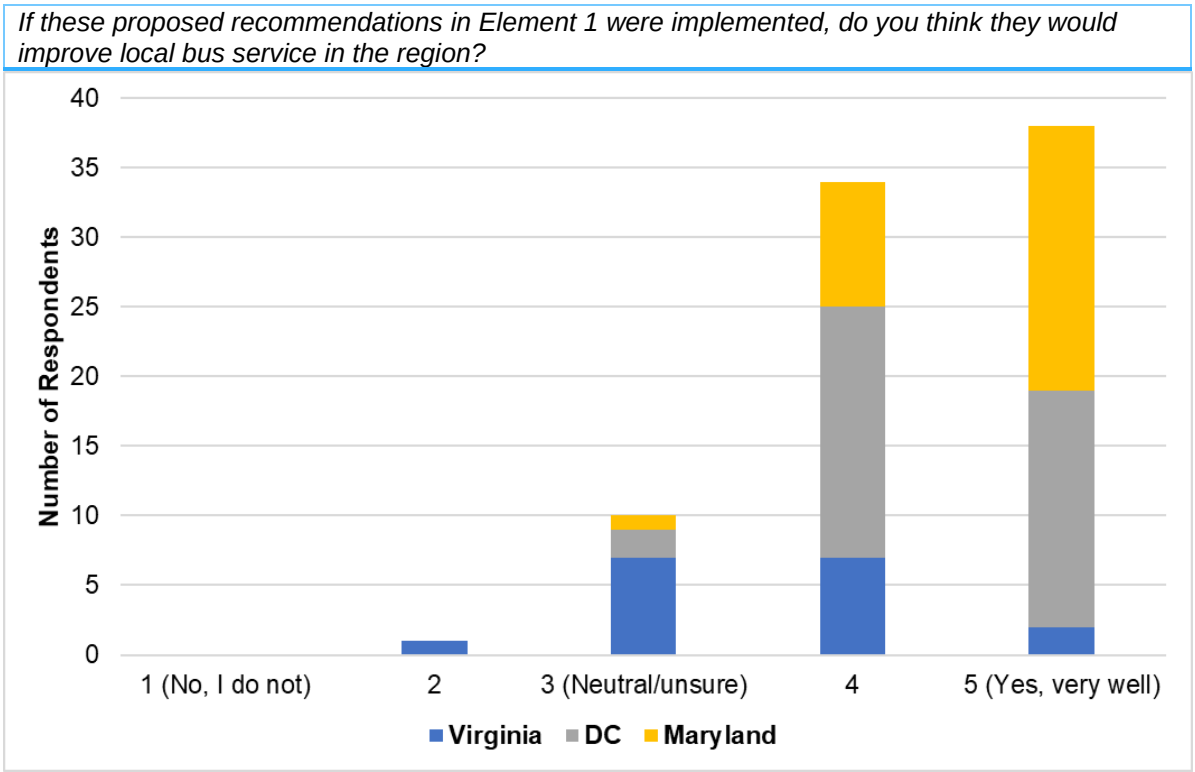
4.2 Open House Dot Exercise Results

At the public open house events attendees were invited to participate in several exercises where they were presented with a multiple-choice question and asked to place dot stickers on posters to represent their opinions on a given topic. The results of these exercises are analyzed in this section.

4.2.1 Element 1

Participants were asked their opinions on two questions related to the recommendations in Element 1. The first question reads, "If these proposed recommendations were implemented, do you think they would improve local bus service in the region?" Participants answered on a scale of one to five, with one indicating strong disagreement and five indicating strong agreement. The results of this question are shown in **Figure 3**. Eighty-seven percent of participants answered either four or five, suggesting substantial agreement with the recommendations in this element. Participants in Maryland were particularly enthusiastic about these recommendations, with 66 percent of participants choosing five. Participants in Virginia were somewhat more neutral on the recommendations. No participant at any open house strongly disagreed with these recommendations.

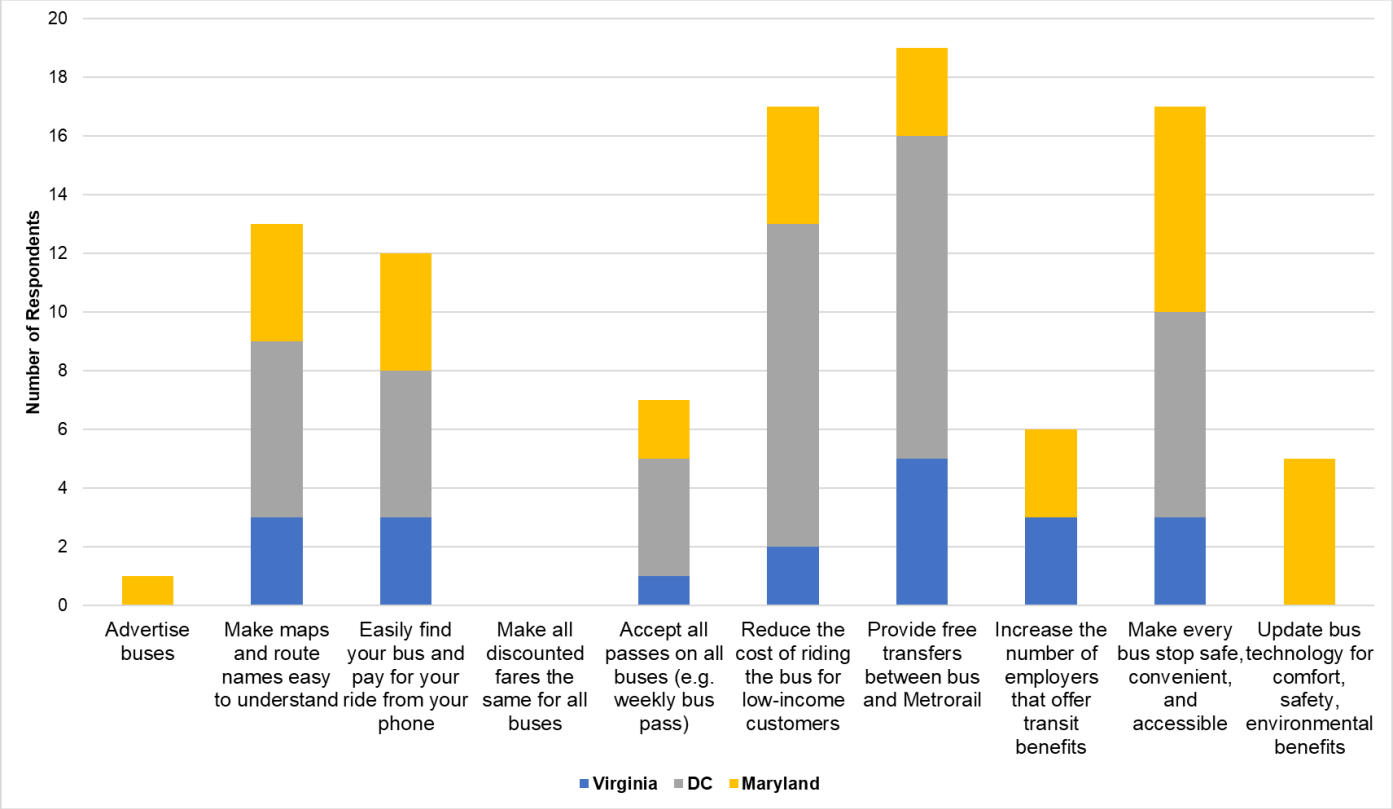
Figure 3: Support for Element 1 Recommendations



