

DC Streetcar Service Equity Analysis

September 2025

This document presents the Title VI service equity analysis for the District Department of Transportation's proposal to (1) reduce the operating hours and (2) ultimately discontinue operation of the H Street and Benning Road (H/Benning) Line Streetcar. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in programs and activities receiving Federal financial assistance. This service equity analysis was conducted in compliance with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Circular 4702.B, which determines whether the proposed service changes result in a discriminatory impact. Furthermore, the

proposed discontinuation of streetcar service meets DDOT's Major Service Change policy, thus triggering a service equity analysis.

DC Streetcar Title VI Equity Analysis

DC Streetcar

Draft 2.0

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1 Introduction

This document presents the Title VI service equity analysis for the District Department of Transportation's proposal to (1) reduce the operating hours and (2) ultimately discontinue operation of the H Street and Benning Road (H/Benning) Line Streetcar. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in programs and activities receiving Federal financial assistance. This service equity analysis was conducted in compliance with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Circular 4702.B, which determines whether the proposed service changes result in a discriminatory impact. Furthermore, the proposed discontinuation of streetcar service meets DDOT's Major Service Adjustment Plan, thus triggering a service equity analysis.

1.1 Title VI Regulatory Background

This analysis was conducted by the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) in compliance with Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Circular 4702.1B, "Title VI Requirements and Guidelines for Federal Transit Administration Recipients", which requires that all FTA funding recipients perform a service equity analysis when significantly reducing and/or ceasing operations on an existing fixed-guideway transit route. The proposed service reduction, and ultimate elimination, of DC Streetcar service, constitute major service changes in accordance with DDOT's internal Title VI Plan.

[DDOT's Title VI Policy](#) specifies the policies and procedures DDOT has put in place to ensure compliance with federal Title VI regulations. DDOT utilized the requirements within FTA Circular 4702.1B and DDOT's internal policies as guides to facilitate the H/Benning service equity analysis.

2 Explanation of Proposed Service Cuts and Elimination

2.1 Project Description

DC Streetcar began operation in February 2016 to provide additional neighborhood access and transportation choices along the H Street/Benning Road corridor. The Streetcar alignment stretches from a western terminus near Union Station (on the Hopscotch Bridge spanning the Union Station train yard), through the H Street Business District, to an eastern terminus on Benning Road near Oklahoma Avenue, NE. The H/Benning Line travels primarily through Ward 5, which includes the North Capitol Hill, Atlas District, Carver Langston, Trinidad, and Kingman Park neighborhoods. It passes in front of the Hechinger Mall retail center, the Langston Terrace housing development, the Langston Golf Course, and the former Spingarn education campus.

DC Streetcar operates as a 2.2-mile, double-track, mainline segment within the existing street right-of-way in travel lanes shared with vehicle and bicycle traffic. The track

alignment is curb-running along H Street and median running along Benning Road. There are a total of eight streetcar stops along the alignment, with 12 unique platform locations.

Figure 1: DC Streetcar Alignment



2.2 Proposed Operating Plan

The DC Streetcar currently operates on the following schedule:

Monday through Thursday: 6:00 am to 12:00 am/midnight (18 hours)

Friday: 6:00 A.M. to 2:00 am (20 hours)

Saturday: 8:00 am to 2:00 am (18 hours)

Sunday: 8:00 am to 12:00 am/midnight (16 hours)

A headway-based schedule is utilized, with service frequency set at 12 minutes throughout the day. DDOT proposes that on January 4, 2026, headways will be increased from 12 to 20 minutes, due to decreasing the number of streetcar vehicles in operation from four to three.

DDOT also proposes reducing the total span of service at this time by a total of 32 hours of operation per week (about 25% reduction), as reflected in the following proposed schedule:

Monday through Friday: 6:00 A.M. to 10:00 P.M. (16 hours)

Saturday: 8:00 A.M. to 10:00 P.M. (14 hours)

Sunday: No service

Table 1: Existing v. Proposed Operating Plan

Days of Week	Current Hours	Proposed Hours	Change in Hours	Percent Change
Monday-Thursday	18	16	-2	-11%
Friday	20	16	-4	-20%
Saturday	18	14	-4	-22%
Sunday	16	0	-16	-100%

Per DDOT's Title VI Policy, this adjustment would qualify as a major service change on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, by changing the route's span of service by more than three hours in a day. In addition, DDOT proposes to end Streetcar service altogether on March 31, 2026, which would also constitute a major service change, and trigger the Title VI review.

