

Metrobus 30s Line Study: Draft Results of July 2007 Public Meetings

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1. Introduction to the 30s Line Study

The Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority (WMATA), in partnership with the District Department of Transportation (DDOT), is studying ways of improving transit service along Metrobus routes 30, 32, 34, 35, 36, and M6—collectively called the 30s Line.

The current 30s Line service runs from Friendship Heights Metro Station in Northwest along Wisconsin Avenue to Georgetown, and along Pennsylvania Avenue through Foggy Bottom and Downtown. Some buses terminate at the National Archives, while most continue along Pennsylvania Avenue (and Independence Avenue) to Potomac Avenue Metro Station. The 30 route terminates here, while the others continue over the Sousa Bridge. The line splits east of the Anacostia River, with the 32 route terminating at Southern Avenue Metro Station and the 34, 35, and 36 routes terminating at Naylor Road Metro Station. The M6 route was added to the study because its alignment is—along with the 30s routes—primarily on Pennsylvania Avenue. The M6 route is essentially a feeder service from Fairfax Village and other points east of the Anacostia River to Potomac Avenue Metro Station.

The 30s Line was chosen for study by WMATA and DDOT for several reasons. Its average weekday ridership of 20,000 and average monthly ridership of nearly half a million make it the most heavily used line in the Metrobus system. The transit corridor is an important link to Downtown for residents in Southeast and along Wisconsin Avenue in Northwest, but because of the popularity of the system and heavy traffic along the alignments, the 30s Line often suffers from overcrowding, bus bunching, and delays.

To address the challenges facing the 30s Line, the project team is conducting workshops, rider surveys, and bus operator interviews; investigating limited-stop, express, and local shuttle service; identifying new vehicle types, bus stop designs and locations, and methods of service monitoring and traffic management; developing a strategy and timetable to phase in the improvements; and determining sources of funding for the improvements.

2. Purpose and Organization of Public Meetings

The first public meeting for this project was held on Thursday, July 19, 2007 at Pennsylvania Avenue Baptist Church, at 3000 Pennsylvania Avenue SE. A second meeting was held on Tuesday, July 24, 2007, at St. Columba's Episcopal Church at 4201 Albemarle Street NW. Both meetings were from 6:00 pm to 8:30 pm. These locations were selected to be as convenient as possible for residents of Northwest along Wisconsin Avenue and of Southeast along Pennsylvania Avenue—two areas along the 30s Line with significant residential populations.

The purpose of the public meetings was three-fold: 1) to engage 30s Line riders in dialogue about challenges facing the line, 2) to hear rider concerns, identify issues, and set priorities for the study, and 3) reveal the preliminary results of the rider survey conducted on June 27, 2007. The project team hoped to get a sense of the problems that are of greatest importance to riders and use this information for setting standards for quantifiable service improvements.

The structure of the two meetings was the same. They started with an hour-long open house, during which participants could review display boards and speak individually with project staff. Following the open house was a 20-minute presentation which offered an overview of the project, a review of existing routes and service, preliminary results of the rider survey, and information about the next steps of the project. Next was an hour-long group exercise in which participants broke up into small groups to discuss issues of importance to them. Included in the exercise were small “game piece” cards—each representing a particular issue—which participants could place on a map of the study area to indicate where certain problems manifested themselves. In

the final portion of the meeting, breakout group members ranked the issues they identified from most to least important, and reported their results to the other groups.

Visual materials were available to meeting participants upon arriving at the registration table: a meeting agenda; a fact sheet (30s by the Numbers); a two-page newsletter; and a comment sheet. Comment sheets were also available at each breakout session table. Additionally, other materials were available to participants upon request: copies of the rider survey preliminary results; a page with key contact people for the study; and a "rider diary" so that riders can keep track of problems on their 30s Line trips and report back to WMATA.

3. Promotion of Public Meetings

The public meetings were promoted in several ways. An invitation letter, flyer, and map of meeting locations were sent out to several hundred people on a mailing list of residents and stakeholders. ANCs were hand-delivered the same information. An e-mail broadcast announcing the meetings was sent to approximately 200 e-mail addresses, obtained mostly from rider surveys submitted by 30s Line riders. In addition, WMATA's Office of Public Relations sent a press release to local media outlets, and bought advertising space in local newspapers such as *The Currents* and the *Washington Post Express*. Notice of the meetings was also posted on buses and at some bus stops in the form of 8.5" x 11" posters. Finally, an announcement of the meetings was posted on the project website, www.metrobus-30s-dc.com.