The other dot exercise question about Element 1 asked participants to choose the recommendation they thought would be most likely to get more people to ride the bus. Results of this question are shown in **Figure 4**. The recommendations chosen by the most attendees were providing free transfers between bus and Metrorail, reducing the cost of riding the bus for low-income customers, and making every bus stop safe, convenient, and accessible. Attendees at the Virginia event were most enthusiastic about free transfers, while Maryland attendees preferred improvements to bus stops, and DC attendees were most strongly in favor of free transfers and lower fares for low-income riders. Advertising buses and standardizing fare discounts across all buses received the fewest votes.

Figure 4: Priority of Element 1 Recommendations

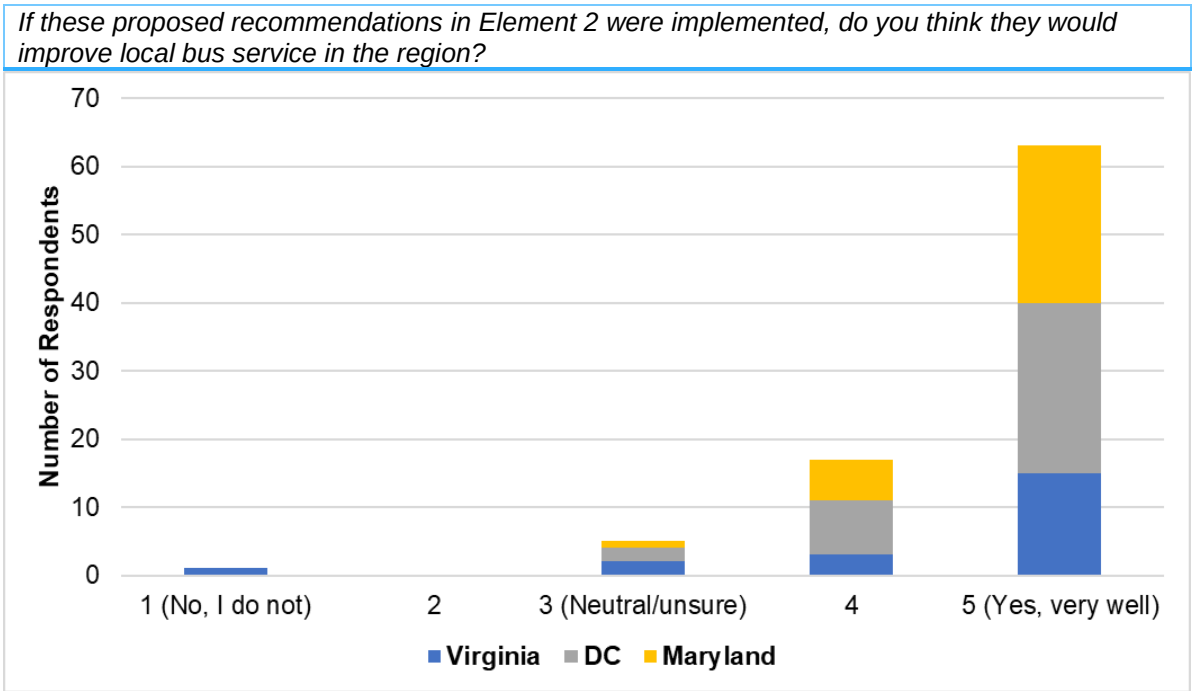
Which of the below recommendations is the most likely to get more people to ride the bus? Choose one.



4.2.2 Element 2

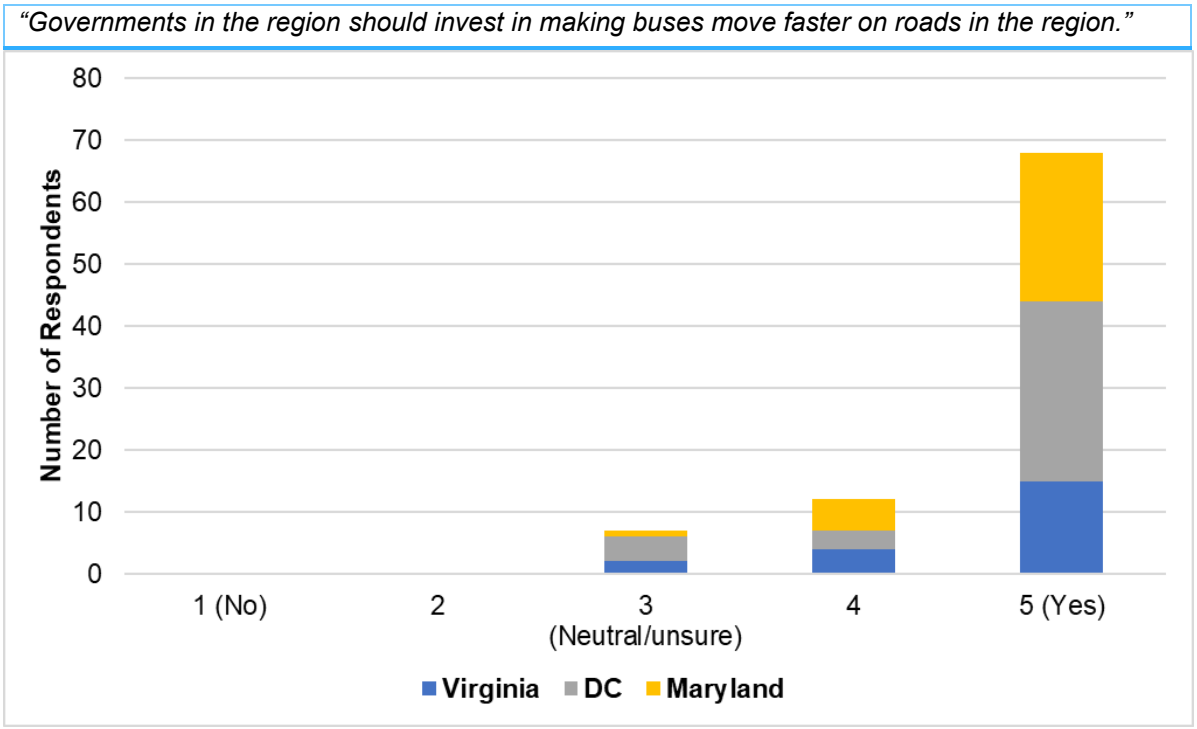
Participants were asked their opinions on two questions relating to the recommendations in Element 2. The first question read “If these proposed recommendations were implemented, do you think they would improve local bus service in the region?” Participants answered on a scale of one to five, with one indicating strong disagreement and five indicating strong agreement. The results of this question are shown in **Figure 5**. Participants overwhelmingly supported the recommendations in this element. Ninety-three percent of participants responded with either a four or a five, and only one participant across all three open houses responded with a two or a one.

