



The Washington, DC region is great >> and it can be greater.

National links: The complicated intersection of protests and transit safety

LINKS By [Jeff Wood](#) (Contributor) June 5, 2020 8



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Transit agencies have a lot to consider when choosing to shut down during protests. The COVID-19 pandemic shows how work expectations align with where people live. This is a moment of reckoning for city planners.

Should transit shut down during protests? Over the past weekend, as protests increased, many transit agencies chose to shut down service

fearing safety of their drivers, passengers, and equipment. The decision left many people stranded, angering riders and advocates alike. Now, agencies and planners must weigh a myriad of factors in creating contingency plans for service during public demonstrations. ([Jarrett Walker](#) | [Human Transit](#))

A soul crushing suburban commute: Many people with office jobs have worked from home in the past few months. Those living in suburban areas have shed their often time-sucking commutes to their desks in the city. Thus, the COVID-19 pandemic has shown how work expectations can align with how and where people live, in addition to preventing some of the negative impacts that driving has on the environment. ([Elie Mystal](#) | [The Nation](#))

A moment of reckoning for planners and urbanists: In this unique moment of public health crisis and social justice reform, planners must consider the role they have played in designing spaces that perpetuate institutional racism. From public streets and parks to private mixed-use developments, they are encouraged now more than ever to consider equity in all planning decisions. ([James Brasuell](#) | [Planetizen](#))

Closed roads show the true beauty of parks: As coronavirus lockdowns have closed some roads near parks, design in its truest form is revealing itself. Spaces like Tower Grove Park in St. Louis have become more quaint as the surrounding streets have become less distracting by car traffic. As the lockdowns ease, people are reconsidering superfluous roads and we might maintain less traffic congestion near parks. ([Chris Naffziger](#) | [St. Louis Magazine](#))

Our infrastructure isn't up to par with current climate conditions: Our drain pipes, reservoirs, power lines, and sewage systems were designed based on past climate data. As such, they are likely to falter as present day natural disasters persist. Planners and designers are now faced with the challenge of updating infrastructure under unpredictable climate changes. ([Shayla Love](#) | [Vice](#))

Quote of the Week

kk on June 5, 2020 at 2:46 pm

Should transit shut down during protests

No they should not; should they detour yes.

Most of the protest have been around the White House should could route buses around that. Most of the buses travel along Pennsylvania Ave, H Street, I Street, K Street, 19th, 18th 17th, 16th, 14th, 13th, 11th, 9th and 7th Streets.

WMATA seems to prefer to rather close service rather than work out detours for stuff. Seeing as how they are a transit agency everyone at the agency should have knowledge of the areas where WMATA services meaning all of DC, and 60 % of the city of Alexandria and 60 % of Arlington, Montgomery, Prince Georges and Fairfax Counties.

I hope they would have a giant map of DC somewhere in WMATA's headquarters so they know every street in DC and which ones buses can fit down and can not. There should be a Geography Test for knowledge of DC similar to how London Cab drivers take one of London.

If need be due to Protest why not route all downtown buses along L and M Streets traveling east and west on the north and Independence Ave and Maine Ave to the south going east and west bound. Ohio Drive, 23rd Street or I-66 to the west and 12th or 11th to the east for north/south traffic and allow riders to transfer to Metrorail for free similar to what was done during marathons in the city.

People have to get to work and some are dependent on transit. Those that are dependent on transit should have a way to get to and from work. Otherwise they should be allowed to file for unemployment as this is no fault of there own due to protest and or due to Covid 19.

Since April Metro service has been limited to almost no buses running on weekends and all service ending earlier than normal. People that work on weekends or work after 9PM have had issues and not anyone has said anything about it.

There were issues with this during voting as was limited to only a few places, you had 3 and 4 hour lines and many had to take transit to get to Polling Centers because they were not in there neighborhoods due to Covid 19. People would wait hours to vote and when they got out all transit had stopped. This affected voters and poll workers alike.

“One of the dangers of this moment for white counterparts in placemaking is to be invigorated to ‘do something’ instead of just picking up the best practices, voices and research of women/black ppl/white allies from the last 5+ years and put that work to work. It is important that we amplify, fund and implement the work of people and organizations that have already spoken loudly on the intersection of place and race. With that in mind I’ve decided to interrupt your lunchtime to do some amplifying...”

Keith Benjamin, Charleston South Carolina’s Director of Transportation and Traffic [on Twitter](#) discussing the need to amplify work that’s already going on.

This week on the podcast, we’re joined by Germaine Haleguoa, University of Kansas Associate Professor of Media and Film, to talk about her book *The Digital City*. I highly highly recommend this one.



