

Washington D.C.



Since 2022, public transit agencies in the DC-Maryland-Virginia area (DMV) have improved service in a number of ways.

WMATA ran more buses and trains, enforced dedicated bus lanes, streamlined fares, and introduced a reduced-fare program. WMATA expanded its train network with the Silver Line to Dulles Airport and a new station in Alexandria.

People are responding to better service by riding. WMATA weekend ridership, for example, is higher now than before the pandemic. Alexandria's DASH Bus had more riders than ever in 2023, with a new bus network and free fare policy in place.

20
minute trip from the supermarket

35
minute commute

40
minute trip home



By March 2024, the average person could reach 40,000 more potential jobs—17% more—in 60 minutes by public transit, compared to March 2022.

Job access grew more for Black people and people with low incomes. Riders with a fare budget of \$5 and evening travelers have higher job access now than before COVID-19.

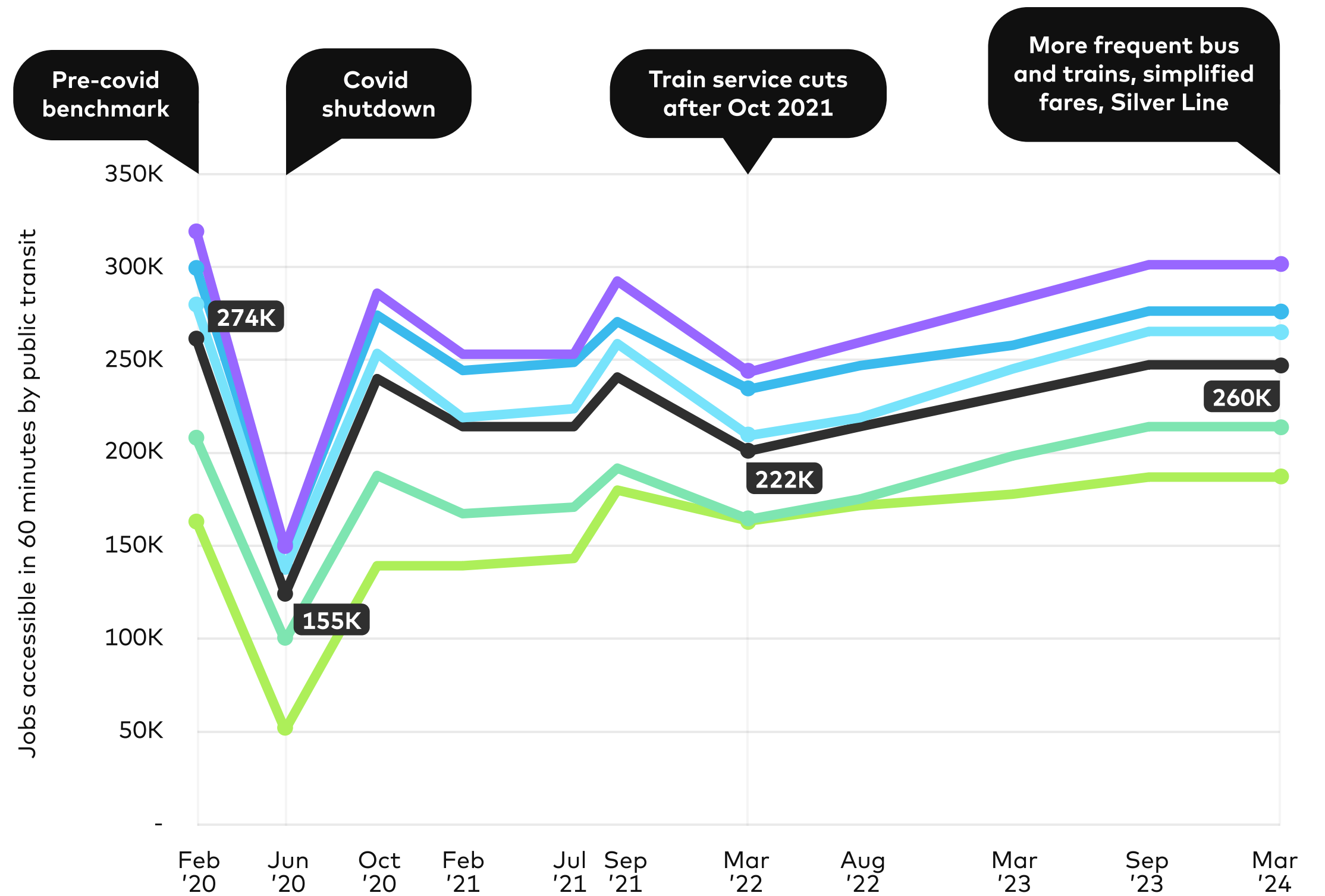


Jobs accessible in 60 minutes by public transit for DMV residents

★ Chart Insight

Access by public transit has grown steadily for many DMV residents over the past 2 years as WMATA made widespread improvements to transit service.

- Chart Key**
- Everyone
 - People with low incomes
 - White people
 - Black people
 - Everyone, Fares <\$5
 - Everyone, Weekday evening



Access data from TransitCenter based on transit schedules for weekday morning unless otherwise noted

People living across the DMV now have better public transit access than a few years ago.

WMATA increased service frequency on buses and trains throughout the day and night. Thanks to funding from the District of Columbia, it began to offer 24-hour bus service on 14 bus routes.