4. Summary of Public Meeting Results

Approximately 20 members of the public attended the first meeting in Southeast, and about 30 attended the second in Northwest. The following is a list of concerns that were commonly voiced by participants of the two meetings:

- The most pressing issue by far at both meetings was the frequency of buses and bus bunching. Almost all participants, even those who otherwise had few issues with 30s Line service, reported problems with schedule adherence and having to wait a long time only to have several buses arrive at once.
- Bus crowding was reported as an important issue at both meetings.
- Many participants noted their desire for express service, saying that the routes have too many stops and that travel times need to be decreased. Having bus-only lanes was cited several times as something 30s Line riders would like to see as a means of defeating traffic congestion; they were adept at pointing out specific chokepoints and other locations of double parking, detours, etc.
- Security and safety were important issues at the Southeast meeting, but not at the Northwest meeting. Southeast residents noted serious concerns such as people throwing rocks at buses to annoyances such as loud, disrespectful school children.
- Participants at the Northwest meeting were less concerned about safety and more so about information at stops, shelters and benches, fare collection, and other amenities.
- Bus operators generally were not a target of criticism among participants, though they did say that drivers could be more aware of what's happening on their buses, and to watch out more for elderly and disabled riders.

- Participants offered several ideas they would like to see implemented for speeding up service, such as better fare collection methods, signal priority and queue jumping, multiple doors for exiting, and stand-by buses for times when the line is busiest.
- A controversial issue at public meetings in 2006 was the potential splitting up of routes, with transfers downtown. This subject was revisited several times, with some saying that the idea will cause a drop in ridership and others saying that splitting the lines is crucial for improving efficiency and travel times.

5. Transcribed Notes from 30s Line Public Meetings: July 2007

A. Thursday, July 19: Pennsylvania Ave Baptist Church, 3000 Pennsylvania Ave SE.

Table 1 Discussion

- Schedules at bus stops are illegible; the print is too small.
- Schedules tend to be inaccurate, out of date.
- Fare payment could be easier and less confusing; make the fare payment area better-lit and color coded depending on methods of payment.
- Kids on Naylor Road throw rocks at buses.
- Need unbreakable glass at shelters.
- Need better lighting along Naylor Road.
- Typically there are no shelters at bus stops east of the Anacostia, and when there are they're dirty and unsafe.
- There should be more of a Metro police presence in the evenings.
- Kids are out of control on the buses.
- Is anyone actually monitoring the cameras on buses?
- The 35 route should continue to Fairfax Village and Alabama Avenue, with more service along the extended route.
- M6 carries too many people on the weekends; usually not on time.
- M6 should go to Naylor Road Metro station.
- Buses should have Annunciators more often, to announce which bus stop is coming up next.
- A new bus, with no passengers on it, should start at Minnesota and Pennsylvania Ave SE, continue to Potomac Ave or Eastern Market Metro, and then come back. Buses going over the Anacostia are crowded, so this may alleviate some of the crowding.
- Need to better connect Fairfax Village with Naylor Road Metro.
- Is it possible to have bus-only lanes along these routes?
- When the 36 used to originate at Naylor Gardens, there were only 3 or 4 people on the bus; now it's standing room only.
- Traffic is a major issue going downtown.
- 17th & Eye St NW was a transfer point for 2 or 3 months in 2006 for buses going to Georgetown. Why was that the case?
- Public transportation is often easier than driving; it needs to stay that way.
- There should be an express bus from Fairfax Village to downtown; it would be full.
- Often the 30s buses are full of kids going to school west of the Anacostia River.
- It takes a long time to get good drivers assigned to the M6; they're often new and inexperienced. Metro should offer incentives to get better drivers on the M6.
- Would like more comfortable buses with working air conditioning and more seats, especially to get across the Anacostia.
- Drivers should be more observant of things happening on the bus.

Table 1 Map

Key issues in Southeast for this group:

- Bus route schedules and other info at stops
- Shelters and benches
- Fare collection
- Safety and security at stops
- Safety and security on buses
- Bus crowding

Key issues in Downtown for this group:

- Bus crowding
- Driver safe operation
- Safety and security on buses, especially school kids
- Bus travel time; there should be express buses

Other issues in for this group:

- There should be a new bus route terminus at the intersection of Minnesota and Pennsylvania Avenues, to alleviate bus crowding going over the Anacostia River.
- There should be an express bus from Fairfax Village to downtown.