2.3 Summary of Existing Substitute Transit Services in H/Benning Corridor

The H/Benning corridor is heavily served by WMATA MetroBus routes. The primary parallel service is the D20 route, which operates 24 hours/day, primarily at headways of 12 minutes or less (extending to 20 minutes in the very early morning hours). This route extends from Pennsylvania Avenue and 22nd Street, NW to the Minnesota Avenue Metrorail Station, and parallels the Streetcar route and stops along the H Street/Benning corridor.

This service is supplemented by the D2X, an express route that travels from Gallery Place/Chinatown Metrorail Station to the Capitol Heights Metrorail Station, also along the Streetcar's segment of H Street and Benning Road, NE. This route runs on headways of approximately 15 minutes and stops at five of the Streetcar stops: Union Station Garage; 8th Street NE, and 14th Street NE along H Street; and 15th Street NE and 19th Street NE on Benning Road. The D2X runs from 6:45 am to 10:00 pm.

Finally, the C57 runs from the U Street Metrorail Station to the Capitol Heights Metrorail Station, overlapping with Streetcar service on Benning Road. This is a limited service making peak period runs on weekdays only.

3 DDOT Title VI Policies and Definitions

DDOT adopted three new Title VI policies in November 2015 that guide this analysis: the Major Service Adjustment Plan, the Disparate Impact Policy, and the Disproportionate Burden Policy. The requirements for these policies come from FTA Circular 4702.1B. The Circular requires any FTA recipient that operates 50 or more fixed route vehicles in peak service and serves a population of 200,000 persons or greater to evaluate any fare change

or major service change at the planning and programming stages to determine whether those changes have a discriminatory impact. DDOT's Major Service Change, Disparate Impact, and Disproportionate Burden policies are defined below.

3.1 Major Service Change Policy

DDOT defines a major service change as:

- Changing frequency of buses/streetcars (how often they arrive) on a route by more than five minutes.
- Altering the geographic alignment of more than 25 percent of a bus or streetcar route's miles.
- Changing a route's span of service by more than three hours in a day.
- Creation or elimination of a route or line.
- Elimination of a bus stop or streetcar stop along a portion of a route or line that would force a 0.5 mile or more increase in walking to access the same route or line.

3.2 Disparate Impact Policy

A disparate impact occurs when the difference between the system-wide percentage of minority riders and the percentage of minority riders affected by a proposed service change or fare change is 15 percent or greater. Because the DC Streetcar is the only service currently operated by DDOT there are no other DDOT routes to which it can be compared. Therefore, the comparison is to the population of the District as a whole in order to determine disparate impact.

3.3 DDOT Disproportionate Burden Policy.

A disproportionate burden occurs when the difference between the system-wide percentage of low-income riders and the percentage of low-income riders affected by a proposed service change or fare change is 15 percent or greater, per DDOT's Title VI Policy. Because the DC Streetcar is the only service currently operated by DDOT there are no other DDOT routes to which it can be compared. Therefore, the comparison is to the population of the District as a whole in order to determine disparate impact.

3.4 Service Equity Analysis

A Title VI service equity analysis was performed to determine the equity impacts of both reducing the service hours of DC Streetcar service, and the ultimate discontinuation of service. This analysis determines if the proposed service change will have a disproportionately high and adverse impact on minority and/or low-income populations and recommends mitigations where necessary.

3.5 Methodology

For the purpose of this analysis, a methodology was developed in accordance with DDOT's Title VI Plan, which prescribes the datasets and techniques to be used in determining impacts on minority and low-income populations.

3.5.1 Definitions

- **Low Income** – Defined as households below 50 percent area median income (AMI). In FY2023, the most recently available data year, AMI for the Washington-Arlington-Alexandria Metropolitan Statistical Area was \$121,469. Therefore, the low-income threshold as defined by DDOT is household income at or below \$60,735.
- **Minority** – Defined as the total population minus the non-Hispanic white population, as defined by the Census Bureau.
- **Service Area** – The service area, as defined by DDOT for the DC Streetcar transit services, is the District of Columbia.
- **Study Area** – The study area is defined as the aggregate ½-mile buffer surrounding each DC Streetcar stop along the H/Benning Line.