Figure 5: Support for Element 2 Recommendations



The other dot exercise question about Element 2 asked participants to indicate, on a scale of one to five, whether they agreed with the statement "Governments in the region should invest in making buses move faster on roads in the region." The results of this question are shown in **Figure 6**. There were no negative responses to this question across the three open house events – every respondent either responded neutrally or in support of the statement. More than three-quarters of those who responded to the question agreed strongly with the statement. There was broad consensus at all three open houses that local governments should be doing more to speed up buses on the region's streets.

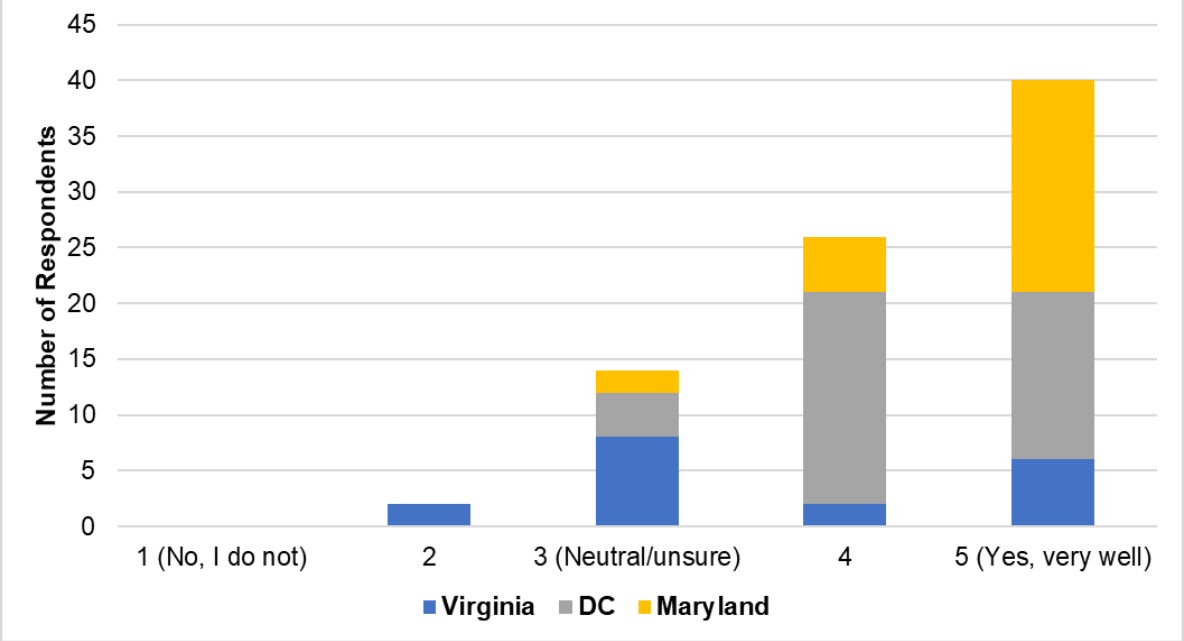
Figure 6: Moving Buses Faster



4.2.3 Element 3

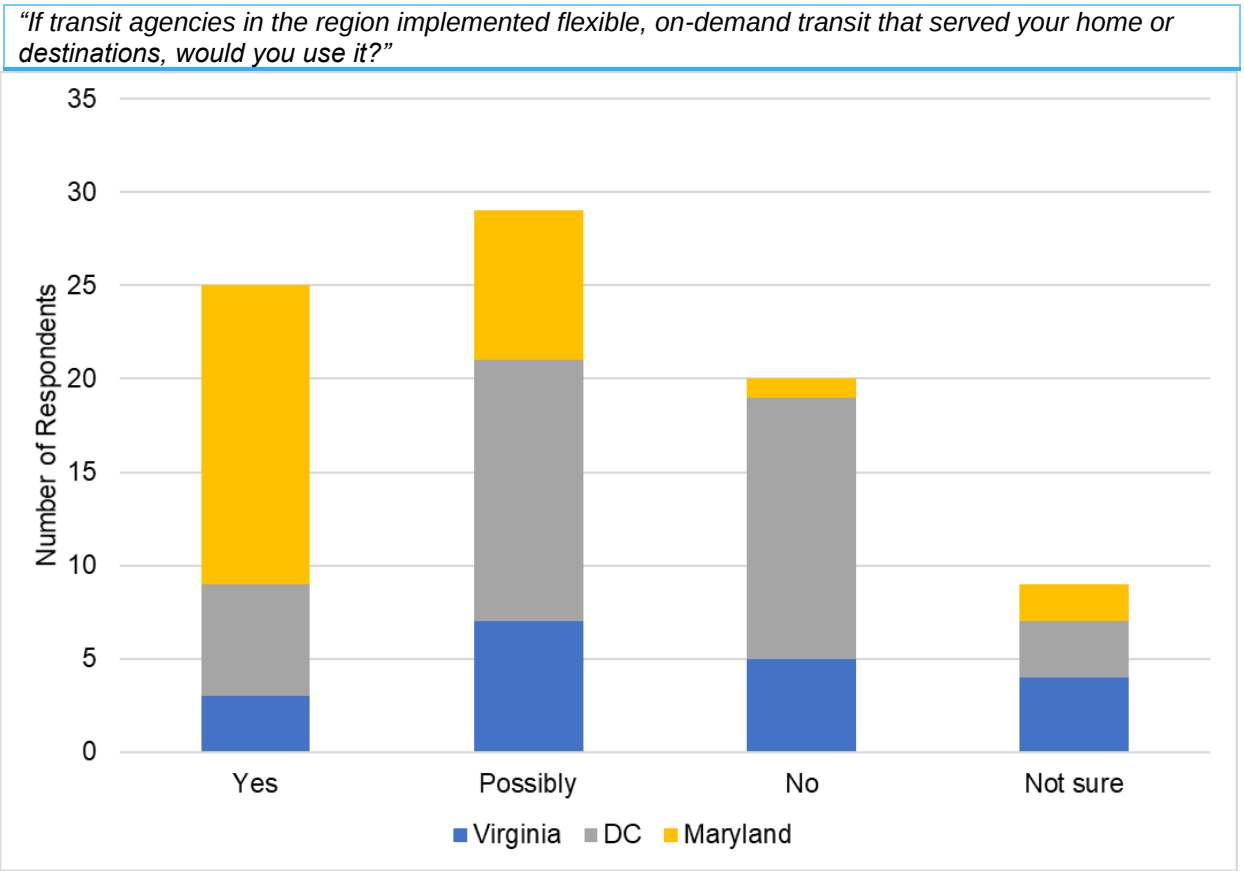
Participants were asked their opinions on two questions relating to the recommendations in Element 3. The first question read "If these proposed recommendations were implemented, do you think they would improve local bus service in the region?" Participants answered on a scale of one to five, with one indicating strong disagreement and five indicating strong agreement. Responses to this question are shown in **Figure 7**Error! Reference source not found.. The recommendations in this element garnered broad support from open house participants. Eighty percent of those who answered the question chose four or five, indicating agreement with the recommendations. Only two participants gave a negative response. The recommendations were least popular at the Virginia open house, with a majority of participants there answering two or three. These recommendations were much more popular at both the Maryland and DC open houses.

