The Need for Suburb-to-Suburb Transit in the DC Region

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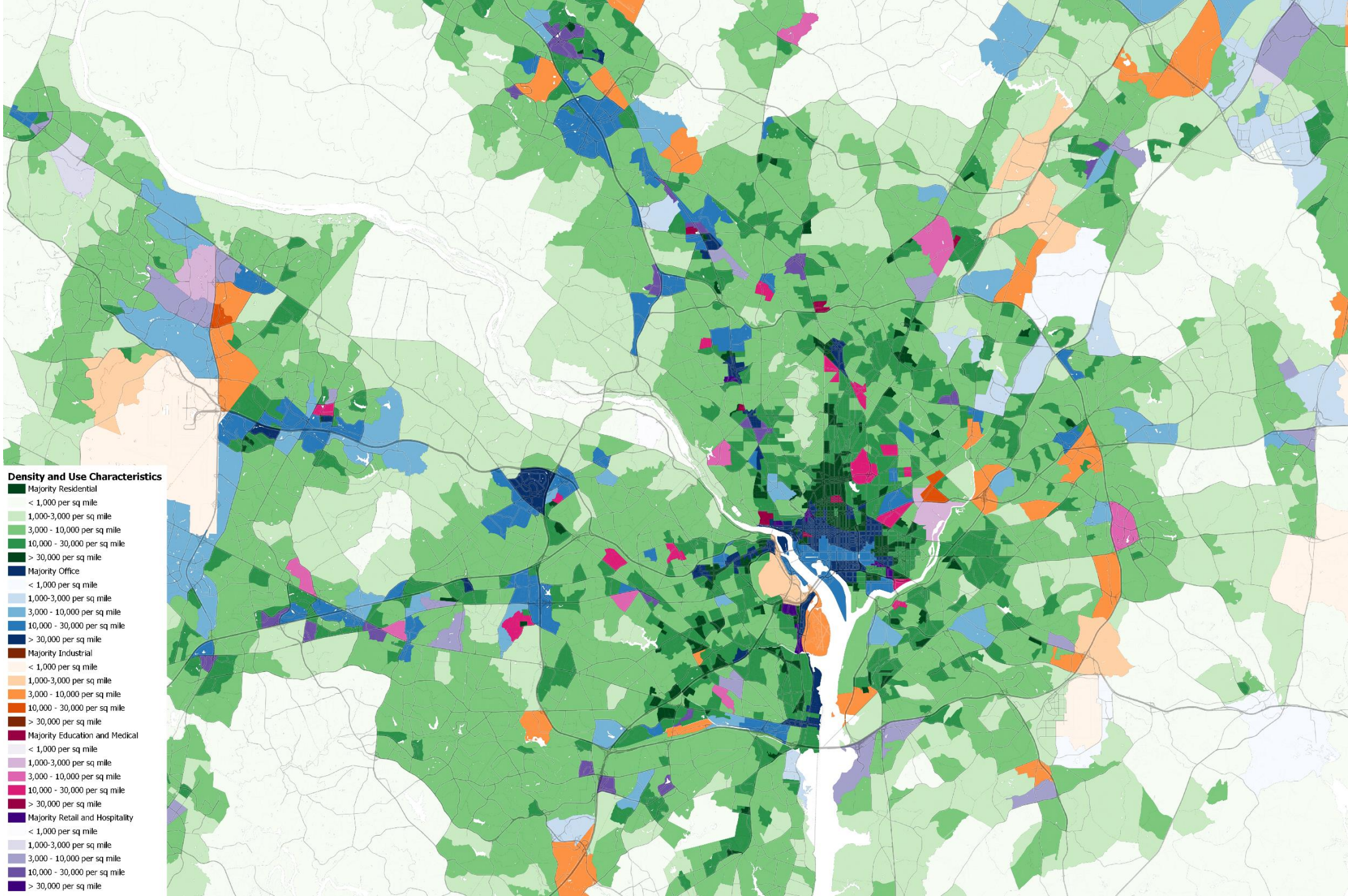
The DC Suburbs Need Better Transit Connections

- Metrorail and much of Metrobus are designed to serve trips into the core.
- The suburbanization of poverty means many suburbanites can’t afford to drive everywhere.
- Gentrification of the core means people who want or need a car-free lifestyle are having to live in the suburbs.
- We can’t eliminate congestion without reducing suburb-suburb driving trips.

