

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Columbia Pike Transit Initiative?

It is a joint project of Arlington County and Fairfax County to bring enhanced transit services and facilities to the Columbia Pike corridor. It has led to such improvements as *Pike Ride*, the proposed Super Stops, and the proposed Columbia Pike Streetcar alternative.

What is a streetcar?

- A streetcar is an electric transit vehicle that runs on steel rails set flush into the surface of the street.
- Modern streetcar vehicles vary in size. They are larger than typical transit buses and can carry more passengers. They have low floors and multiple doors for convenient boarding.
- Most streetcars are powered by a single overhead wire that is less visually intrusive than multiple overhead utility lines.



Example of a modern streetcar in Seattle, Washington

Why do Arlington County and Fairfax County want to build a Streetcar along Columbia Pike?

Streetcars offer increased capacity and expanded mobility choices, and contribute to local economic revitalization and environmental sustainability. Citizens and workers in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area rely heavily on rail and bus transit; a streetcar would extend the reach of the Metrorail system.

Why can't we just add more buses?

The existing bus service along Columbia Pike (2-3 minute headways during peak hours) is so frequent that it limits the ability to improve service by adding more buses to the schedule. With streetcars in place, much of the Metrobus and ART bus service will remain and continue to be improved to serve local and commuting trips. Streetcars will replace the 16G and 16H buses.

What features will the Columbia Pike Streetcar system include?

- A fleet of 10 to 14 modern streetcar vehicles that will travel on existing streets, in shared traffic lanes along with cars and buses.
- Station stops spaced about ¼ to ½ mile apart with enhanced shelters, raised bus and streetcar boarding areas, improved lighting, up-to-date travel information, and real-time display of next-vehicle arrival.
- Quick, easy fare payment and integration with WMATA's SmartTrip system.
- Frequent all-day service (every six minutes) complemented by bus service.
- Facilities for vehicle maintenance, storage, and operations.
- Traction power substations located at approximately one-mile intervals along the corridor.

Will the streetcar have stops in the curb lane or in the median?

Generally, the system will have curb-side stops, using the sidewalks for boarding. Median stops will only be used where there is enough street width to construct them, such as in Skyline and Pentagon City.

What is the proposed route?

The route extends approximately five miles between Pentagon City and Skyline, as shown in the figure on the opposite page of this handout with an option to extend to the NOVA Community College. There is much discussion in the region about streetcars, including active implementation of a streetcar network in the District of Columbia. The project team has planned this route so as not to preclude future expansion to the east or west.