3.5.2 Datasets

The following data was used to complete the demographic analysis for the service equity analysis:

- American Community Survey (ACS) 2019-2023, Five-Year Estimates, Table B03002, Hispanic or Latino Origin by Race, aggregated by census block group.
- ACS 2019-2023, Five Year Estimates, Table B19001, Household Income in the Past 12 Months, aggregated by census block group.
- US Census Tiger/Line shapefile block group data

3.5.3 Determination of Study Area

The study area is calculated as follows:

1. The H/Benning Line GIS polyline and streetcar stop point shapefiles are overlaid onto the District of Columbia census block group polygon shapefiles.
2. A ½-mile buffer is created based on the streetcar stop point shapefile to represent the analysis study area. A ½-mile buffer was determined by DDOT as an appropriate “catchment” area for fixed-guideway transit.
3. Census block groups which fall in whole or in part within the study area buffer are selected, and when joined with demographic data, become the basis for analysis.

3.5.4 Data Calculations

Service Area

Demographic data is calculated for the District of Columbia to determine thresholds to provide a baseline comparison for minority and low-income populations.

Population by race is calculated using ACS census block group data, as identified in Section 4.2.2. The minority threshold is calculated using the following formula:

- $\text{Percent Minority} = \text{Total Service Area Minority Population} / \text{Total District of Columbia Minority Population}$

The low-income threshold for the DDOT service area is calculated using ACS census block group data, as identified in Section 4.2.2. For the purpose of this analysis, the breakpoint for the low-income threshold is set at \$60,000, which is the nearest income bracket breakpoint to 50 percent AMI (\$60,735) as defined by the census.

- $\text{Percent Households under \$60,000 Annual Income} = \text{Total District of Columbia Households within all Income Brackets Below \$60,000} / \text{District of Columbia households within all Income Brackets}$

Thresholds

The resulting percentages are used as thresholds to determine minority and low-income block groups. Any block group that has a percentage of minority or lower income populations equal to or greater than the District of Columbia are considered minority or low-income block groups for the purpose of the equity analysis. The Title VI thresholds calculated for the District of Columbia are defined below:

- District of Columbia Minority Threshold: **63.4%**
- District of Columbia Low Income Threshold: **30.1%**

Study Area

Demographic data for the study area is calculated using the same method as previously described for the service area. However, percentages are calculated based on census block groups within the study area geography, as defined in Section 4.1.3, to determine the rate of minority and low-income populations. The percentage of the Study Area population defined as minority and low income is defined below:

- Study Area Minority Percentage: **59.7%**
- Study Area Low-Income Percentage: **23.6%**

3.6 Analysis of Impact to H/Benning Corridor Transit Service Levels

Bus service on the existing DC Streetcar alignment is provided by WMATA; it is not anticipated that these service levels will drop in the near future. While overall transit

frequencies will be reduced as a result of the service change, high frequency transit (at headways at or better than those of the Streetcar) will continue to be available for existing Streetcar riders. In addition, because the span of service of Metrobus is greater (with the D20 running throughout the night), there will be no decrease in the span of service either. At this time, it is expected that WMATA bus service on the corridor will have enough capacity to absorb Streetcar ridership.

3.7 Assessment of Service Equity

As indicated by the service equity analysis, the demographics of the DC Streetcar corridor have changed since the Streetcar was originally constructed in 2016. The corridor is now approximately four (4) percent below the minority threshold, and over seven (7) percent below the low-income threshold. Therefore, the planned service reduction and ultimate discontinuation do not present a disparate impact or disproportionate burden (per DDOT's Title VI Policy). Figures 3 through 5, contained in the Appendix, identify Minority, Low-Income, and Title VI block groups within the study area.

Compared to the District of Columbia as a whole, the DC Streetcar corridor has lower levels of both minority and low-income populations (as seen in Table 3 below).

Table 2: Service Area vs. H/Benning Study Area Demographics

Analysis Area	Minority Proportion of Total Population	Low-Income Proportion of Total Households
District of Columbia (Service Area)	63.4%	31.1%
DC Streetcar (1/2 mi.)	59.7%	23.6%
Difference (Service Area – DC Streetcar)	-3.7%	-7.5%

Furthermore, while customers will lose access to free, accessible Streetcar service, alternative transit in the form of the D20, D2X, and the C57 Metrobus routes are already available. These routes – in particular the D20 – provide service that equals or exceeds Streetcar in terms of both headways and span of service. Thus, customers will have access, albeit no longer free, to WMATA's robust transit service in the corridor.