Table 2 Discussion

- Metrobus customer service number is complicated to use. Too much time connecting to operator.
- Circulator service is good.
- Introduce new service from Potomac Avenue Metro to 10th & Pennsylvania SE.
- Too many diesel fumes.
- Driver knowledge of system.
- Need proper operating equipment, e.g. lifts.
- Double-parked delivery vehicles and tour buses are hindering access to Metrobuses around White House/Lafayette Square.

Table 2 Map

Key issues in Southeast for this group:

- Buses arriving according to schedule
- Bus crowding
- Frequency of buses
- Bus travel time
- Continue the existing 30s routes, with no transfers

Key issues in Downtown for this group:

- Access to buses; tour buses block the Old Post Office Pavilion
- Frequency of buses
- Bus crowding, especially during rush hour
- Shelters and benches; homeless people on benches
- Buses need to quit passing bus stops without stopping

Key issues in Northwest for this group:

- Frequency of buses
- Bus travel time
- Noisy kids; should have special buses with unique branding for school kids.
- Bus route schedule and other info at stops

Other issues for this group:

- Bus drivers should be trained to help passengers with questions
- Driver courtesy
- Shelters and benches
- Metro's information phone line
- Vehicle condition
- Is it possible to extend the M6 to Eastern Market?

Table 3 Discussion

- Buses are more reliable before 7:30 a.m.; less traffic, less crowded. Buses also run more smoothly before 5:45 p.m.
- N22 comes reliably and is always empty.
- 32 and 34 buses can sit through 3 or 4 light cycles turning left onto Pennsylvania Ave from 25th St.
- Pennsylvania Ave is congested east of Minnesota Ave. That intersection needs better timing of lights, breaks down if there's an accident, and has problems with Maryland commuters making u-turns.
- Traffic on Independence is horrendous in the a.m.; may be due to South Capitol Bridge closure.
- 15th Street is a nightmare due to construction and double parking.
- In Georgetown, buses bunch up, there is a long time between buses, and no way of knowing when the next one will come. Schedule is unreliable; buses bypass stops.
- New drivers often have no knowledge of route, riders, or "tricks".
- Should include bus operators at future public meetings.
- Would like limited-stop service like on Georgia Avenue.
- Back-ups start at the ends of the lines and ripple through.

Table 3 Map

Key issues in Southeast for this group:

- Frequency of buses
- Buses arriving according to schedule
- Bus crowding
- Too many bus lines
- Buses bypass stops
- Double parking
- Detours

Key issues in Downtown for this group:

- Pennsylvania Ave often detours when there are special events; should have standard detour routes with announcements to riders.

- Double parking along 15th St near New York Avenue and along Eye St near McPherson Square.
- Bunching of Circulator buses takes up space along Pennsylvania Avenue.
- Sometimes buses don't stop at bus stops.

Other issues for this group:

- Need express buses with limited stops while maintaining local service.
- Short light at Pennsylvania Ave and Branch Ave in the a.m., and at Pennsylvania and Minnesota Avenues.
- Congestion in the p.m. at Barney Circle.
- Buses have problems getting into and out of traffic flow along Pennsylvania Avenue near Eastern Market.
- Need parking restrictions in the a.m. along Pennsylvania Ave SE.
- Security around Capitol Hill has an impact on traffic.
- Tour buses are in the way at New Jersey Ave SE.

Table 4 Discussion

- The M6 schedule adherence is too early at 42nd St and Southern Ave.
- The 30s should have a limited-stop express route.
- Make easier the fare collection process for cash and coins.
- Shelters and benches are needed from 25th & Naylor to Minnesota Ave.
- Increase frequency of buses between 7:30 and 8:30 a.m.
- Need more 34 service to alleviate crowding on the 32.

Table 4 Map

Key issues in Southeast for this group:

- Buses arriving according to schedule
- Slow travel speeds, too many stops
- Bus crowding at the front of the bus, especially with low-floor buses
- Buses have too many seats and not enough capacity
- Fare collection
- Frequency of buses
- Safety and security on buses, especially at night
- Not enough service across Anacostia bridge and on Naylor Road
- Need more low-floor buses for seniors
- Shelters and benches

Other issues for this group:

- Need a shelter at Mt. Calvary Church.
- There is crowding on the 32 bus because it doesn't run frequently enough.
- There is congestion at Minnesota Ave and Pennsylvania Ave
- There are too many stops between Eastern Market and Potomac Avenue Metro stations.
- Buses going across the Anacostia are always crowded in the a.m. peak.