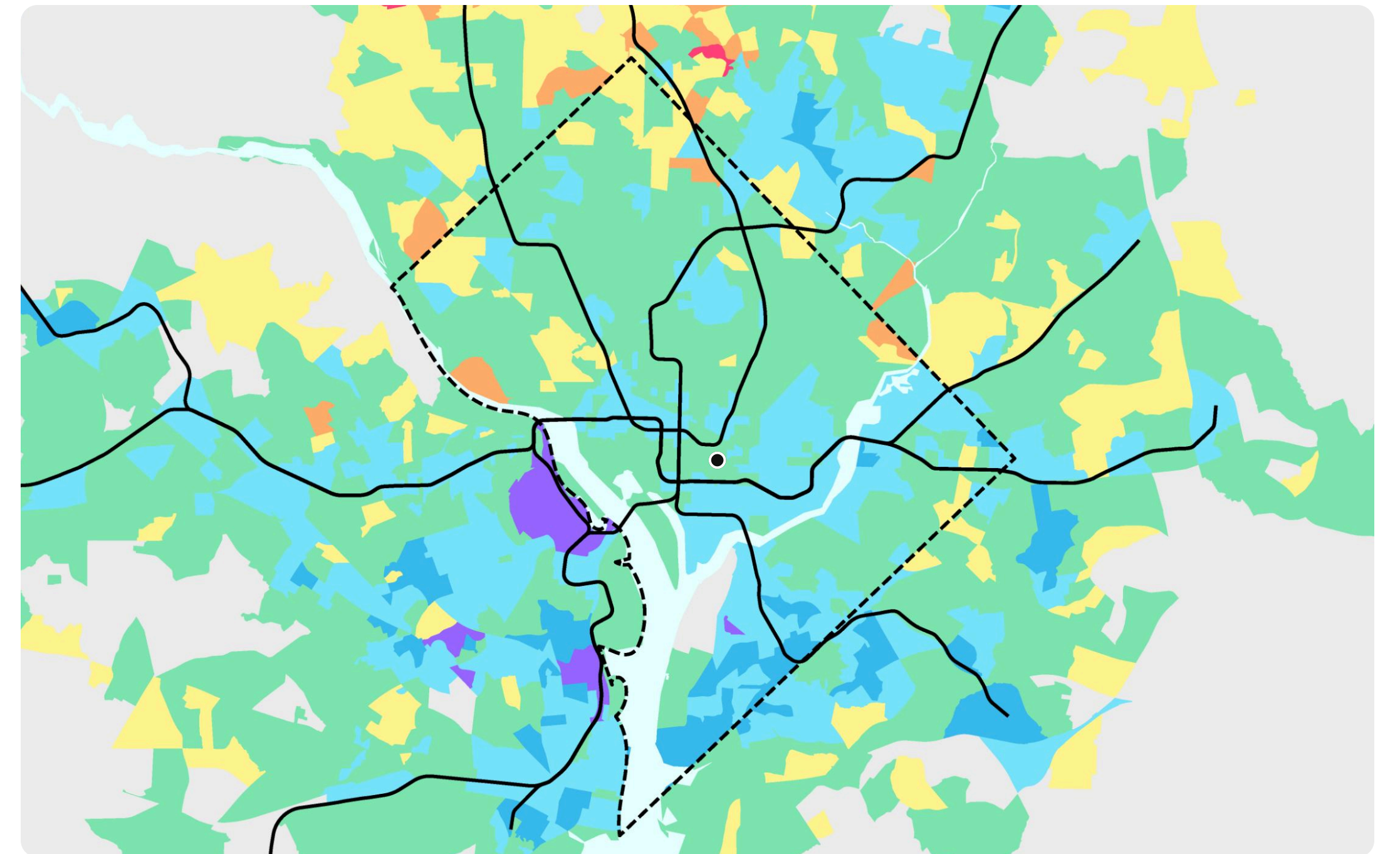
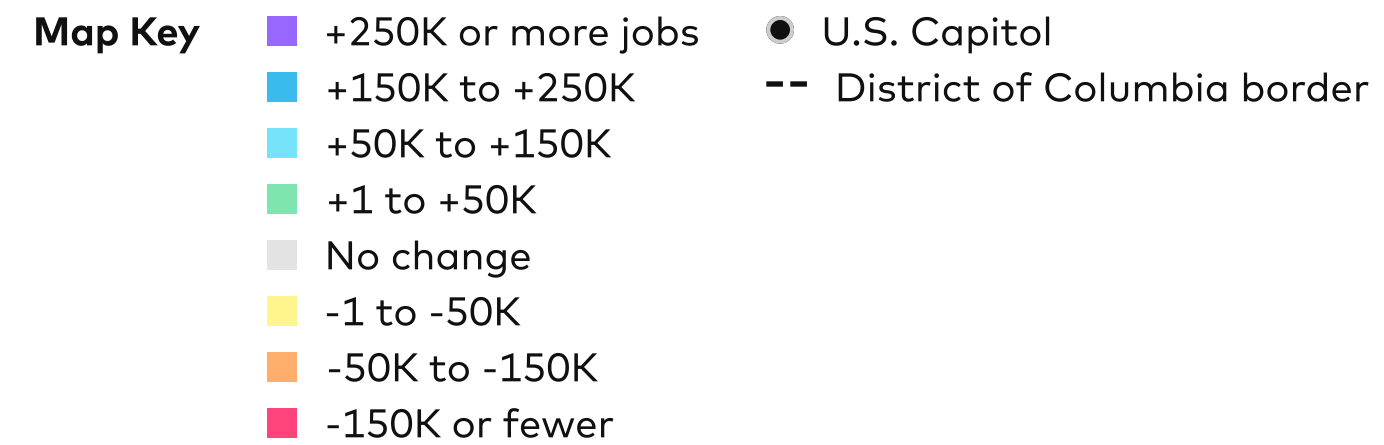
These changes make it easier for second and third-shift workers to commute by transit and for people to take transit for personal trips.



Change in jobs accessible in 60 minutes by public transit for DMV residents, March 2022-2024

★ Map Insight

More service on weekday evenings has increased job access for many, particularly in Eastern DC; Prince George's County, Maryland; and Arlington and Alexandria, Virginia.



White people have better access by transit than people of color in the District of Columbia.

The average white resident of the city of DC lives 20 minutes by public transit from the nearest hospital, while the average Black resident lives 25 minutes away.

Access to opportunities is a result of residential patterns, development, and transportation. WMATA isn't responsible for the lack of hospitals near Ward 7. But it can ameliorate the gap by boosting transit connections from Ward 7 to hospitals. Other government agencies must ensure that healthcare is equitably distributed in the region.