3.8 Recommended Mitigations

Specific mitigations are only required when the major service change presents either a disparate impact upon minority persons, or a disproportionate burden to low-income populations – neither of which will occur with the planned service reduction and ultimate closing of the DC Streetcar. Therefore, no mitigations are recommended for these proposed service changes.

4 Public Involvement Process for Title VI Policy Update

In the interest of equitable community engagement, DDOT plans to:

- Post notice of the major service changes in the Public Register;
- Hold a public meeting;
- Complete a communications plan, to include pop-up event outreach;
- Post notification of the major service changes on the DC Streetcar website;
- Post notifications of the major service change at Streetcar stations/stops.

5 Appendix A: H/Benning Corridor Title VI Maps

Minority Population within ½ Mile of DC Streetcar Stations

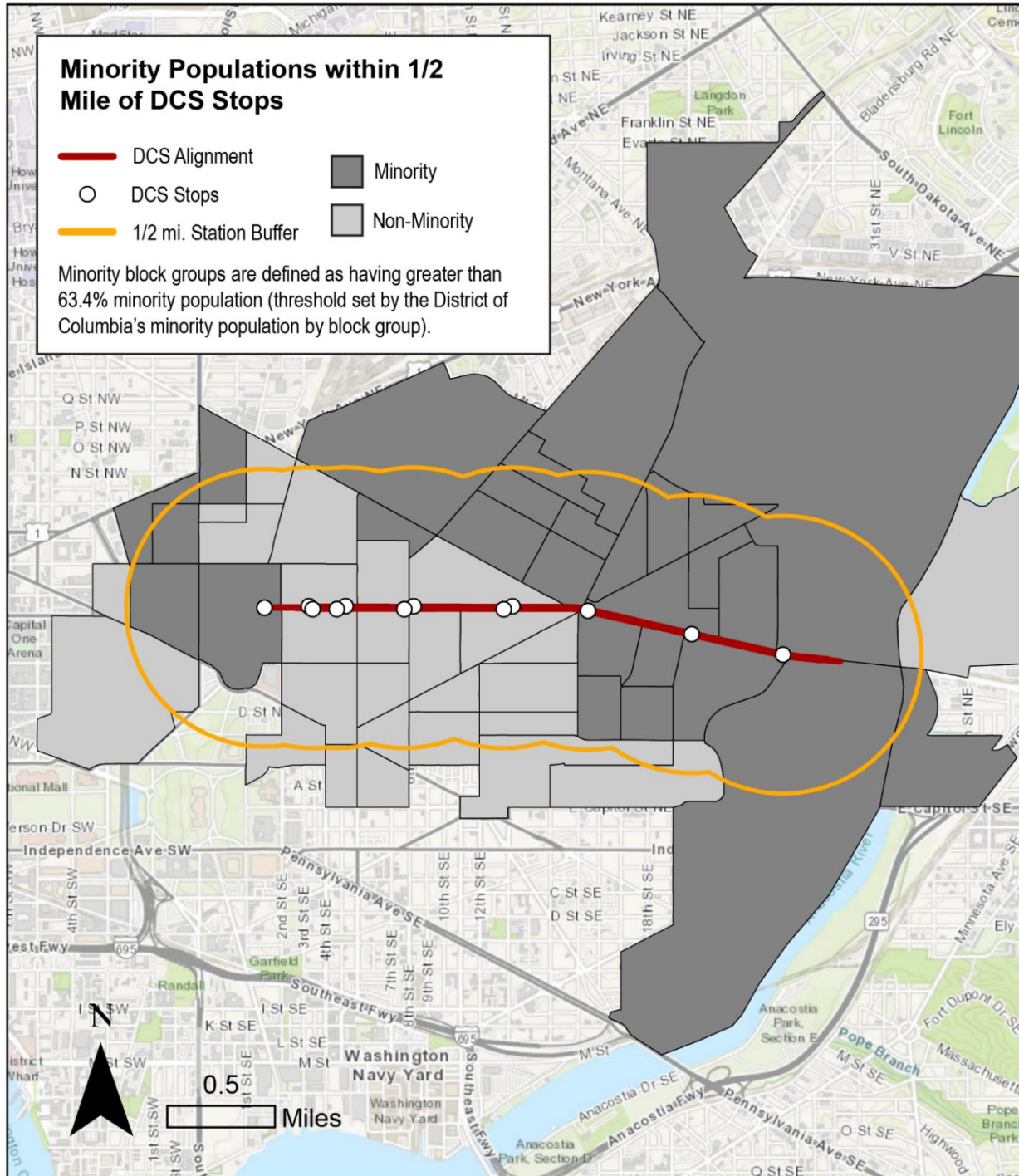


Figure 5-1 Minority Population within ½ Mile of DC Streetcar Stations

Low-Income Block Groups within ½ Mile of DC Streetcar Stations

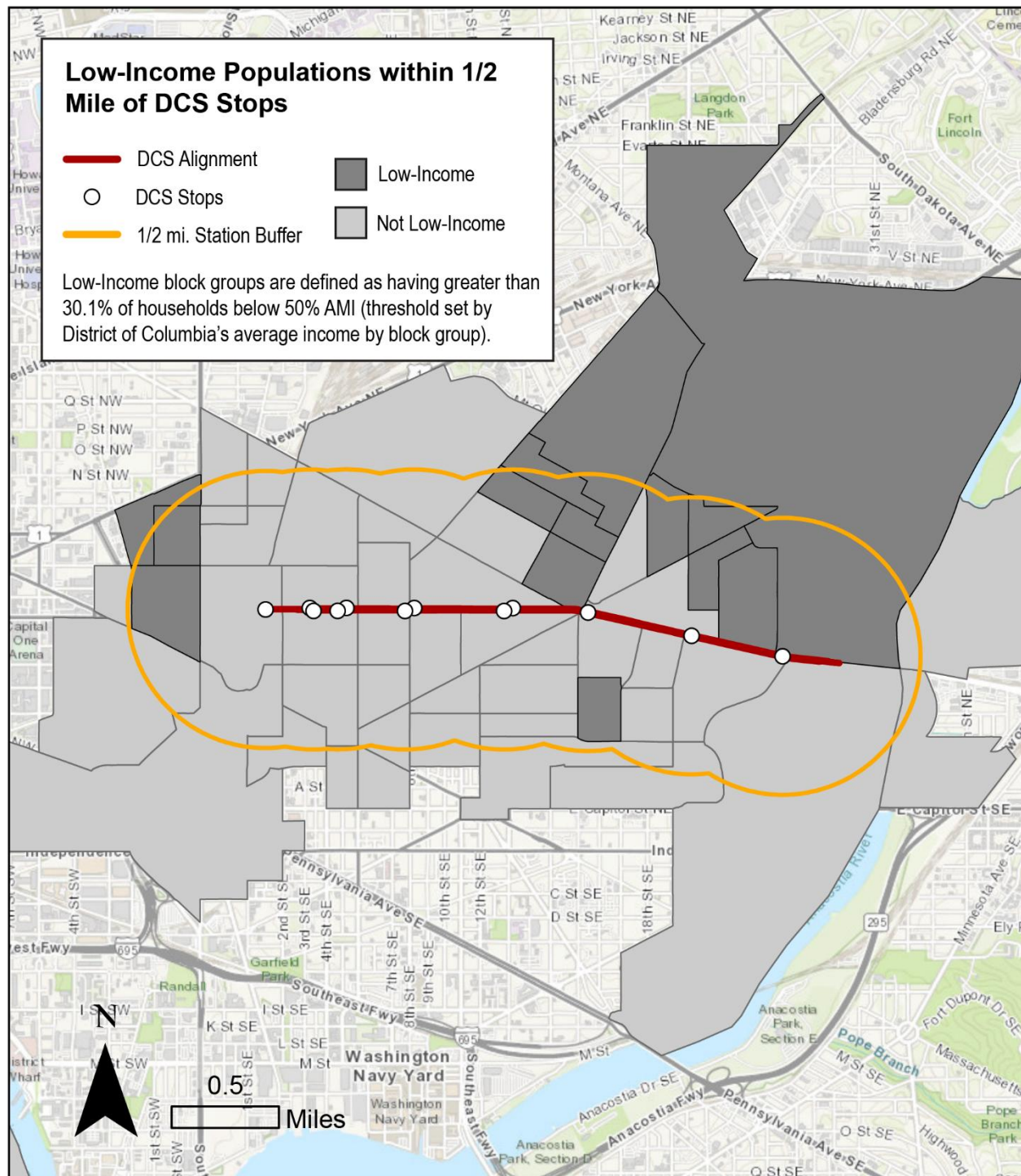


Figure 5-2 Low-Income Block Groups within ½ Mile of DC Streetcar Stations

Low Income and Minority Block Groups within ½ Mile of DC Streetcar Station

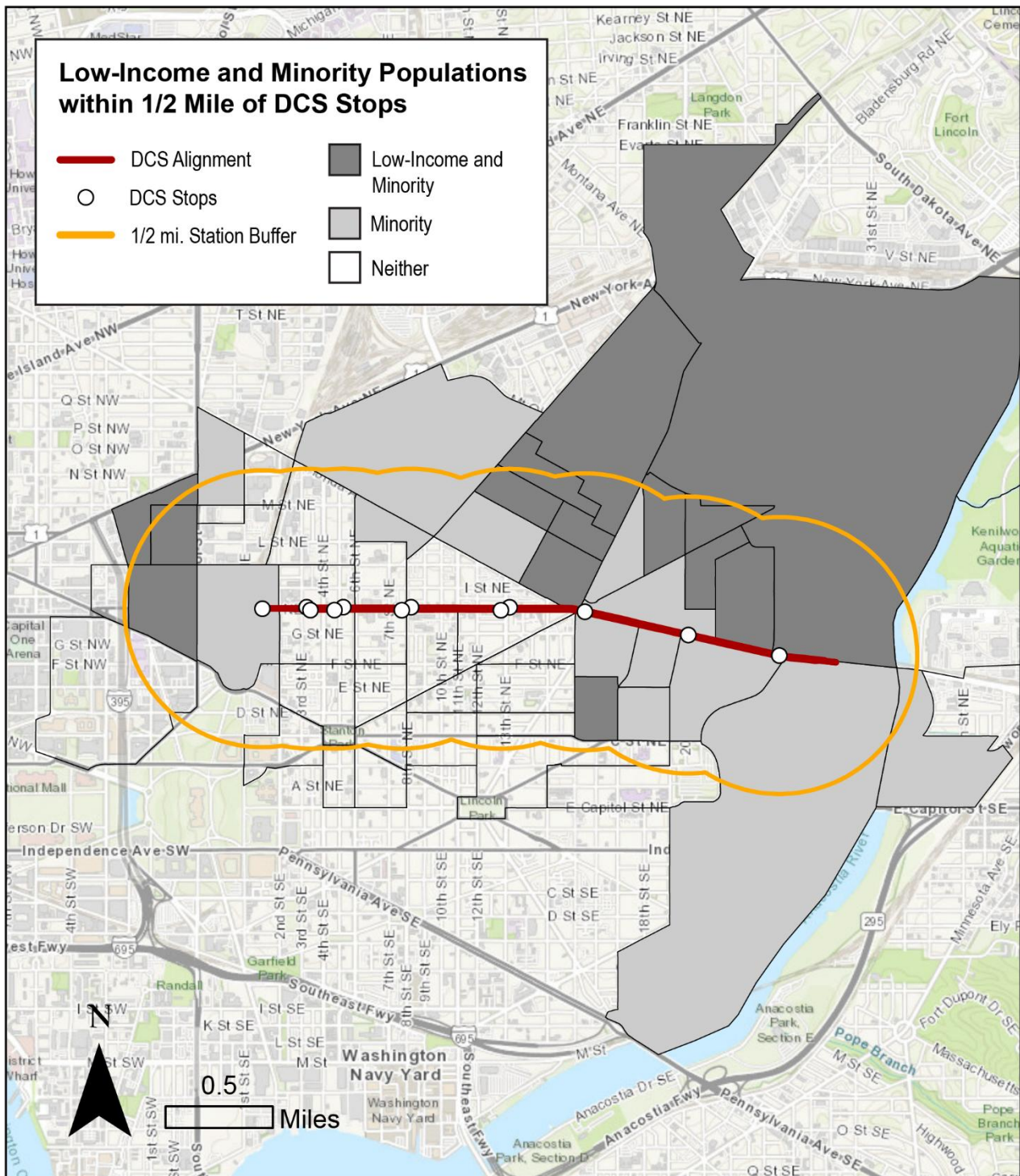


Figure 5-3 Low Income and Minority Block Groups within ½ Mile of DC Streetcar Station