

STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON
PROPOSED RESTRUCTURING OF THE PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE LINE
ROUTES 30, 32, 34, 35, 36
DOCKET NO. B08-1

I. BACKGROUND

Between June and December 2008, WMATA, in partnership with the District Department of Transportation (DDOT), studied ways of improving transit service along the Pennsylvania Avenue Line (Routes 30, 32, 34, 35, 36). Current 30s line service runs from Friendship Heights to Southern Avenue and Naylor Road Stations generally along Wisconsin and Pennsylvania Avenues.

The 30s line has the highest ridership of any Metrobus line at almost 20,000 daily riders and it provides an important link between Southeast and Northwest DC. However, because of its popularity and heavy traffic along its route, the line suffers from passenger crowding, bus bunching, poor schedule adherence and delays.

Following extensive public involvement, the study developed many short-term and long-term recommendations for improvements to service, operations, stops and facilities, customer information, safety and security, traffic operations and management, vehicles and vehicle assignments, and fare collection. The recommended changes to routes and service, which were the main subject of public hearings, are described below.

- Maintain local Routes 32 and 36 between Friendship Heights and Southern Avenue Station (Route 32) and Naylor Road Station (Route 36) serving all stops and operating seven days a week.
- Implement new peak period limited-stop services on Route 37 between Friendship Heights and Archives via Massachusetts Avenue and 20th/21st Streets, and on Route 39 between Naylor Road Station and Foggy Bottom-GWU Station via Southern and Pennsylvania Avenues.
- Implement new seven-day-a-week neighborhood connectors on Route 31 between Friendship Heights and Foggy Bottom and on Route M5 between Naylor Road Station and Eastern Market.
- Eliminate Routes 30, 34 and 35.

Enhanced street supervision and service management would be implemented in order to improve service reliability and reduce bus bunching.

II. REVIEW OF PUBLIC HEARING RECORD

The public hearing record consists of the notice of public hearing, the staff statement describing the proposals, transcripts of the proceedings, and written statements submitted for the record.

A. Public notification

The official notice of the public hearings was published in the Washington Post, Washington Hispanic and El Tiempo Latino newspapers pursuant to Article XIII, Section 62 (c) of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority compact. In addition, notices were sent to area libraries in the District and posted in all of the Authority's vehicles operating in revenue service over the affected routes, as well as publicized by other means.

B. Review of Transcripts

Public Hearing Number 531 was convened at 7:05 p.m. on Monday, March 17, 2008, at St. Columba's Episcopal Church, 4201 Albemarle Street NW, Washington, DC. Twenty-one persons attended the hearing and 16 witnesses testified for the record. Public Hearing Number 532 was convened at 7:10 p.m. on Wednesday, March 19, 2008, at St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church, 2800 Pennsylvania Avenue SE, Washington, DC. Twenty-one persons attended the hearing and seven witnesses testified for the record.

C. Additional Material Submitted for the Record

The record for the public hearing was held open until 5 p.m. March 26, 2008, to receive additional comments and material from interested parties. Twelve persons submitted written testimony for the record.

III. DISCUSSION OF THE PUBLIC HEARING RECORD

Following are the most often mentioned comments from witnesses during the public hearing process.

- A. General support for the proposals, especially new Routes 31 and 37. There were a number of individual suggestions for modifying proposed Routes 31 in Georgetown, 36 in Hillcrest, 37 via Calvert and 22nd/23rd Streets, and 39 via Naylor Road or Fairfax Village, as well as adding more stops on limited-stop Route 39.

Staff response

The suggested route changes would improve service for some riders, but make service for others less attractive. Staff plans to evaluate the new service after implementation and will consider these suggestions along with other changes that might be needed based on operating experience.

- B. Concerns about the effectiveness of the supervision and monitoring plan to reduce bus bunching and delays.

Staff response

Enhanced supervision and line management seven days per week is expected to result in greatly improved service reliability so that actual headways will more closely match schedules. The supervision and management plan will utilize several techniques, including a dedicated line manager and operations center, tracking vehicles using GPS technology, on-street supervision at multiple points along the line, deployment of strategic buses to fill gaps, ability to hold back and turn back buses when necessary to maintain spacing, and use of a "play book" describing actions to take when situations arise that impact on-time performance or vehicle spacing.

- C. Concern about maintaining adequate frequency of service and capacity in critical areas, including Naylor Road and lower Wisconsin Avenue.

Staff response

Staff has collected ridership data in 2008 on all segments of the existing routes and will develop schedules for the new service that will accommodate current ridership.

- D. Suggestions to speed the boarding process on the limited-stop routes by restricting fare payment to SmarTrip and weekly flash passes only.

Staff response

Staff will continue to explore a number of fare payment options that were suggested during the 30s study.

Following are additional comments from witnesses. Staff will continue to evaluate these suggestions prior to and after implementation.

- Operate service on at least one route 24 hours a day.
- Coordinate schedules where two or more routes operate on the same

- street in order to reduce wait time.
- Cutback some peak period trips at Tenleytown-AU Station.
- Enforce parking restrictions along the routes to speed service.
- Provide better information to customers about routes and stops when service is detoured.
- Use smaller buses on Route 31 and brand that service.

IV. MINORITY OR LOW INCOME AREA IMPACT

As specified in the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA's) Title VI Circular 4702.1A, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (Metro) has evaluated the proposed restructuring of Pennsylvania Avenue Line, Routes 30, 32, 34, 35, 36, to determine whether these changes have a discriminatory impact on minority and low-income populations. In a study conducted by the Offices of Civil Rights and Long Range Planning, it was determined that the proposed changes will not have a disproportionate adverse effect on minority and low-income persons.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

After review of the public hearing testimony, staff recommends that the proposed restructuring of the Pennsylvania Avenue Line (Routes 30, 32, 34, 35, 36) be approved as proposed in Docket No. B08-1.