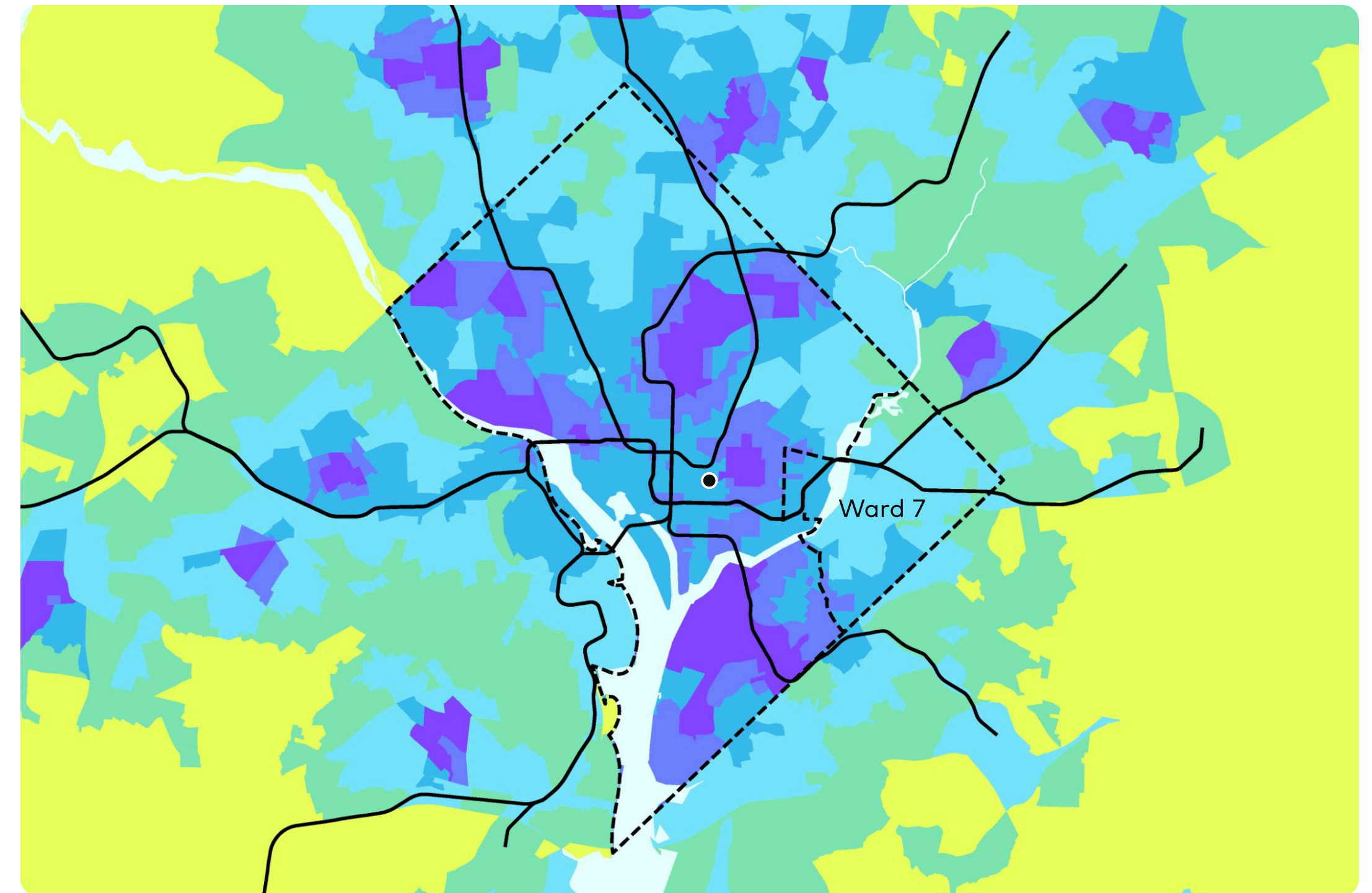


Transit time to the nearest hospital for DMV residents

★ Map Insight

Most white residents of DC and neighboring cities live within 30 minutes by transit from the nearest hospital. But most residents of DC's Ward 7 and neighboring Prince George County, who are predominantly Black, live at least 30-60 minutes from the nearest hospital by transit.

