This Major U.S. City Just Made Public Buses Free Forever

Public transportation has long since been an affordable way for residents and visitors to find their way around big cities and metro areas.

But for some people, taking public transportation can mean multiple routes and require several forms of transport – making the options difficult, scarce, or unaffordable.

That's why Washington D.C. has decided to make public buses free to all residents and visitors starting next summer, as pandemic restrictions wind down and more people return to on-site to work daily.

The Council approved the plan (dubbed the Fare-Free Bus Funding Emergency Act) in a unanimous vote which also included expanding bus services 24 hours a day for 12 major downtown areas.

"Free transit of course is only as good as the frequency and the reliability of that service," said Ward 6 Councilmember Charles Allen per *DC News Now*. "It's an investment in better service and ensures that WMATA will have what it needs to help earn riders back."

The bus, which normally costs $2, will start offering free rides on or around July 1 and will be implemented as a permanent change for the city moving forward. The new program only applies to Metro buses, not Circulator buses (owned by the city) or the Metrorail.

The *Associated Press* pointed out that ridership on city buses during weekdays is at about 74% of what it was pre-pandemic.

It’s estimated that the new project will cost around $40 million total to implement, with $32 million going toward the free buses and $8.5 million towards extending service hours.

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