Figure 7: Support for Element 3 Recommendations



The other dot exercise question in this element asked participants, “If transit agencies in the region implemented flexible, on-demand transit that served your home or destinations, would you use it?” The answers to this question are shown in **Figure 8**. Feedback was mixed on this question; while more participants said yes (30 percent) than no (24 percent), the plurality of respondents responded “possibly” (35 percent), with an additional 11 percent responding “not sure.” Flexible service was most popular at the Maryland open house, where only one participant said they would not use the service, while more people said no than yes at both the Virginia and DC open houses.

Figure 8: Flexible Service



4.3 Survey Results

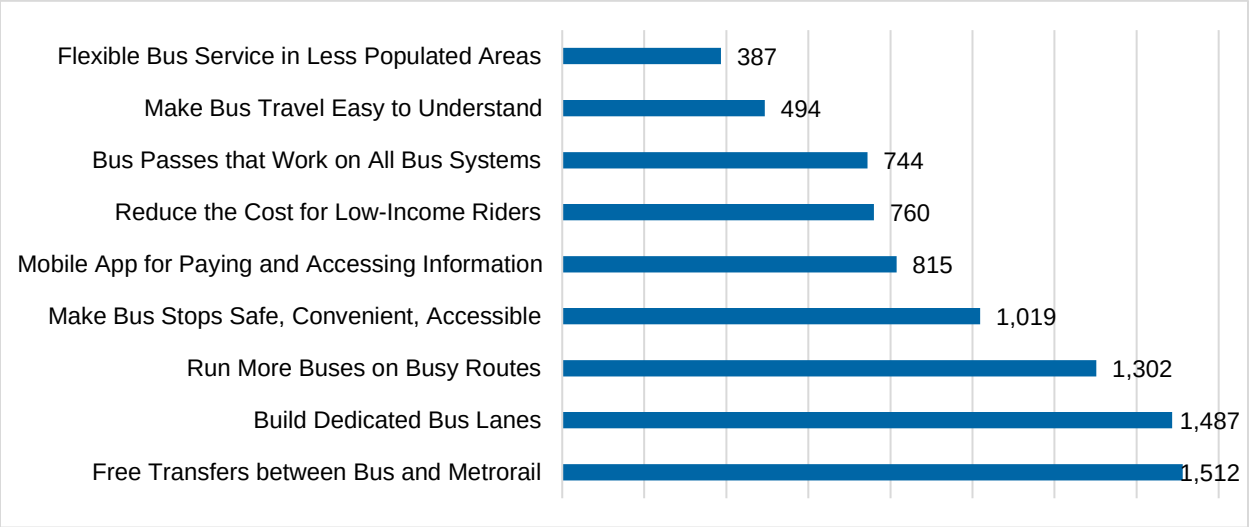
4.3.1 Introduction

Quantitative feedback from the survey, taken both online and administered at pop-ups, provides a sense of how the public wants policymakers to prioritize the recommendations in the Draft Strategy. Survey takers could choose up to three recommendations that they supported most strongly. On the next screen of the survey they were asked to rank those three recommendations in the order of their preferences from one to three. Those rankings were then used to create weighted scores for the recommendations. This allows the project team to understand which recommendations the public believes would provide the biggest benefit to bus service. These choices are also broken down by the demographics of survey respondents to highlight the needs of key communities whose preferences might otherwise get overlooked.

4.3.2 Overall Recommendations Preferences

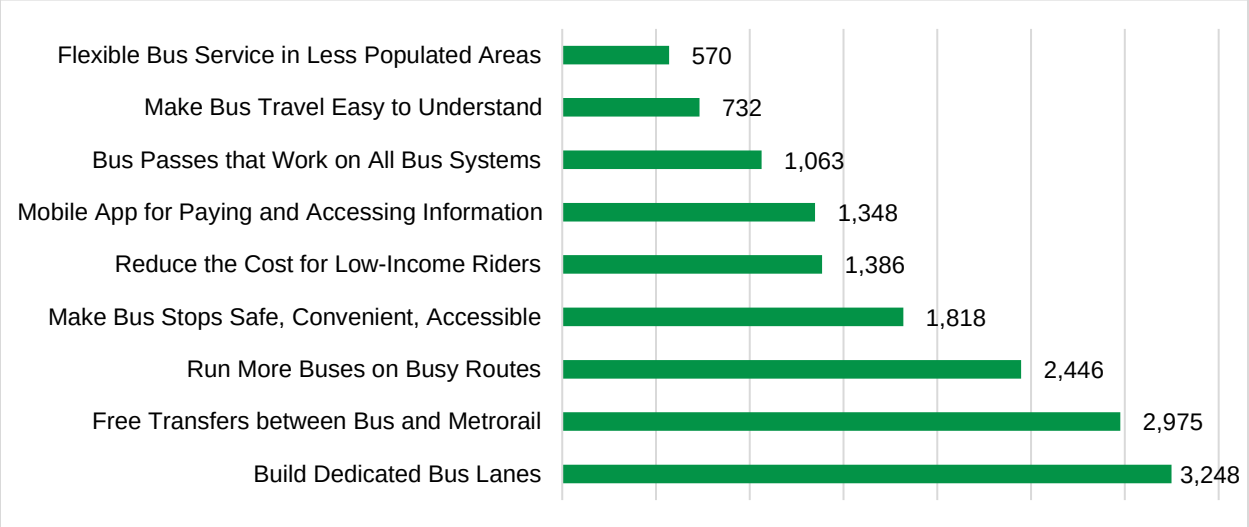
The online survey asked respondents to choose up to three recommendations out of a list of nine that they believed should be the highest priority actions coming out of the Bus Transformation Project. A raw count of responses tallying all the times a recommendation was chosen as one of the three selections by respondents is shown in **Figure 9**. The most popular responses were providing free transfers between bus and Metrorail, building dedicated bus lanes, and running more buses on busy routes. These three options were each chosen by more than 1,300 survey respondents.

