



Government of the District of Columbia
ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION 3/4G

Chevy Chase, Barnaby Woods, Hawthorne
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ANC 3/4G Resolution
Regarding WMATA's Draft Visionary Better Bus Network -
Proposed Changes to the M4 and E4 Routes and
Reinstating the E6 Route
June 12, 2023

BACKGROUND & RATIONALE:

WHEREAS, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) has released a proposed "Visionary Network proposal" for bus transportation in Washington DC and surrounding areas;

WHEREAS, WMATA is seeking comment on the Visionary Network proposal and had set June 5, 2023 as its original deadline, later extending its deadline to June 18, 2023 to allow additional time for community comments;

WHEREAS, WMATA provided several options for public comment, however, in-person options for DC residents were limited. WMATA only provided one in-person workshop¹, one Lunch and Learn, and two pop-up events. Public comments were mainly directed through WMATA's website;

¹ The workshop was held on May 20, 2023 at Turkey Thicket Recreation Center

WHEREAS, Chevy Chase and its broader neighborhoods have long been known as transportation deserts. The far East neighborhoods of Barnaby Woods and Hawthorne are most impacted by the lack of transportation and are also impacted by the natural barrier of Rock Creek Park;

WHEREAS, the proposed DC 203 (E4 replacement) runs from Friendship Heights, along Military Road through Rock Creek Park and will no longer go through Chevy Chase or along McKinley Street as the current E4 route does;

WHEREAS, the proposed DC 203 (E4 replacement) does not provide residents with easy access to the Chevy Chase civic core (the commercial corridor) or Friendship heights. Residents would have to transfer to the DC 102 (L2 route) at Military Road and Connecticut Avenue to access the Chevy Chase civic core or walk approximately 10 minutes (.04 miles) to the heart of this community's retail stores, pharmacies, and other service providers;

WHEREAS, the ANC and community are very concerned with the placement of bus stops around Military Road and Nebraska Avenue. This will become the new transfer point between the DC 201 (M4) and the DC 200 and DC 203 (E4). This is a dangerous intersection for pedestrians. Bus stops should be located to make it easy to transfer bus lines without crossing the more dangerous parts of the intersection. Bus stops should be placed near the corners so people are not incentivized to cross outside the crosswalk;

WHEREAS, the DC 201 (replacing M4) will no longer run in the neighborhoods along 30th Street N.W.;

WHEREAS, the DC 201 (replacing M4) will no longer run to Sibley Hospital;

WHEREAS, the DC 201 (replacing M4) route turns on New Mexico Ave, runs to Georgetown University Hospital and proceeds through Georgetown, M Street to the West End, down to George Washington University, and Foggy Bottom;

WHEREAS, the DC 201 (replacing M4) is scheduled to run every 15 minutes peak time and 30 minutes non-peak time. The ANC and community have concerns that this route may make transit service unreliable because of the extremely long route and traffic density through Georgetown, Foggy Bottom, and West End which could delay the route up to 30 minutes or more. There is concern that this will impact student ridership in the morning when students are commuting to Deal Middle School and Wilson High School. Extra buses to accommodate the morning school rush, with possibly a shortened route so students are not relying on a bus delayed in Georgetown, will be required;

WHEREAS, the DC 201's (replacing M4) 30-minute interval during non-peak times may render the route barely usable, particularly if the bus is unreliable due to the proposed route through Georgetown and Foggy Bottom. A 15-20 minute maximum wait time would better serve the community and attract versus deter ridership;

WHEREAS, the Better Bus Network tradeoff was supposed to be between high frequency service with transfers or less frequent but direct service. The proposed routes serving Chevy Chase are not frequent nor direct which makes the proposed routes not viable alternatives to vehicle use. For example:

- The lack of a neighborhood bus line to Friendship Heights emphasizes the need for the DC 201 (replacing M4) to run more frequently than 30 minutes mid-day. Residents frequenting the Chevy Chase civic core will have to transfer from the DC 102 (L2) to get home from shopping and attending medical appointments, and residents frequenting Friendship Heights for the same reasons will have to transfer from the DC 101.
- Under the current proposal, to get to Friendship Heights you could take the DC 201 Bus (30-minute interval), then transfer to a DC 203 bus (20-minute interval) at Nebraska and Military with no seating or shelter; a potentially 50 minute wait. Alternatively, you could take the DC 201 (30-minute interval) to Tenleytown and take the DC 101 (Wisconsin Ave line, 10- minute interval), which is a longer travel time, more walking to transfer, but potentially shorter wait with covered seating in shelters.

