



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON DC

January 24, 2018

Mike O'Rielly  
Commissioner

Mr. Paul D. Wiedefeld  
General Manager and Chief Executive Officer  
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority  
600 Fifth Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Mr. Wiedefeld:

The ability of Americans to access 9-1-1 emergency networks when critical moments arise is of paramount importance to the Federal Communications Commission as we seek to protect the public's safety via communications technologies. Unfortunately, for too long, passengers of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) have faced a lack of 9-1-1 accessibility within Metro tunnels, causing increased risk of bodily injury and possible death.

Over the last number of years, WMATA, under your leadership, has taken steps to bring wireless communications, and therefore 9-1-1 capabilities, throughout its footprint. Your October 2016 letter to me (attached) provided a timeline by which all the tunnel segments within the system will have wireless service. Further, WMATA released an announcement in December 2017 (attached) that indicated those above-ground Metro stations without Wi-Fi would see such service by mid-2018. While I still have deep reservations over these elongated timelines and pray no event that could have been prevented or minimized with 9-1-1 accessibility occurs in the meantime, I am pleased that some progress is actually being made.

Accordingly, I write to seek an update on WMATA's timeline for bringing wireless service to the remaining unserved Metro tunnel portions and a detailed schedule for bringing full Wi-Fi capabilities to all of the Metro stations without such service. This information will be incredibly useful as I prepare for a public safety-focused FCC oversight hearing to be held by the House of Representatives' Energy and Commerce Committee in mid-February.

I thank you in advance for your prompt reply.

Sincerely,

Michael O'Rielly

cc: The Honorable Greg Walden  
The Honorable Frank Pallone  
The Honorable Marsha Blackburn  
The Honorable Michael Doyle

Attachments



October 27, 2016

The Honorable Michael O'Rielly  
Commissioner  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Commissioner O'Rielly:

Thank you for your letter of September 7, 2016 requesting an update of the Washington Area Transportation Authority (WMATA) radio/cellular project and additional information on the Wi-Fi pilot project.

As you know, the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PRIIA) of 2008 requires WMATA to ensure cellular phone service throughout the system, including the underground tunnels. WMATA and the wireless carriers worked together on the first phase of the project and currently all 91 Metrorail stations (including 47 underground stations) provide customers with access to cell phone service.

The remainder of the project, and the largest portion to enable service in the tunnels and throughout the system, is being advanced using Metro-managed workers thereby yielding cost and efficiency benefits. Metro is installing the necessary cable for both cellular and radio systems at the same time, while prioritizing other safety-critical maintenance work for tracks, switches, signals and structures.

Following extensive engineering and project tests in the Glenmont tunnel section of the Red Line, WMATA has rolled out a complete project schedule. Recognizing that the carriers have ownership and installation responsibilities to initiate cell phone service, service will be turned over to the wireless carriers as each tunnel segment is completed, meaning that riders will notice incremental improvements in coverage as the project moves forward. The installation of cellular cable in all underground tunnel segments will be completed by the end of 2020.

**Washington  
Metropolitan Area  
Transit Authority**

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202/962-1234

[www.metroopensdoors.com](http://www.metroopensdoors.com)

*A District of Columbia,  
Maryland and Virginia  
Transit Partnership*

The full installation schedule is provided below:

Activity	Line	Start infrastructure Installation	Infrastructure Installation Complete	Cell Phone Availability	Radio Availability
Glenmont to Silver Spring	RD	1/2/16	3/31/17	6/30/17	8/21/18
Potomac Avenue to Stadium Armory	BL/OR/SV	7/15/16	10/31/16	11/30/17	10/30/18
Metro Center to Potomac Ave	BL/OR/SV	4/1/17	8/8/17	12/31/18	10/30/18
Benning Road to Largo Town Center	BL/SV	8/9/17	9/18/17	12/31/17	10/31/18
College Park to Gallery Place	GN/YL	9/19/17	4/17/18	7/31/18	12/31/18
Union Station to DuPont Circle	RD	4/18/18	7/2/18	9/30/18	4/8/19
Metro Center to Rosslyn	BL/OR/SV	7/3/18	8/16/18	9/30/19	5/2/19
Rosslyn to Ballston	OR/SV	8/17/18	11/11/18	3/1/20	7/26/19
Pentagon to King Street	BL/YL	11/12/18	2/28/19	1/31/20	9/8/19
Gallery Place to Southern Ave & Suitland to Branch Ave	GR/YL	3/1/19	9/8/19	7/31/20	1/22/20
DuPont Circle to Medical Center & Grosvenor to White Flint	RD	9/9/19	5/4/20	8/30/19	10/30/20

