

THE NORTHWEST CURRENT

Metro wins praise for 30s line ideas

■ **Buses:** Plan to reduce delays would split some routes but also create express service

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Metro authorities heard mostly positive feedback from residents at a meeting last week on a draft proposal for changes to the 30s bus route. The proposal would break some of the often-delayed bus lines into segments and create two new express lines.

"I think it's a great idea," Cleveland Park resident Mary O'Rourke said of the proposed new 31 segment, which would run from Washington Circle and Friendship Heights.

O'Rourke said she uses the 30s buses, often to trav-



Bill Petros/The Current

The 30s bus route, which runs along Wisconsin and Pennsylvania avenues, has been criticized by some as unreliable despite its heavy use.

el to the Tenleytown or Friendship Heights Metrorail stations. "It's so frustrating for me to be so close to that and have to wait a half an hour," she said. "The 31's brilliant."

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The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority held meetings on the proposal in Ward 3 Thursday and in Southeast Washington this week. The 30s line connects Northwest to Southeast, stretching from Friendship Heights to Southern Avenue, and needs along the route vary: Many Southeast residents want the line to continue unbroken up to Friendship Heights, while many Upper Northwest residents want the buses for only local transit or to get downtown.

The route is made up of a group of bus lines: the 30, 32, 34, 35, 36 and M6. It has the highest ridership in the system and often runs off-schedule. It has also drawn complaints from riders for a tendency toward "bunching," when a number of buses arrive in quick sequence.

Metro authorities say that they have crafted a solution that addresses the needs of residents in both parts of the city. They say the changes should put the bus back on schedule and solve the "bunching" issue.

Two lines would stay the same, running along the entire route; two lines would traverse only half the route; and two lines would offer express service.

The 32 and the 36 lines would stay the same, traveling from Naylor Road and Southern Avenue in Southeast to Friendship Heights in Northwest. The M6 in Southeast would also stay the same, serving local transit from Potomac Avenue to Fairfax Village.

The new 31 line would travel from Friendship Heights only to Washington Circle, and the new M5 would travel from Eastern Market only to the Naylor Road Metrorail station.

One of the new express lines, 37, would operate only during morning and evening rush hours. It would travel from Friendship Heights to the Archives Metro Station, bypassing Georgetown by taking Massachusetts Avenue. Eastbound, the bus would turn left onto Massachusetts Avenue from Garfield Street and turn right on 25th Street to Washington Circle; westbound, it

would reverse that pattern. The bus would be eastbound from 6 a.m. until 10 a.m. and westbound from 3 p.m. to 7:15 p.m.

The other express line, 39, would run from Washington Circle to Naylor Road Metro station and operate during the same hours. The 39 line would travel westbound during morning rush hour and eastbound during evening rush hour.

Supervisors stationed along the route will be able to track buses and communicate with drivers to improve the "bunching" issues, said James Hamre, the transit authority's project manager on the line.

The exact cost of the changes has not been determined, although it will likely be about \$500,000 a year.

The authority plans to initiate the changes in June after holding hearings in late February, with final approval in March. Hamre said the proposed changes are not set in stone and the agency can alter the plan before settling on a final version. At Thursday's meeting, though, he said he was pleased to have heard a number of residents express general support.

Nate Harshman, who lives near Wisconsin Avenue in Cleveland Park, said the authority "really listened" to residents' feedback in earlier planning sessions. He said he was pleased that the authority did not split the line completely because many people use it to travel the length of the city. "The 30s line unites the city," Harshman said.

During the meeting, residents offered a number of further ideas for the route, which included:

- extending the 37 across Massachusetts Avenue through Dupont Circle instead of cutting south to Washington Circle before Dupont;
- having the 37 express line travel in both directions during rush hour;
- eliminating some stops in Georgetown north of M Street (or avoiding M Street completely); and
- creating a parking enforcement service that bus drivers could call when they come across illegally parked cars.

Maps of the proposed changes and more information is available at metrobus-30s-dc.com.