WHEREAS, the neighborhoods in Chevy Chase are comprised of transit dependent populations of seniors, like the Knollwood Military Retirement Community, and people who do not own cars;

WHEREAS, the Chevy Chase civic core is undergoing planning for proposed redevelopment which will potentially include new housing units along Connecticut Avenue;

WHEREAS, if the community is only afforded one bus line, that single bus line's frequency must be considered in the context of relative public transit scarcity and how frequently likely transfer buses arrive. The community will need more frequent service to make up for the lack alternative transit options;

WHEREAS, the ANC discussed WMATA's draft proposal at its May 22, 2023 regularly scheduled ANC meeting and received substantial public comments² - all opposing changes to the current M4 and E4 routes, and repeated calls for the restoration of the E6 route;

WHEREAS, the ANC received written public comments relating to WMATA's proposed route changes to the M4 and E4 routes. It is important for WMATA to understand the community's opposition to its proposed route changes. The ANC has included some comments from community members below:

- "The E4 should continue on its present route for two reasons:
(1) coverage: wmata should not be contributing to creating a bus-desert. Rerouting the E4 cuts too much of the neighborhood out of route service.
(2) the city's climate policy should encourage people to take the bus instead of driving a car. Over time, with climate increasing in salience, more people will take the bus, which will pay for the service."
- "I have been riding DC and MD buses since the early 1960s, when my family moved to Chevy Chase when I was 10 years old. Until the pandemic, there has always been at least two bus lines on McKinley Street (and as many as four lines), and the intersection of McKinley Street & Connecticut Avenue has been a bus transfer location for the better part of a century. (The D6 line from 50+ years ago ran from Pinehurst Circle down Western Avenue, Broad Branch Road, McKinley Street, 41st and Wisconsin to Nebraska and Sibley Hospital. The highly truncated line became the E6.)

At the high-level: If the Mayor wants to reduce the number of cars in this city, then the city must beef up public transit, not scale back and not service the communities. Looking at the proposed Better Bus plan, one can see that, in the ring that encircles the downtown core, there's far less density in Rock Creek West than any other portion of the city. There's almost no service between Western and Nebraska Avenues. Specifically in the Chevy Chase neighborhood: Rerouting bus service to avoid McKinley street is a bad idea, for numerous reasons: This neighborhood has an unusually high concentration of seniors in the District and, while there are new families moving in from time to time, the seniors are getting older, some relying on buses coming within 2 to 3 blocks of their houses.

If the City's plan is to take driving lanes away from Connecticut Avenue, then traffic will divert to other streets. One of those is Military Road. During rush hour, some

² Public comments can be viewed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B_5EtR10Nqo

commuter traffic already turns eastward at Military Road, creating congestion on Military Road east of Connecticut Avenue. With fewer lanes on Connecticut Avenue, more commuters will choose alternate, less arterial routes, creating less safe conditions on residential streets.

In contrast to the longer portion of Military Road and all of Missouri Avenue, the western section of Military Road between Nebraska Avenue and its terminus at Western Avenue can only accommodate three lanes, one of which is a valued parking lane for very long blocks between Nebraska & Nevada Avenues, between Chevy Chase Parkway & Connecticut Avenue, and between 39th & 41st Streets. DDoT has already been engaging with the community around the problematic intersection of Military Road at Chevy Chase Parkway. Placing a bus route on that section of Military Road is worse for traffic than keeping it on McKinley Street.

All the other business hubs along Connecticut Avenue have a Metrorail station (Woodley Park, Cleveland Park, Van Ness) and/or an east/west bus line (Woodley Park, Cleveland Park, Connecticut & Nebraska), and Chevy Chase would lose the only east-west connection to our business area. Rerouting that line to avoid McKinley Street bypasses the emerging Chevy Chase Main Street/Gateway, requiring anyone coming from either Friendship Heights or from east of Connecticut Avenue to transfer at Military & Connecticut, which is a much lousier place to wait than McKinley and Connecticut, to wait for the very short ride up Connecticut.

In a public transit system, not all routes need to contribute positively to the bottom line or have frequent ridership. Ride-On operates lines that have few riders. The revenue from the most heavily traveled lines absorbs the cost of the few lines that don't necessarily contribute much to the bottom line. And if buses are free, then the number of riders on a particular line matters less than when fares contribute directly to revenue.