Figure 9: Raw Count of Recommendation Preferences



After choosing their three priority recommendations, survey takers were asked to rank those three in order of importance to them. The ranked results were used to create a weighted index score of all the responses, which summed the weighted scores (each top priority was multiplied by three, each second priority was multiplied by two, and each third priority was multiplied by one). Weighted preferences are shown in **Figure 10**. By this method, the same three responses were most popular, but in a different order when compared to just the raw count of responses. With the weighted method, the recommendation to build dedicated bus lanes rose to the top. These results suggest overwhelming support for a more efficient and seamless network, driven by high-frequency buses in dedicated lanes with free transfers to Metrorail.

Figure 10: Weighted Index Score of Recommendation Preferences



4.3.3 Survey Results by Demographics and Frequency of Bus Use

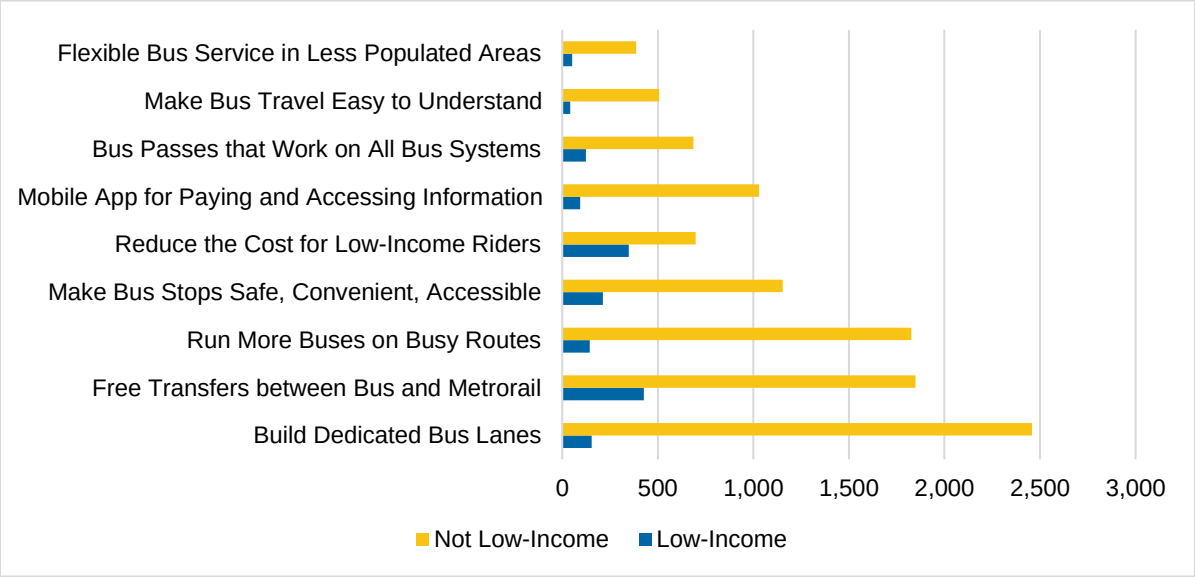
The weighted index score method was used to analyze whether different groups of respondents prioritize recommendations differently from each. The crosstabs of recommendation preferences are done by

income, race/ethnicity, frequency of bus ridership, age, jurisdiction of residence, and language that the survey was taken in.

The following graphs show weighted ranked scores for each recommendation for each group. Group preferences can be determined by analyzing the order of the weighted scores – higher scores represent higher priorities. In many of the following graphs, the groups analyzed have very different respondent counts; for example, **Figure 11** analyzes the weighted index score of low-income respondents (15 percent of respondents) compared to non-low-income respondents (85 percent of respondents). The size of the bars, representing the weighted ranked scores, are a result of the magnitude of preference as well as the number of respondents in that group.

Figure 11 shows recommendation preferences for low-income and non-low-income survey respondents.[2] For low-income respondents, who made up 15 percent of survey respondents, safer and cheaper travel were higher priorities than building dedicated bus lanes, whereas for non-low-income respondents, their highest priority was building dedicated bus lanes.

Figure 11: Weighted Score of Recommendation Priorities by Respondent Income



As shown in **Figure 12**, white and non-white respondents prioritized recommendations similarly. Both groups placed the recommendations to build dedicated bus lanes and provide free transfers between bus and Metrorail in their top three recommendations. Non-white respondents, who made up 48 percent of the survey respondents, placed free transfers between bus and Metrorail as the highest priority, whereas for white respondents this was the third highest priority.

[2] *WMATA defines low-income as having an annual household income of less than $30,000.*