- Map Key**
- 0-10 minutes
 - 10-20
 - 20-30
 - 30-45
 - 45-60
 - 60 minutes or more
 - U.S. Capitol
 - District of Columbia border



"I've been a lifelong Metro rider and it's been exciting to see our transit system evolve. Since 2020, I've noticed more reliable rail trips, more frequent bus service."

Kyle
DMV public transit rider



"As a [car-free] couple, we rely on public transportation to be reliable, frequent, and safe. It would be personally and communally a great loss if there were any cutbacks in current or planned service. In fact, [there] should be increased service across the board."

Richard and Mirele
DMV public transit riders



WMATA has a large budget shortfall because COVID-19 depressed fare revenue and raised inflation. To make ends meet in FY2025, the agency will raise fares by 12.5%; defer preventative maintenance; and receive one-time additional funding from DC, Maryland, and Virginia.

The government funding allows WMATA to avoid major cuts to service and transit access until FY2026, when it faces another budget gap.

Long-term, WMATA lacks dedicated government funding, without which it can't plan in advance or implement ambitious improvements.

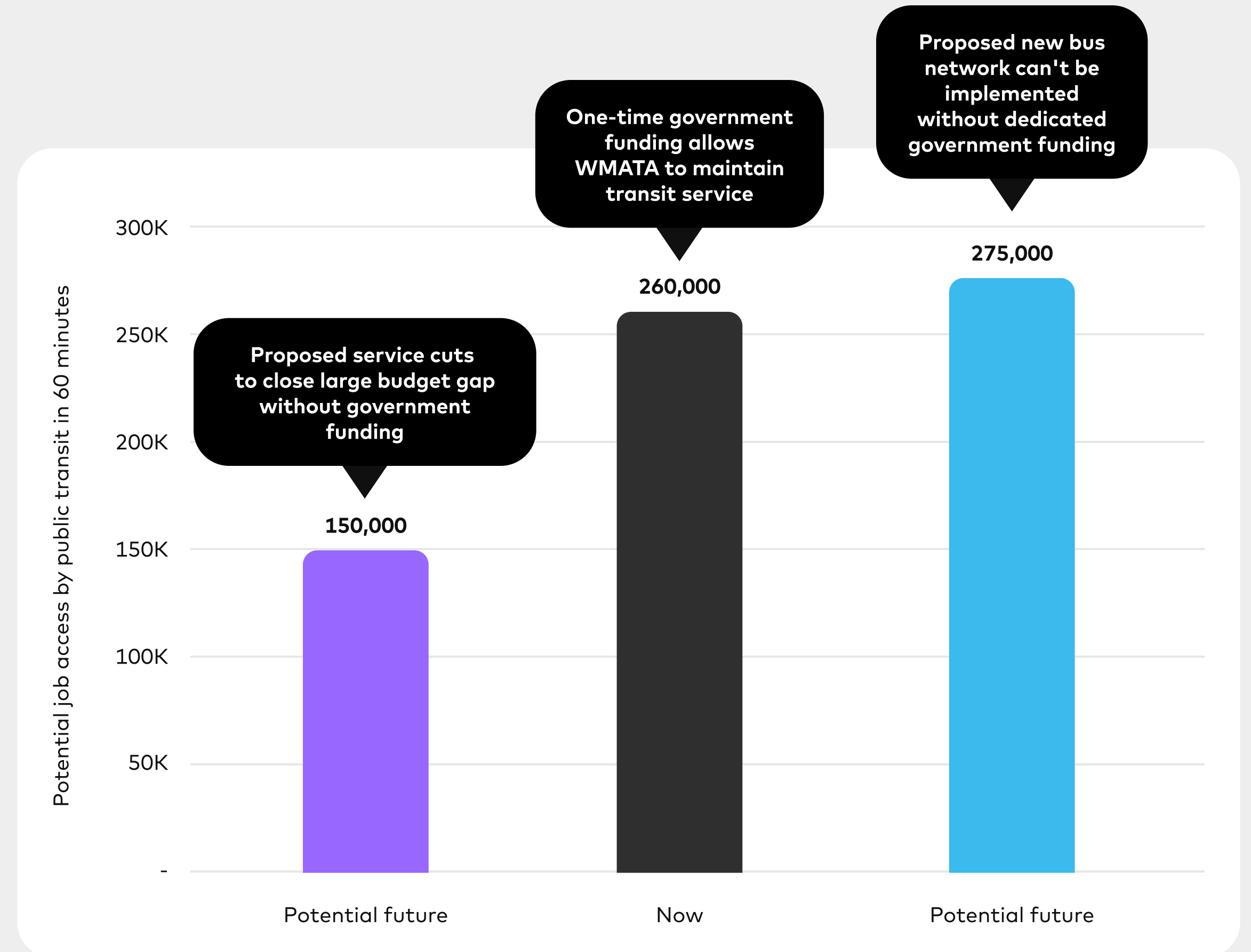
For example, WMATA can't afford a proposed new bus network that would give a million people 24-hour service and substantially improve access to opportunities by transit. Instead, WMATA can afford a cost-neutral redesign that won't improve bus service as dramatically.