B. Tuesday, July 24: St. Columba's Episcopal Church, 2401 Albemarle Ave NW.

Table 1 Discussion

- Bunching of buses is a big concern; sometimes the wait is 1/2 hour, then 3 buses come.
- Bunching happens in non-peak periods too.
- Leapfrogging is common. Can't the buses reset?
- Is it possible to have stand-by buses for especially busy times?
- The N2 is almost always on schedule; why are the 30s not, when they have similar routes?
- What's the story with new buses at Western Division? Is it the case that the ceiling precludes the introduction of new CNG buses?
- The biggest problem is schedule adherence.
- How about a separate circulator service for Wisconsin Avenue? It really is its own corridor.
- There are too many stops; how about express service?
- Metro's hotline information is inaccurate; it doesn't apply to the 30s Line because if you want to know when the next bus is coming, it might tell you the next 32 or 34 but not the next 30 or whichever happens to be closest.
- Shelters and benches often have homeless people.
- Signal priority and queue jumping might speed up service.
- Streetlights could have a countdown of seconds to let drivers know how much time is left at an intersection before the light turns red.
- Travel times are unpredictable.
- Need enforcement against people parking in Metrobus zones.
- Loading and unloading buses often takes too long.
- Drivers shouldn't be cashiers; off-bus fare payment would help speed things up.
- More than one door for entering the bus would help as well.
- The fare structure for this line is a mess; it's too complicated.
- There seems to be a random positioning of stops with regard to intersections; stops could be better planned.
- Is it better to have stops on the near side of an intersection or the far side? Would having stops on the far side cause gridlock in the intersection?
- Bunching starts at the terminal; they come out of the garage three-at-a-time. Traffic is not an excuse for bunching.
- Bunching is a high-priority concern; sporadic frequency is the rule, not the exception.
- Buses go too fast as they approach stops to pick up passengers; it's unsafe.
- Breaking up the routes will cause a drop in ridership.
- WMATA seems to be running Metrobus as a feeder system to Metrorail, not as its own entity.
- Georgetown congestion is a nightmare; maybe a by-pass?
- Maybe run a 30s bus along Mass Ave instead of Wisconsin?
- Buses could have their own rights-of-way with the stops in the median; this will save travel time.

Table 1 Map

Key issues in Northwest for this group:

- Schedule adherence
- Bus stop locations – near side/far side, two stops at light? Too many stops.
- Driver courtesy – drivers pass over stops
- Need strong parking enforcement in Metrobus zones
- Need more direct service

- Next-bus info on hotline must be by route; should be by stop
- Allow CNG buses at Friendship Heights garage.

Table 2 Discussion

- How long should drivers wait for a replacement driver during shift change before continuing or cancelling a run?
- If routes are split, have some overlap in downtown.
- Implement a limited-stop express service from SE to downtown and NW to downtown.
- Re-route some routes around White House via Independence and Constitution Aves.
- Need dedicated bus lanes on Wisconsin Avenue and M Street.
- Increase parking restrictions, despite opposition from businesses.
- Ban private vehicles in certain sections of the city.
- Tour buses heavy between McPherson Square and Farragut Square.

Table 2 Map

Key issues in Northwest for this group:

- Schedule adherence
- Bus bunching
- Frequency of buses
- Bus crowding
- Bus passing over stops, not picking up passengers
- Stops blocked by Circulator, other buses, and non-authorized vehicles.

Key issues in Downtown for this group:

- Traffic congestion
- Blocked bus stops
- Dedicated detours and stops, plus publicity to increase public awareness
- Schedule adherence
- Frequency of buses

Key issues in Southeast for this group:

- Bus travel times, schedule adherence
- Fare collection, esp. transfers between bus and rail

Table 3 Discussion

- For some, the 30s Line is a way of life. Some people ride it 4 or 5 times a day, and use it to travel both ways to shops and restaurants.
- Ride from Friendship Hts to Capitol Hill does not stay on schedule. Who keeps the schedule?
- Southbound tends to be okay, northbound is not okay.
- The L bus is better.
- Bunching is a big issue.
- Concern about getting people on and off the bus.
- Needs new fare system, "smart fares machine".
- Coins take a long time; longer to get on bus with fare machines.
- Bus drivers will not let people on before schedule.