Figure 12: Recommendation Priorities for White and Non-White Respondents

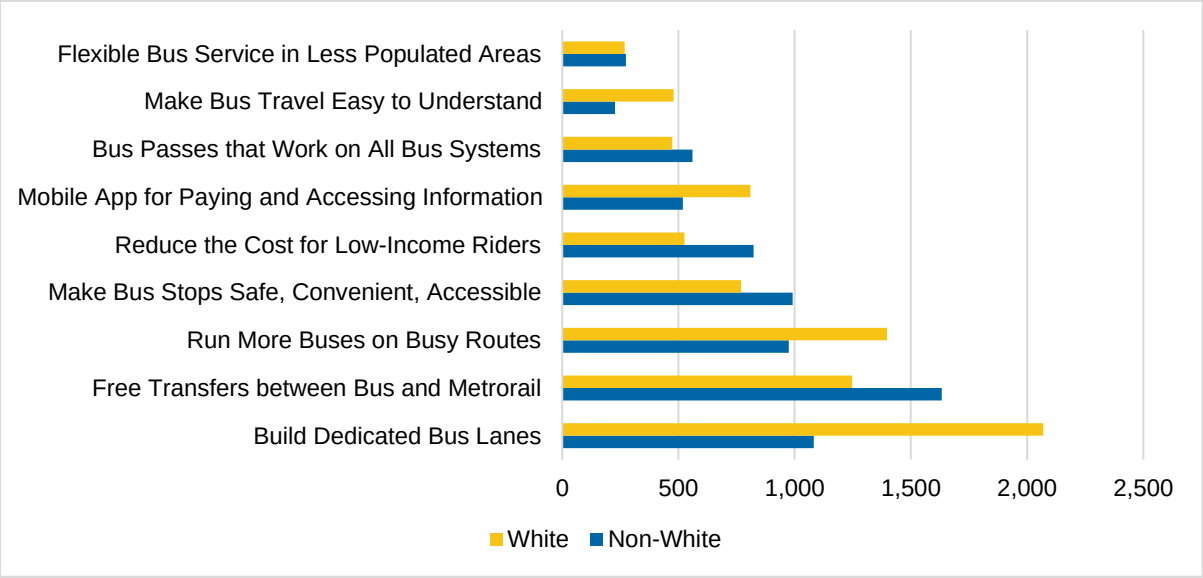
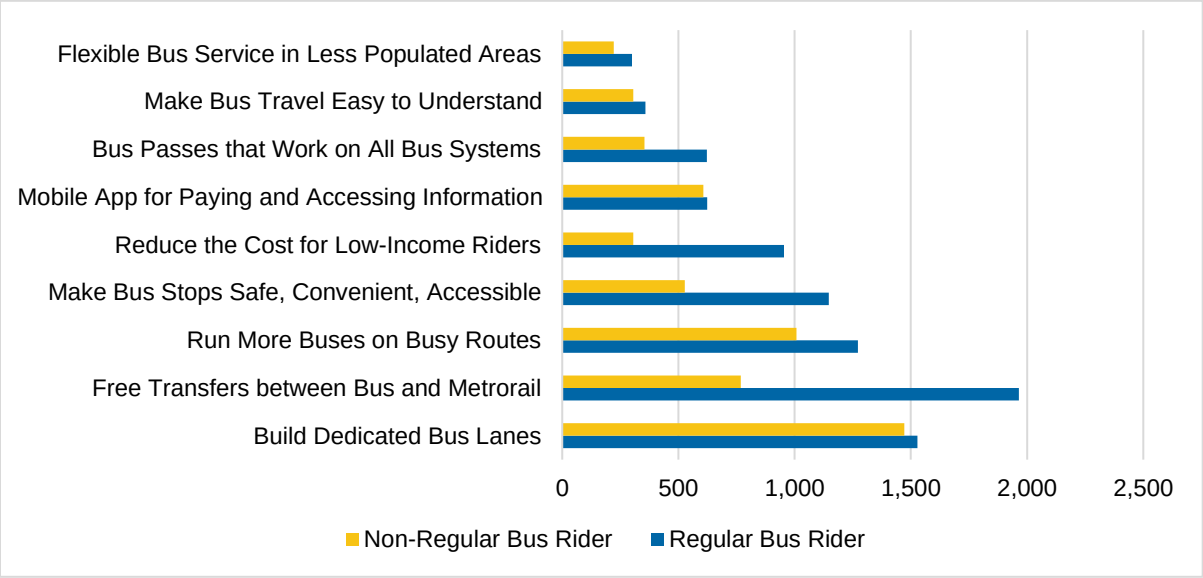


Figure 13 shows differing priorities between regular bus riders and non-regular riders.[3] The recommendation for free transfers between bus and Metrorail was by far the highest priority for regular bus riders (who made up 62 percent of survey respondents), followed by building dedicated bus lanes and providing more frequent buses on busy routes. Non-regular-riders prioritized the recommendation for a mobile app higher than regular riders did (fourth place compared to sixth). Regular riders prioritized the recommendation for improving bus stops higher than non-regular riders did (fourth place compared to fifth).

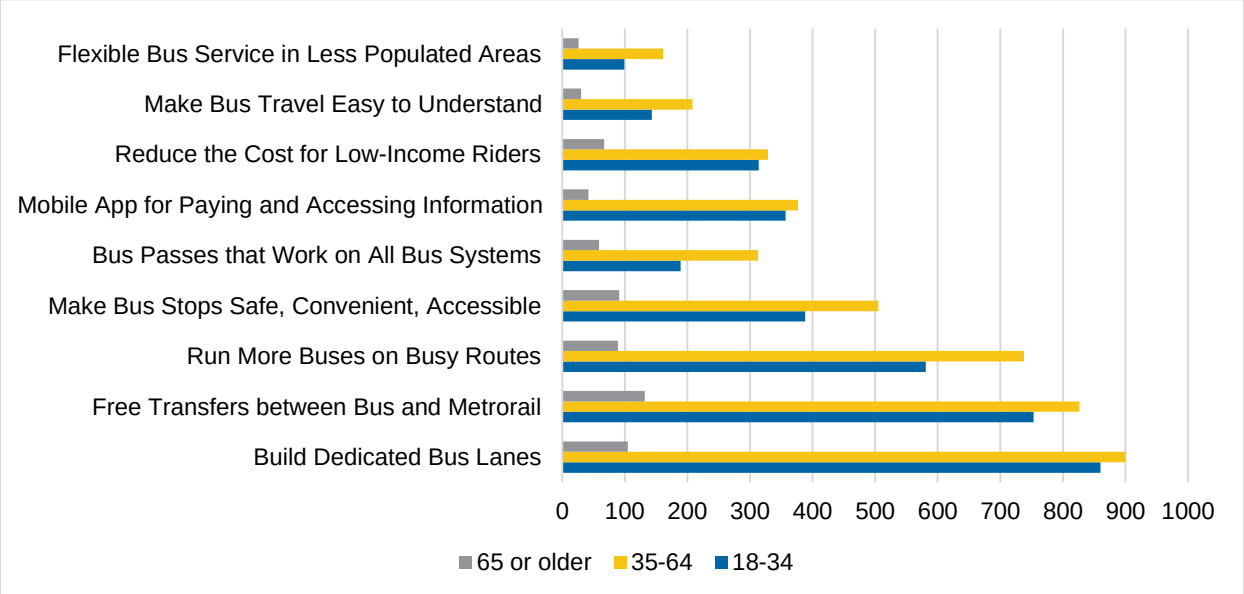
[3] *Regular riders include respondents who reported they ride the bus at least once per week. Non-regular riders include respondents who reported they ride less frequently than once per week.*

Figure 13: Recommendation Priorities for Regular and Non-Regular Bus Riders



The recommendations priorities were also broken out by age (**Figure 14**). Forty-two percent of survey respondents were aged 18-34, 51 percent were between the ages of 35 and 64, and the remaining seven percent were age 65 or above. Recommendation priorities did not differ much between the age groups. The eldest group place highest priority on the recommendation for free transfers between bus and Metrorail, whereas for the other two age groups this was the second highest priority.