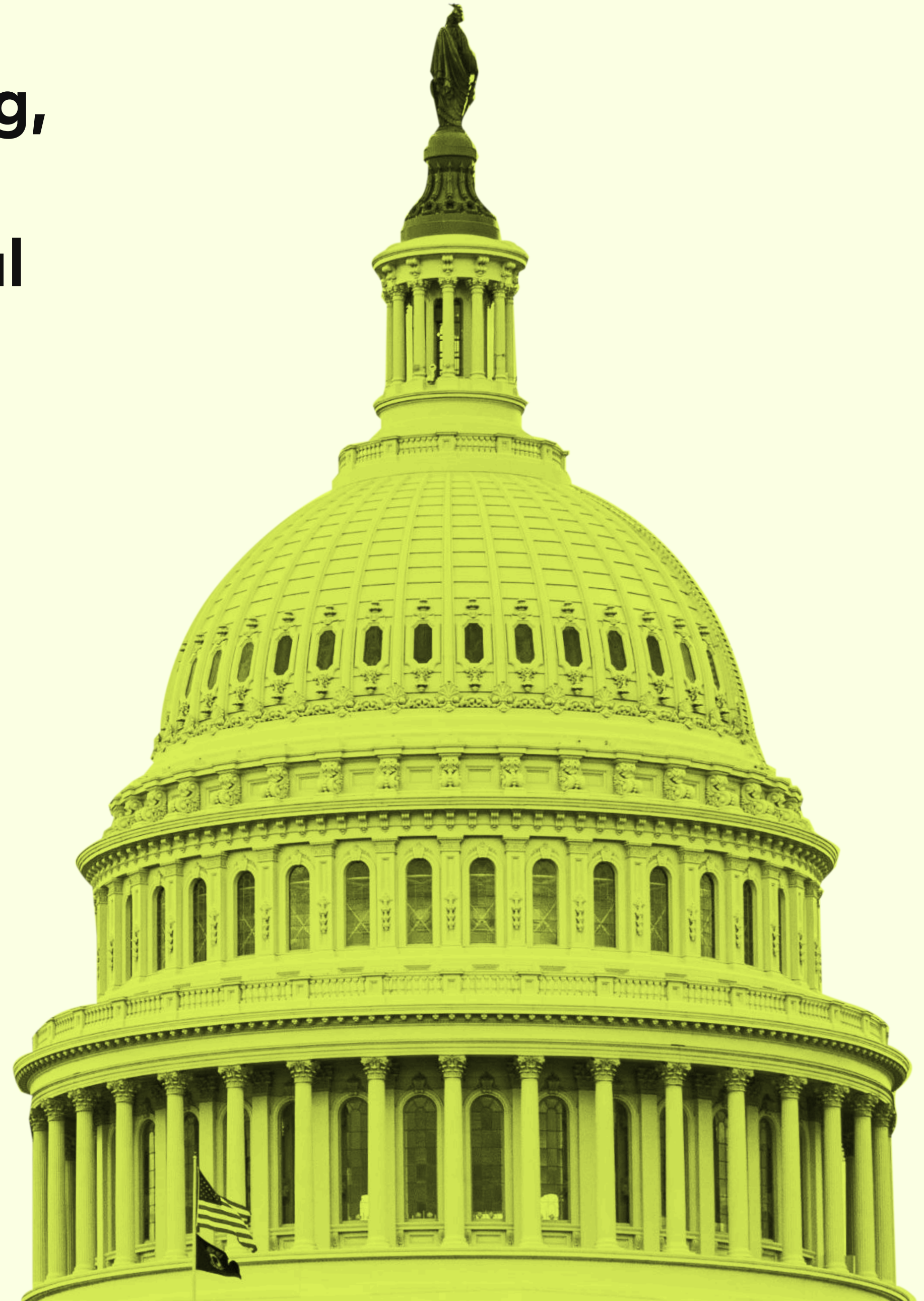
How government funding scenarios impact access to jobs by public transit for DMV residents