Conclusion: We need **more** bus service weaving through Chevy Chase, not less, to maintain and increase vitality in the Chevy Chase community. Keeping the line on McKinley Street will continue to provide access to our public library, community center, and neighborhood shops and restaurants, for children and seniors alike. Plus, residents in Chevy Chase employ workers in their homes who rely on public transit to come from other parts of the city. Proposed solutions:

1. Keep the Military Road bus line running along McKinley Street.
2. Reroute the line as follows (going eastward from Friendship Height): Western Avenue, McKinley Street, make a left onto Nebraska Avenue, a right onto Utah Avenue, and a left at 27th Street and Military Road, and resume eastward from there. (This was

suggested by another resident to eliminate the left turn onto Military Road from 30th Place.)

3. Add a new community bus line that snakes through the neighborhood, beginning and ending at Friendship Heights, on a half-hourly cycle. In Oakland CA, there are routes that run clockwise and counterclockwise. This could be a smaller (30-foot?) bus.

4. Best solution: Partner with Montgomery County MCDOT to have Ride-on run routes into and within the District, in the strip between Nebraska Avenue and Western Avenue.”

WHEREAS, the elimination of the E6 route came in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic and resulted in WMATA combining the E6 and M4 routes. The ANC and community were opposed to this change then and we remain opposed to this change;

WHEREAS, WMATA has not provided the ANC or community with a sufficient justification for the continued combination of these routes;

WHEREAS, the ANC has pointed out many times that WMATA’s proposed changes to the E6 were not consistent with the District’s Age-Friendly DC commitment to promoting “safer, timely and affordable modes of private and public transportation” for our seniors³. The resulting outcomes of the elimination of the E6 are also in direct opposition to the Mayor’s MoveDC plan⁴ and VisionZero⁵.

WHEREAS, a local, grassroots community survey⁶ conducted in 2020 opposing the elimination of the E6 had nearly 300 signatures and dozens of comments all opposing the route’s elimination;

BE IT RESOLVED, the Commission opposes WMATA’s proposed changes to both the M4 and E4 bus routes and calls upon WMATA to maintain these routes and improve upon these routes so the Chevy Chase civic core is not underserved;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the ANC demands the E6 bus route be restored in the Visionary Network and reiterates the requests made in its:

³ See One-page Summary of Age-Friendly DC, 2018, available at <http://bit.ly/37OMVBw>.

⁴ <https://movedc-dcgis.hub.arcgis.com/>

⁵ <https://visionzero.dc.gov/>

⁶ *Sign the petition* (no date) *Change.org*. Available at: <https://www.change.org/p/wmata-save-your-e6-bus-service?redirect=false> (Accessed: 08 June 2023).

- March 15, 2023 comments on WMATA’s FY24 Budget⁷;
- October 13, 2020 Resolution on WMATA’s FY 2021 Budget Proposal to “Eliminate” the E6 Bus Route⁸;
- February 24, 2020 Resolution on WMATA’s FY 2021 Budget Proposals to Combine the E6 and M4 Bus Routes and Capital Expenditures for Historic Bus Terminal Rehabilitation⁹; and its
- February 9, 2016 letter to WMATA on E6 bus issues¹⁰.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the ANC calls upon WMATA to provide more time and opportunity for residents to learn about and evaluate the Visionary Network proposal and to provide substantive comments. Although the Commission appreciates WMATA extending the public comment period until June 18, 2023, this only represents a roughly two-week extension. The impacts of WMATA’s proposed draft network will have profound effects on communities. Communities must have sufficient time and opportunity to fully understand its implications, convene community meetings and discussions, and draft comprehensive responses. The ANC calls on WMATA to extend the comment period for a full 45-60 days from its original June 5, 2023 deadline;

⁷ <https://anc3g.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2023-03-15-WMATA-FY24-Budget-Comments.pdf>

⁸ <https://anc3g.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/ANC-Resolution-re-WMATA-Proposal-to-Eliminate-E6-Bus-10-13-20.pdf>

⁹ <https://anc3g.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/ANC-Resolution-re-WMATA%E2%80%99s-FY-2021-Budget-draft-2-21-20.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://anc3g.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Chevy-Chase-ANC-3-4G-E6-Bus-Route-Issues.pdf>

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the ANC authorizes the Chair, Lisa R. Gore, and the Commissioner for 3G02, Bruce Sherman, to represent the Commission on this matter.

APPROVED at a regular public meeting notice of which was properly given, and at which a quorum of four (4) of seven (7) members was present on June 12, 2023, by a vote of yes, no, abstentions

Lisa R. Gore, Chair

James L. Nash, Secretary