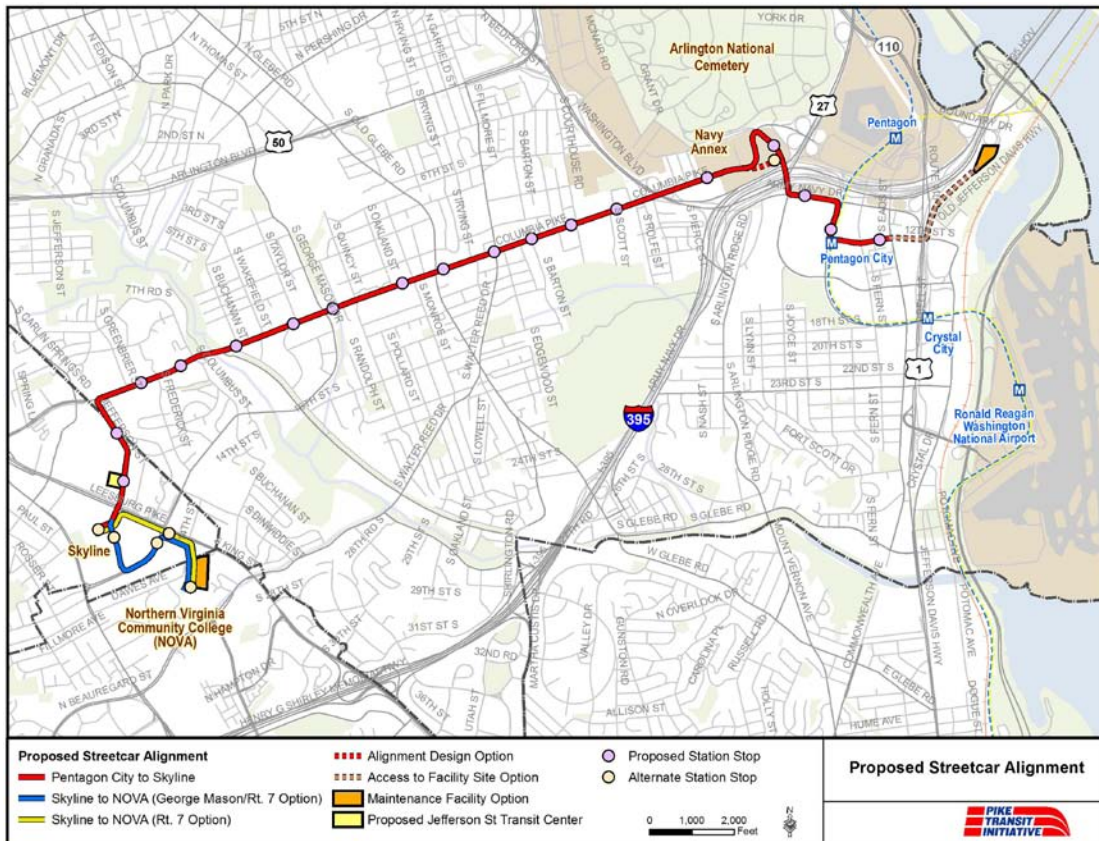
What is the current status?

Currently, the project team is preparing a combined Federal Alternatives Analysis (AA) and Environmental Assessment (EA). This phase includes project level engineering and evaluates proposed alternatives for potential impacts. Upon completion of this phase, the project team will submit a draft of the AA/EA to FTA for their review and approval. Upon approval of the AA/EA document by FTA, the document will be released to the public for review and comment.

What is the timeline?

Current plans call for:

- Preliminary engineering and project development from 2012 to 2013.
- Design and construction to begin in 2014.
- System testing and service beginning in 2016.



How will the project be funded?

Fairfax and Arlington Counties have demonstrated local funding commitments to the project and the financial capacity to operate and maintain the transit improvements. The Counties will rely on state matching funds and apply for funding through the FTA New Starts/Small Starts program.

Who will operate the system?

Project sponsorship options are currently being studied. As the project moves into its next and later phases, Arlington and Fairfax Counties may create a new transit organization or utilize existing entities for preliminary engineering, final design, construction, operation and maintenance.

Are the Counties looking at other options to improve transit along the corridor?

The project team is evaluating three other options as part of the Federal Alternatives Analysis (AA) and Environmental Assessment (EA), to include a No Build Alternative, and two Transportation Management Systems (TSM) Alternatives (essentially, enhanced bus options). These options are being analyzed to the same level as the proposed Streetcar Build Alternative.

What is the projected cost?

The projected cost of streetcar is currently being evaluated in the Alternatives Analysis (AA) and

Environmental Assessment (EA). More detailed information will be available during the public review of the Draft Environmental Assessment.

How will the decision be made on which alternative is selected?

After completion and approval of the draft study report by FTA, the draft Federal Alternatives Analysis (AA) and Environmental Assessment (EA) will be released for public review and comment. Following this release, public meetings will be held where citizens can provide comments. The project team will compile those comments into the document for consideration by FTA and the Arlington County and Fairfax County Boards. The Boards will then each select the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA).

How can I find out more about the streetcar?

Information about the Columbia Pike Transit Initiative can be found online at www.piketransit.com, where people who are interested in the project are encouraged to submit comments or questions and sign up to receive email alerts about the project. You can also send an email to the project team at info@piketransit.com, or call John Dittmeier, the Metro Project Manager, at (202)962-1027.