★ Chart Insight

Without recently-approved government funds, WMATA would have had to slash service, causing the average person to lose access to 100,000 jobs. Until more funding is secured, WMATA can't reimagine its bus network, which would increase access by 15,000 jobs.



Without dedicated government funding, WMATA can't implement a new bus network that would make an additional 15,000 jobs accessible within 60 minutes for transit riders.



For people who are able to drive, access to destinations by car is dramatically higher. It takes the average DMV resident 35 minutes by transit to reach the third-nearest supermarket (in other words, a variety of food options)—but just 5 minutes by car.

Driving is much faster than public transit because local, state, and federal officials have invested in car-oriented infrastructure instead of public transit. The region's adopted transportation plan would spend \$28.2 billion on highway expansion and \$13.8 billion on transit expansion over the next twenty years—even though driving is more expensive, dangerous, and polluting than public transit.

Public transit, anchored by WMATA, has enormous potential to improve people’s daily lives through affordable, convenient access around the region.

Transportation and political leaders from across the DMV must fully fund public transit to ensure everyone can get where they need to go.

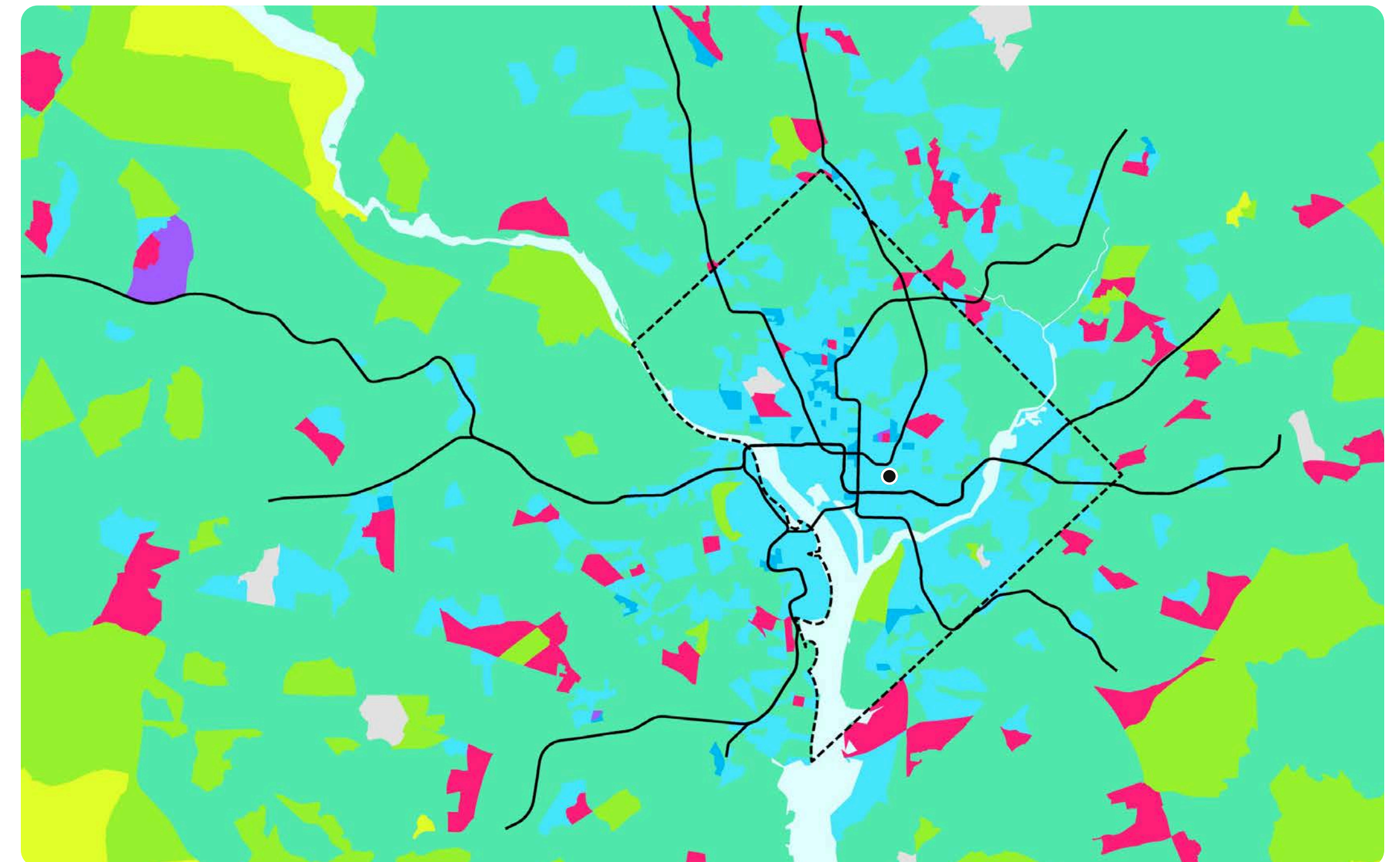


Transit vs. driving time to three nearest supermarkets for DMV residents

★ Map Insight

A transit trip to the third-nearest supermarket is at least three times longer than a car trip except in a few pockets of the region.

- Map Key**
- Location of 3 supermarkets
 - Transit as fast as car
 - Transit 1-2x slower than car
 - Transit 2-3x slower than car
 - Transit 3-5x slower than car
 - Transit 5-10x slower than car
 - Transit more than 10x slower than car
 - Not accessible by transit
 - U.S. Capitol
 - District of Columbia