### **Wi-Fi Pilot Project**

On August 29, 2016 WMATA launched a free public Wi-Fi pilot project, part of my Customer Accountability Report (CARE), at six Metrorail stations. The six stations selected for the pilot are: Metro Center, Gallery Place, Judiciary Square, Union Station, Archives and L'Enfant Plaza. The pilot timeframe of 45 days was set as a reasonable amount of time to measure customer interest and satisfaction in having and using the service. The service continues at the pilot stations while the pilot program is evaluated. The pilot was designed to minimize costs by utilizing previously installed infrastructure to provide coverage that was intended for internal maintenance and operational use only.

During the evaluation period, our staff will be looking at statistics; like the number of unique and total number of devices as well as how the service is used. The Wi-Fi pilot is a WMATA owned, operated and maintained initiative to gauge public interest in having this service. WMATA is open to partnering with the private sector in continuing or expanding this service through a potential open competitive procurement. Since WMATA is providing the service, we can disable or continue the service as customer interest guides us.

WMATA has initiated two surveys, one on-line through the service and another through our Amplify customer feedback program. In addition, WMATA has solicited feedback from our Accessibility Advisory Committee. The collective feedback from these groups will be compiled into a final report which will be presented to our executive leadership. Also included in this report will be a cost to continue the deployment to other stations, long term operations and maintenance estimates and a preliminary project schedule.

Given the technical and cost limitations of modern equipment, normal signal propagation and attenuation of Wi-Fi frequencies as well as the very limited space and access to areas within our tunnels, Wi-Fi service is only potentially envisioned for station platforms.

Thank you for your interest in WMATA. If you have any further questions, please contact Regina Sullivan, Managing Director of Government Relations at 202-962-1632 or [rsullivan@wmata.com](mailto:rsullivan@wmata.com). I look forward to working together to ensure the National Capitol Region is served by a safe and reliable transit system.

Sincerely,



Paul J. Wiedefeld  
General Manager and  
Chief Executive Officer

## Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

[Home](#)

For immediate release: December 14, 2017

# Free customer Wi-Fi now available at 30 Metro stations

Metro today announced the availability of free customer Wi-Fi service at 24 additional underground stations, dramatically expanding the number of Wi-Fi enabled stations to 30.

Metro first began offering customer Wi-Fi at six stations in April: Metro Center, Gallery Place, L'Enfant Plaza, Judiciary Square, Union Station and Archives.

Starting today, Wi-Fi is available at the following additional stations:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farragut North</li> <li>• Dupont Circle</li> <li>• Cleveland Park</li> <li>• Van Ness-UDC</li> <li>• Tenleytown-AU</li> <li>• Friendship Heights</li> <li>• Bethesda</li> <li>• Medical Center</li> <li>• Forest Glen</li> <li>• Wheaton</li> <li>• Glenmont</li> <li>• McPherson Sq</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farragut West</li> <li>• Foggy Bottom-GWU</li> <li>• Rosslyn</li> <li>• Crystal City</li> <li>• Smithsonian</li> <li>• Mt Vernon Sq</li> <li>• Columbia Heights</li> <li>• Waterfront</li> <li>• Navy Yard-Ballpark</li> <li>• Anacostia</li> <li>• Court House</li> <li>• Clarendon</li> </ul>
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All remaining underground stations will have Wi-Fi by mid-2018.

Metro's Wi-Fi amenity supplements existing cellular service, which is already available at all Metro stations.

Wireless voice and data service is also available in underground tunnel segments on the Red Line from Glenmont to Silver Spring and on the Orange, Silver and Blue lines from Metro Center to Stadium-Armory.

Work is underway to provide full cell service in all tunnel segments.