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Jeff Wood is the Principal of [The Overhead Wire](#), a consulting firm focused on sharing information about cities around the world. He hosts a weekly podcast called [Talking Headways](#) at Streetsblog USA and operates the daily news site [The Overhead Wire](#).

8 COMMENTS

THREADED NEWEST AT BOTTOM NEWEST AT TOP

If there is such an issue to keep Metro opening late why is there not a concern to open early ? Why does Metro need to open at 5 when it can not close at 11:30 ? Let Metro open 9AM to 9PM then; stop favoring 9Am-5PM workers and no one else.

[REPLY](#) [LINK](#) [REPORT](#)

Jasper on June 5, 2020 at 3:08 pm

No they should not; should they detour yes.

Exactly.

I've written to CaBi to express my disappointment that they closed stations near the White House and that they closed the system during the curfew. There is no need to close a system when there's no one in the street anyway. Furthermore, a transit system should not be singled out like CaBi and the scooter companies were, while other systems keep running.

WMATA seems to prefer to rather close service rather than work out detours for stuff.

The last bit of that phrases is superfluous. WMATA prefers closing itself for anywhich reason. Safety, track work, a pandemic, demonstrations. It doesn't matter, WMATA's solution is reduced service. Can we make it a requirement for the next WMATA manager that she actually wants to run a transit system?

People have to get to work and some are dependent on transit.

Others choose - in line with city policy - to live a car-free lifestyle. Transit is PUBLIC transportation and it does not require justification for a ride, just like you don't need to justify why you get a book in the library.

There should be a Geography Test for knowledge of DC similar to how London Cab drivers take one of London.

Sadly, there isn't and many bus drivers barely can follow their route.

[REPLY](#) [LINK](#) [REPORT](#)

kk on June 5, 2020 at 8:55 pm

You're right seeing as DC is the capital and we have protest give or take once a year on average of varying sizes.

WMATA should have plans in place for them for pretty much everything in between GW, Dupont Circle, L'Enfant Plaza and the Capitol. They should have plans on what streets can be used for buses and what streets can fit which sizes buses. There should also be alternatives for reaching every metrostation downtown incase there is an issue but I really doubt that they have the planning to even consider something like that.

"Sadly, there isn't and many bus drivers barely can follow their route."

True, I have seen that first hand during many times on regular routes and also during shutdowns when Metro ran shuttles in the past. Bus drivers and the Metro board should be required to take a geography test; so that they have an understanding of the areas their buses serve.

DC is not that large that this would be an impossible task, but I bet most would fail.

[REPLY](#) [LINK](#) [REPORT](#)

Jasper on June 5, 2020 at 11:05 pm

True, I have seen that first hand during many times on regular routes and also during shutdowns when Metro ran shuttles in the past.

It's just a matter of not wanting to spend the money on the education of the drivers.

[REPLY](#) [LINK](#) [REPORT](#)

kk on June 5, 2020 at 11:16 pm

@ Jasper

No i doubt that.

It seems to be more of a case of not giving a d**n; as they have never really done anything that is customer first and the history proves this. They have broad history when it comes to a lack of customer service or just explaining anything.

They have no problem putting up posters, billboards and ad's that pat themselves on the back and that cost money. It seems like a plain and

simple lack of customer service from low level employees like station managers, bus drivers and officers all the way to the top.

[REPLY](#) [LINK](#) [REPORT](#)

Jasper on June 6, 2020 at 7:45 pm

*It seems to be more of a case of not giving a d**n*

Sure. Same difference.

But you're right. WMATA cares about moving buses and trains. Not about moving passengers.

In the same line, it irritates the hell out of me that they keep saying that during the pandemic, their first priority is to keep their personnel safe. Their first priority should ALWAYS be: Moving passengers safely. And when the passengers are safe, their personnel is too.

[REPLY](#) [LINK](#) [REPORT](#)

Brad on June 6, 2020 at 8:09 am

I would argue that is less an issue of WMATA, and more an issue of Jackie Jeter and the ATU. Drivers state that they do not feel safe, whether it is COVID or a protest, then the system stops to protect the drivers. WMATA has the option, cave-in and shut down to meet the ATU demands, or risk a strike and public backlash. Either way Metro and the public loses.

[REPLY](#) [LINK](#) [REPORT](#)

Atom Eyes on June 8, 2020 at 10:34 am

Hmmm...seeing as Jackie Jeter doesn't work for ATU 689 anymore, I'd say it's not an issue of that at all. Frankly, it seems like this was just an excuse to take a cheap shot at her.

[REPLY](#) [LINK](#) [REPORT](#)



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