About this analysis

The access to opportunity data used in this analysis comes from TransitCenter's Transportation Equity Dashboard (TED). Data are based on changes to transit agency schedules and fare policy, where people live (data from 2017-2021 American Community Survey), where jobs are (data from 2021 LEHD), and where other essential places are (based on open-source geospatial data).

Because the TED access to opportunity data is based on transit schedules, it does not factor in reliability issues or on-time performance. Time periods are: weekday mornings from 7-9am; weekday evenings from 9-11pm; and Saturday mornings from 10-12am. The "region" described in this analysis is the Census-defined urbanized area.

Visit

To explore more access to opportunity data, visit the Transportation Equity Dashboard at www.dashboard.transitcenter.org. For more information on the methods used to generate the access to opportunity data, visit the TED About page.

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TransitCenter

TransitCenter is a foundation that works to secure a more just and sustainable future with abundant public transportation options. We recognize that our current transportation system is contributing to climate change, that transit systems poorly serve many of their riders, and that access to opportunity in the U.S. is deeply inequitable because of unjust, historical barriers based on race, gender, culture, and identity.

We believe that targeted research and effective grassroots advocacy can persuade leaders to make better choices that center both climate and justice outcomes in transportation. We make grants, conduct research, and coordinate a national network of local advocates to build a successful movement pushing for bold shifts in transportation funding and strategy.

For more information, please visit www.TransitCenter.org.

Acknowledgments

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