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THE PARTNERSHIP AND KEY LEADERS CALL FOR THE CAPITAL REGION TO RETHINK THE BUS

Five Key Actions Could Transform the Bus into a Fast, Reliable Way to Move Around the Capital Region

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Today, the Greater Washington Partnership released a new issue brief, [*Rethinking the Bus: Five Essential Steps for Improving Mobility in the Capital Region*](#), the third and final issue brief in advance of the *Blueprint for Regional Mobility* to be released later this year. This brief recommends proven actions and tools from around the world to improve bus systems and provides targeted next steps for Baltimore, Washington and Richmond.

Buses play a crucial role in moving people in and around the Capital Region of Baltimore, Washington and Richmond. More than 900,000 trips each weekday—about half of all public transportation trips in the region—are on buses. However, their performance is declining, with bus speeds decreasing by more than 10 percent in some areas and ridership declining by more than 20 percent in Baltimore and Richmond metro areas from 2010 to 2017. *Rethinking the Bus* charts the course for state and local officials, transit agencies and employees, and regional stakeholders to reverse the trends and empower buses to improve the region’s mobility outcomes.

The issue brief was developed in partnership with the Greater Baltimore Committee, Central Maryland Transportation Alliance, Greater Washington Board of Trade, Coalition for Smarter Growth, DC Sustainable Transportation, ChamberRVA and RVA Rapid Transit. These organizations represent a broad cross section of the region and sectors that have come together to advance a shared goal—fixing the Capital Region’s bus systems.

“The Capital Region has the building blocks of a well-performing bus system, but we need to work together to take our buses to the next level,” said **Jason Miller, CEO, the Greater Washington Partnership**. “Imagine if buses were fast, frequent and get people where they need to go affordably



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and on time. International regions like London and Seoul, and U.S. regions like Seattle and Houston, are leading the way with innovations in bus service. For the Capital Region to compete globally, we must transform our bus network so that it can effectively serve the needs of residents and employers.”

While the region has made a meaningful investment in buses over time, it is time to capitalize on that investment by developing a modern bus system that can effectively speed past growing traffic congestion and address persistent inequities in access to jobs and opportunity. *Rethinking the Bus* charts the course for state and local elected officials, transit agencies and stakeholders to empower buses to help solve the region’s mobility challenges.

The region has already taken some important steps, including route redesigns in Baltimore and Richmond, launch of Richmond’s new Pulse Bus Rapid Transit line and faster bus service in the Washington area on the Priority Corridor Network. But overall, the region has been slow to adopt best practices for bus service, and generally bus ridership has been declining.

The brief identifies five key actions to improve bus service and provides a menu of implementation tools that can be quickly put into practice:

1. Optimize routes
2. Make space for the bus
3. Make boarding faster
4. Make buses easy to use
5. Measure and report on performance

The brief argues that creating a high-performing bus network is a shared responsibility. Local and state officials, transit agencies, employers, employees and the community as a whole must work together to re-think the bus. Because Baltimore, Washington and Richmond are at different stages in the evolution of their bus systems, the brief offers recommendations specific to each metro area.

Notable Statements of Support

“Our region’s businesses need an interconnected, comprehensive and integrated transportation network to support economic growth, and buses are a critical part of that network,” said **Donald C. Fry, President & CEO, Greater Baltimore Committee**. “Bus service that connects workers with employment hubs throughout the region will strengthen Baltimore’s—and the region’s—business climate.”





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“Transportation is not an end in itself; it’s a means to access opportunity,” said **Brian O’Malley, President & CEO, Central Maryland Transportation Alliance**. “Buses can best serve that goal when they are fast, frequent and reliable—qualities our region has long struggled to achieve. This brief is a first-of-its-kind roadmap to fixing the issues that have been holding our buses and region back.”

“As our region continues to grow, it’s critical that we use our shared resources as effectively as possible. High quality bus services benefit everyone across all our communities and must be fully integrated into our transportation networks,” said **Jack McDougle, President and CEO, Greater Washington Board of Trade**. “I ride Metrobus to work every day and fully support efforts to ensure we have a world-class bus system.”

“Buses are a critical component of a sustainable and equitable transportation system, moving more people, reducing per capita vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions,” said **Stewart Schwartz, Executive Director, Coalition for Smarter Growth**. “But to move more people on buses and to use buses to support walkable, transit-oriented development, we need to make sure buses can do their job effectively. The region needs to take proactive steps like those outlined in this brief.”

“Building a better bus network doesn’t have to be complicated,” said **David Alpert, Executive Director of DC Sustainable Transportation**. “This report provides common sense ideas that, once implemented, will make buses a faster and more convenient way for people to get around without having to drive.”

“For the Capital Region to be competitive in attracting the next generation of innovators and entrepreneurs, we need a great public transportation system,” said **Kim Scheeler, President & CEO, Chamber RVA**. “Our new Pulse Bus Rapid Transit is a bold step toward that vision, but our work is not done. Community leaders have embraced this new mode of transportation and are working to enhance its efficiency throughout our region.”

“The launch of the Pulse and the region’s redesigned bus network are incredible steps for the Richmond metro area, and have given our public transit system new momentum,” said **Nelson Reveley, President, RVA Rapid Transit**. “We need to capitalize on this moment to further connect the region and bring better public transportation to more of Richmond’s residents. The recommendations in Rethinking the Bus will help us make progress towards our goal of expanding reliable, frequent and far-reaching bus service in the greater Richmond region.”





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For more information about the Rethinking the Bus issue brief or the Greater Washington Partnership, contact Steven Chlapecka at skc@greaterwashingtonpartnership.com or call 202.871.9914.

About the Greater Washington Partnership

The Greater Washington Partnership is a first-of-its-kind civic alliance of CEOs in the region, drawing from the leading employers and entrepreneurs committed to making the Capital Region—from Baltimore to Richmond—one of the world's best places to live, work and build a business. Working in collaboration with leaders across our communities, the Partnership connects and leverages the region's extraordinary assets to advance inclusive, actionable solutions that strengthen Greater Washington as a leading global region and center for commerce and innovation.

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