Figure 14: Recommendation Priorities for Respondents by Age



The results were also broken down by the survey taker's jurisdiction of residence. **Table 4** compares the weighted ranked scores of respondents by jurisdiction of residence, with the percentages indicating the share of weighted ranked scores for each recommendation from respondents within each jurisdiction. The highest ranked recommendation for each jurisdiction is highlighted in yellow. In each jurisdiction except

Montgomery County, Prince George's County, and Fairfax County, dedicated bus lanes were residents' highest priority. In Montgomery County, dedicated bus lanes and free transfers between bus and Metrorail were tied, while survey respondents from both Fairfax and Prince George's Counties prioritized free transfers between bus and Metrorail above all other recommendations. Safe, accessible, and convenient bus stops were a higher priority in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties than they were in DC or in any Virginia jurisdiction, while residents of the City of Alexandria, Arlington County, and Fairfax County prioritized a mobile app for fare payment and travel information higher than other respondents. These results indicate that there are some differences in the issues riders face in each jurisdiction, though a plurality of respondents in all jurisdictions prioritized dedicated lanes and free transfers to and from Metrorail for faster and cheaper travel around the region.

Table 4: Recommendation Breakdown Priority by Jurisdiction[4]

	DC	Montgomery	Prince George's	Fairfax Co.[5]	Arlington	Alexandria	Loudoun	Other Jurisdictions
Build Dedicated Bus Lanes	24%	19%	15%	17%	20%	21%	25%	21%
Free Transfers between Bus and Metrorail	19%	19%	21%	20%	19%	15%	16%	19%
Run More Buses on Busy Routes	18%	14%	14%	15%	15%	16%	12%	14%
Make Bus Stops Safe, Convenient, Accessible	10%	14%	15%	11%	11%	9%	11%	12%
Bus Passes that Work on All Bus Systems	6%	7%	8%	8%	7%	8%	9%	8%
Mobile App for Paying and Accessing Information	7%	10%	8%	11%	13%	14%	9%	8%
Reduce the Cost for Low-Income Riders	10%	9%	10%	6%	7%	5%	6%	10%
Make Bus Travel Easy to Understand	4%	4%	4%	7%	6%	6%	7%	5%
Flexible Bus Service in Less Populated Areas	3%	5%	5%	5%	3%	5%	5%	3%
Total[6]	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Those who took the survey in Spanish (**Table 5,** five percent of all survey responses) had differing priorities compared to those who took the survey in English (**Table 6**). Both groups had the same top five recommendations but in different orders. For Spanish-language respondents, the recommendations to reduce the cost to ride and the recommendation to make bus stops safe, convenient, and accessible, rose to the top. In contrast, for English-language respondents, building dedicated bus lanes rose to the top, followed by the free transfer recommendation.

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[4] Other Jurisdictions includes those respondents who provided a home zip code that is outside of WMATA Compact jurisdictions and does not include respondents who did not indicate a home zip code.

[5] Due to small sample size of respondents from the City of Fairfax and the City of Falls Church, respondents from those two jurisdictions have been folded into Fairfax County for this analysis.

[6] Numbers above do not always total exactly 100% due to rounding

Table 5: Recommendation Priorities of Spanish-Language Survey Respondents

Recommendation	Share of Weighted Score
Free Transfers between Bus and Metrorail	26%
Reduce the Cost for Low-Income Riders	17%
Make Bus Stops Safe, Convenient, Accessible	17%
Build Dedicated Bus Lanes	13%
Run More Buses on Busy Routes	8%
Make Bus Travel Easy to Understand	7%
Bus Passes that Work on All Bus Systems	5%
Mobile App for Paying and Accessing Information	5%
Flexible Bus Service in Less Populated Areas	3%
Total[7]	100%

Table 6: Recommendation Priorities of English-Language Survey Respondents

Recommendation	Share of Weighted Score
Build Dedicated Bus Lanes	22%
Free Transfers between Bus and Metrorail	19%
Run More Buses on Busy Routes	16%
Make Bus Stops Safe, Convenient, Accessible	12%
Reduce the Cost for Low-Income Riders	9%
Bus Passes that Work on All Bus Systems	7%
Mobile App for Paying and Accessing Information	6%
Make Bus Travel Easy to Understand	5%
Flexible Bus Service in Less Populated Areas	4%
Total[8]	100%

In summary, survey takers' top priorities were recommendations that would result in faster and more reliable service and recommendations that would reduce the cost to ride. Breaking the survey results down by demographics illustrate that safety and lower fares for low-income individuals are even higher priorities for certain key constituencies, such as Spanish speakers and low-income individuals.

4.4 Overall Support for BTP Recommendations

Survey takers were also asked to answer two multiple choice questions about their support for the recommendations in the Draft Strategy. One asked, "How confident are you that the listed ideas will transform bus service in the Washington, DC region?" and the other asked, "Are you in favor of investing public dollars to implement the measures proposed by the Bus Transformation Project?" The results from these questions can help the project team and policymakers understand the public's feelings about the

[7] *Numbers above do not always total exactly 100% due to rounding*

[8] *Ibid.*

urgency of this project and how important they believe it is that the recommendations in the Draft Strategy be implemented.

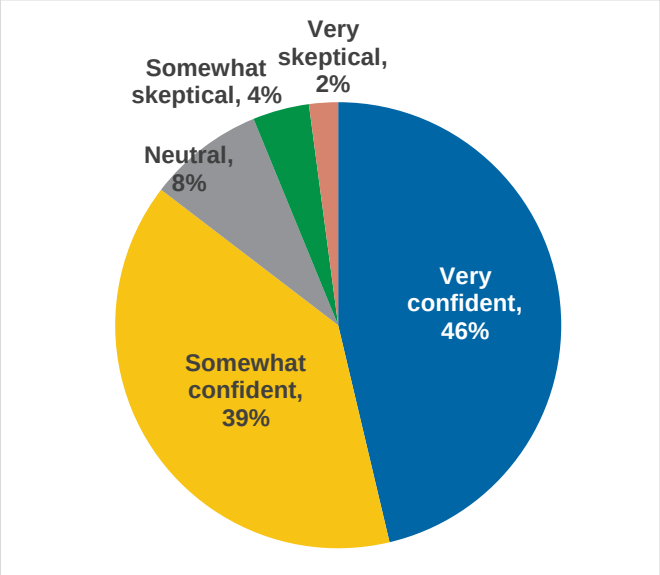
As shown in **Figure 15**, survey takers were generally confident in the potential of the BTP recommendations. Forty-six percent responded that they were "very confident" in the potential for the recommendations to transform bus service in the region, while a further 39 percent were somewhat confident. Eight percent were neutral, leaving just six percent of respondents somewhat or very skeptical.

There was little variation based on income and frequency of bus ridership when answering this question:

- Fifty-five percent of low-income respondents were very confident, compared to 46 percent of non-low-income respondents. Eight percent of low-income respondents were somewhat or very skeptical, compared to six percent of non-low-income respondents.
- Forty-seven percent of regular bus riders were very confident, compared to 45 percent of non-regular riders. Seven percent of regular bus riders were somewhat or very skeptical, compared to five percent of non-regular riders.