- Takes too much time to get flash pass.
- How are buses scheduled? Where are they dispatched from?
- Is there a computer tracking system to decrease bus bunching?
- Schedule needs to be adhered to; someone to keep buses on schedule.
- Takes too long to ride bus from Georgetown to Tenleytown, even late.
- Is it possible to change the route [alignments]?
- Do bus-only lanes really work?
- Need better parking enforcement; DC does not have good traffic enforcement.
- DC is still part of the “car culture”.
- Why is the route so long?
- How do other cities’ bus routes compare? Is the 30s Line the longest? Do these routes need to be split?
- Too many stops, sometimes at every block.
- Takes longer in the p.m. than a.m.
- Narrow roadways slow buses down.
- Need increased buses in p.m. for shopping, restaurants, etc.

Table 3 Map

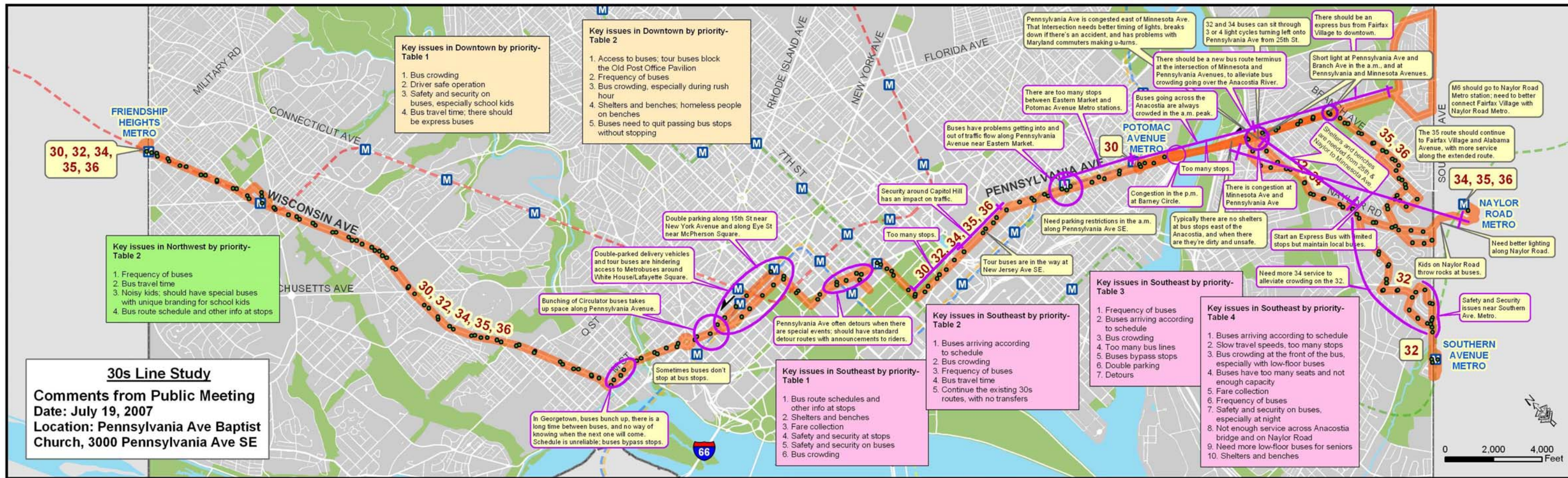
Key issues for this group:

- Schedule adherence
- Fare issues
- Frequency of buses, adding more buses to line during peak periods.
- Start buses at different stops and continue the rest of the route
- Bus crowding
- Travel times
- Stop locations, too many stops

Table 4 Discussion

- Overall, scheduling and schedule adherence is a problem.
- Bus bunching is a problem.
- Suggest next-bus signs for all routes.
- At 17th & Eye NW, no buses show up between 5:30 and 6:00 pm.
- Comfort is an issue: air conditioning often doesn’t work, poor seat quality, trash on buses.
- School kids display bad behavior.
- Drivers need to enforce rules.
- Buses aren’t letting passengers off at the curb, and they’re not using the kneeler.
- Homeless people often occupy buses.
- There’s congestion between McPherson Square and Georgetown.
- Safety is an issue, especially at night around Farragut Square.
- Signage about where to catch the bus is confusing around Friendship Heights.
- 1st Street and Independence Ave has evening rush hour delays.
- There are long delays on Saturday.
- Bunching happens in midday too.
- People have loud cell phone conversations.
- Between 9 and 10 a.m. there are no in-service buses on Wisconsin Ave.
- Better signage for stops around Friendship Heights

6A. Public Meeting Comments, Mapped – Thursday, July 19: Pennsylvania Ave Baptist Church, 3000 Pennsylvania Ave SE.



6B. Public Meeting Comments, Mapped – Tuesday, July 24: St. Columba's Episcopal Church, 2401 Albemarle Ave NW