These results indicate that individuals are generally enthusiastic about the BTP recommendations and see a lot of potential for improvements in bus service were these recommendations to be implemented.

Figure 15: Confidence in Transformative Potential of Recommendations



Survey takers also expressed support for spending public funds to implement those recommendations. As shown in **Figure 16**, a clear majority (58 percent) are strongly in favor of using public money to support these recommendations, with an additional 24 percent moderately in favor. Only six percent of survey takers were moderately or strongly opposed to public spending for implementing BTP recommendations.

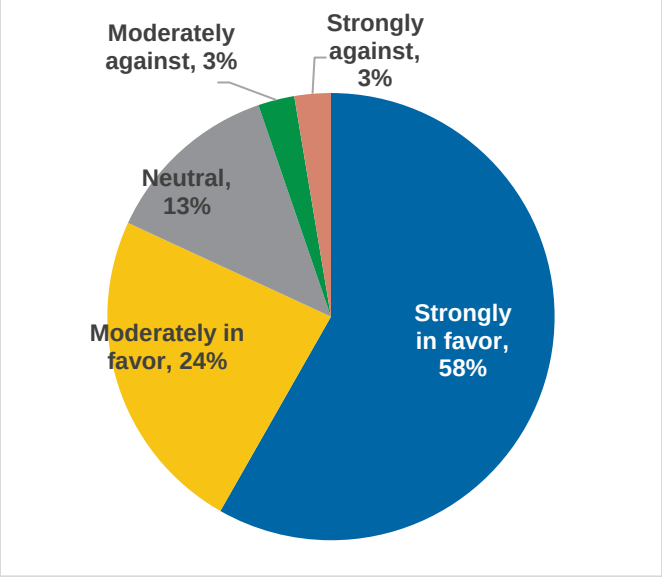
Answers to this question did vary based on respondents' income and frequency of bus ridership:

- Even though most low-income respondents were in favor of spending public funds on implementing the recommendations, compared to non-low-income respondents they were less overwhelmingly in support. Fifty percent of low-income respondents were strongly in favor of spending public funds to

implement the recommendations, compared to 62 percent of non-low-income respondents. Nine percent of low-income respondents were moderately or strongly against spending public funds, compared to only three percent of non-low-income respondents.

- Notably, non-regular riders were more enthusiastic than regular riders about this use of public funds: Fifty-four percent of regular riders are strongly in favor of spending public money on implementing BTP recommendations, compared to 67 percent of non-riders. This may suggest that some non-riders see the BTP's recommendations as the improvements necessary to make the bus a viable option for them.

Figure 16: Willingness to Spend Public Money on Implementing Recommendations



5. Appendix

5.1 Content of the Draft Bus Transformation Strategy

Throughout this report there are references to the elements and recommendations from the Draft Bus Transformation Strategy. The list of elements and recommendations are included here as a point of reference. More details about the Draft Strategy, including the full Draft Strategy document, can be found at https://bustransformationproject.com/draft-strategy-eng/. There are six elements (numbered), each followed by varying amounts of recommendations (lettered).

Element 1: Bus system should be customer focused and an easy-to-use option that people want to ride

A. Expand marketing efforts related to bus to enhance visibility of bus options and benefits
B. Make buses easy to understand with legible maps and consistent route naming conventions
C. Create a mobile solution that allows riders to plan and pay for trips and access real-time service information
D. Make bus fares clear and consistent across the region

E. Introduce pass products that work across all bus systems
F. Enhance reduced fare products for low-income residents
G. Allow customers to transfer for free between bus and rail
H. Incentivize more employers to offer transit benefits
I. Make bus stops safe, convenient, and accessible across the region
J. Modernize the region's bus fleet with advanced technologies that improve the environment, safety, and the rider experience

Element 2: Prioritizing road space for buses on major corridors is the fiscally responsible way to move the most people quickly and reliably

A. Obtain commitments from each local and state jurisdiction to prioritize bus on major corridors within their boundaries
B. Adopt consistent priority guidelines for corridors across the region
C. Develop enforcement programs that maximize the effectiveness of bus priority efforts
D. Offer incentives to jurisdictions to encourage implementation of the regional priority guidelines
E. Coordinate with regional congestion mitigation efforts, including congestion pricing, curb access management, and parking limitations to move more people more efficiently

Element 3: Frequent and convenient bus service is fundamental to accessing opportunity, building an equitable region, and ensuring high quality of life

A. Develop a regional bus network plan that realigns routes to create the most efficient and customer focused bus system
B. Adopt consistent guidelines across the region to provide customers with the right amount of bus service by location and time of day
C. Provide flexible, on-demand transit services to markets where customers are not well served by conventional bus service

Element 4: Balance local and regional provider responsibilities by positioning local bus systems to meet their jurisdictional needs and the regional bus system to meet regional needs and deliver regional benefits

A. Position the regional bus system to provide the services that meet regional needs.
B. Revise the cost local jurisdictions pay WMATA for local service to better match the actual cost to provide service.
C. Develop a 10-year plan to optimally allocate services between bus systems for applicable routes.

Element 5: Optimize back-office functions through sharing, streamlining and shared innovation by consolidating regional resources and devoting more resources to operating bus service

A. Consolidate back-office support functions to realize shared benefits for bus systems that choose to participate
B. Establish a Regional Mobility Innovation Lab to drive continuous improvement in customer experience

C. Develop regional standards for bus data collection, formatting, sharing and analysis

Element 6: Customers in a region with multiple bus providers need a regional steward to transform the bus system

A. Form a regional task force responsible for Bus Transformation Project execution; after a three-year period, transfer responsibilities to a formal Coalition of jurisdictional representatives with authority for implementation
B. Hold transportation and transit agencies accountable for prioritizing bus as a primary mode of transportation within their organizations
C. Publish an annual Bus Transformation and bus performance scorecard to drive accountability for results

5.2 Glossary for Survey Analysis

Respondents have been sorted into different categories for the survey analysis. Some of the key terms which define these different groups are:

- **Regular bus riders:** Respondents who reported they ride the bus at least once per week. Across the region, 49 percent of bus riders are frequent riders, and these riders take 91 percent of all bus trips.
- **Non-regular bus riders:** Respondents who reported they ride the bus less than once per week. Across the region, 51 percent of bus riders are non-frequent riders, and these riders take nine percent of all bus trips.
- **Low-income:** Respondents who reported their household annual income as less than $30,000, which is WMATA's definition of low-income in its Title VI Plan. Fifty-two percent of Metrobus riders are low-income.
- **Non-white:** Respondents who selected any race or ethnicity choice other than white, which includes American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African-American, Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, Hispanic, Two or more races, or Other. Eighty-one percent of Metrobus riders are non-white.