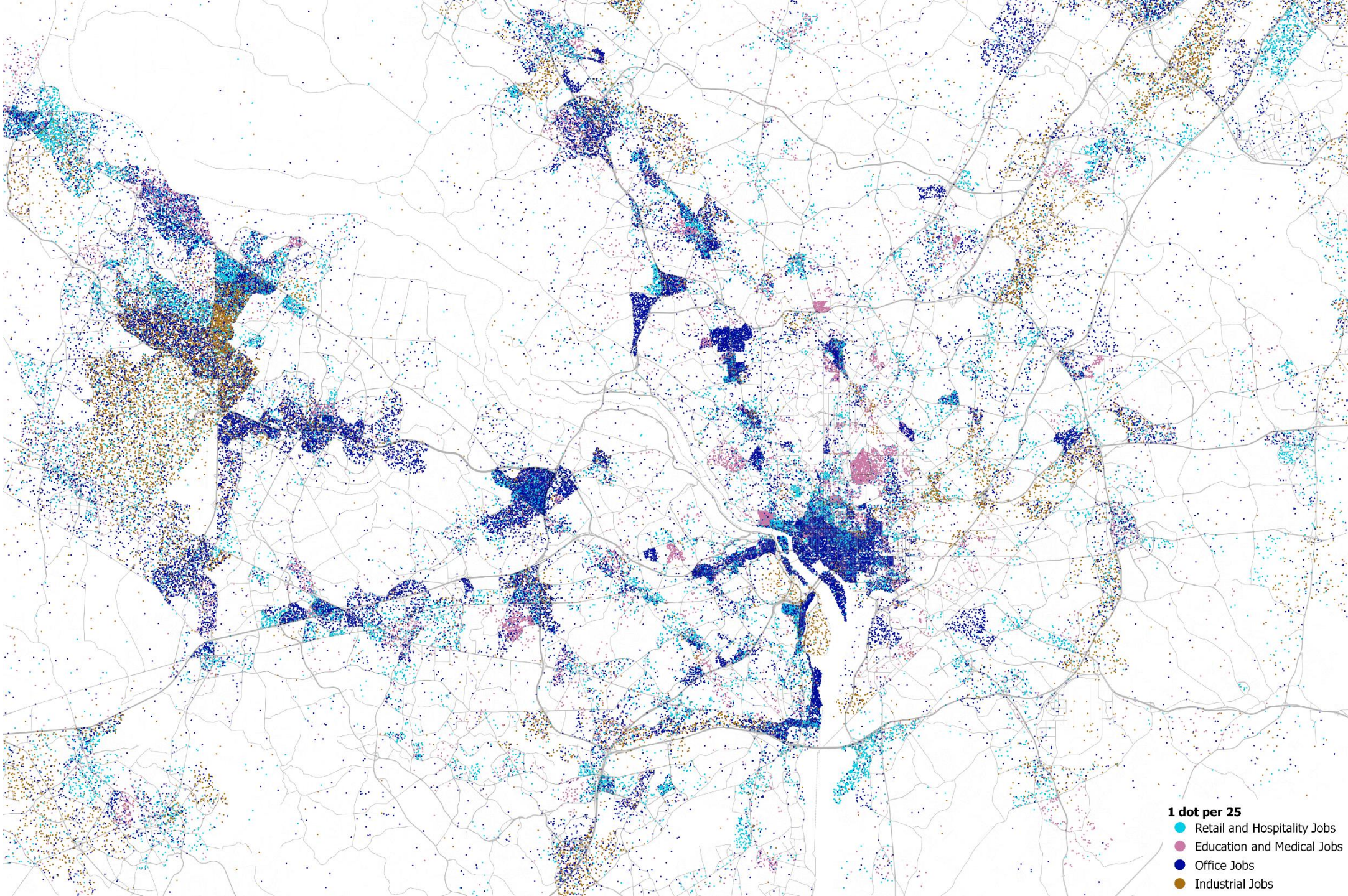
Retail and Medical Destinations Matter

- We often focus on trips to work, because they're easy to measure.
- "Care trips"—trips to do household chores and medical issues—matter!
  - These trip are most often made by women—an equity issue.
  - The person making these trips is less likely to have access to a car than commuters.
- "Care trips" have different characteristics than commute trips:
  - Often involve "trip chaining"—makes frequency more important.
  - Different destinations, often retail, medical, educational.
  - Less likely to match a traditional 9-5 commute.
  - Unlikely to make the same trip regularly; flexibility is more important.
  - These traits are often shared with commutes to low-income jobs.

Density and Land Use in the DC Area



Job Locations in the DC Area



Better Serving non-Work Trips

- Connections to Metrorail are important, but we also need to work on connecting activity centers to each other:
  - Think of the system as a grid: circumferential connections as well as radial.
- We need to make transfers easier:
  - Higher frequency: 15 minutes headways should be thought of as a minimum, not an ideal.
  - Improve bus stop infrastructure at transfer locations: lighting, shelters, countdown clocks.
- We need to take weekend and evening ridership seriously:
  - Service needs to run until around midnight, even in the suburbs.
  - Frequency is important even at off-peak times; especially since people tend to feel less safe waiting long times for a bus after dark.
- Flexibility for riders means an understandable, consistent system:
  - Riders need routes that don’t change their service patterns depending on time of day.
  - More service but fewer service patterns to make the network understandable.

Provide Good Service, and They Will Come

- This is a major circumferential (suburb-to-suburb) arterial in a major North American city.
- What do you think the bus frequency is at rush hour?
- At mid-day?
- At 11pm?

Provide Good Service, and They Will Come

- This is Finch Avenue in Toronto.
- It’s a circumferential arterial that crosses the end of the Yonge Street subway line.
- There is bus service every 5-10 minutes all the way until midnight.
- We need to provide this kind of service if we want the kind of mode share Canadian cities regularly get.

Provide Good Service, and They Will Come

- The Toronto metro area has 6 million people.
- The DC metro area also has 6 million people.
- Toronto’s regional transit mode share for commuters is nearly twice ours.
- In the short term, the fastest way to increase suburban mode share is to run buses frequently and all day.

Provide Good Service, and They Will Come

- Canadian cities are good models:
  - Similar built environment to the US.
  - Much higher transit ridership.
- Seattle has been improving service, and has seen a ridership spike:
  - Bus lanes and priority at signals.
  - Many frequent routes, and maps that make frequency and hours of service clear and explicit.
  - Suburban ridership has grown even faster than in-city ridership.

What We Need

- Transit in the suburbs can’t be treated as “transport of last resort.” This means people need to be able to get to their destinations
  - Quickly.
  - When they need to be there.
  - Without worrying about whether they’ll be able to get back.
- Bus lanes are important on suburban routes; collaborate with DoTs.
- Frequency matters, especially when passengers have to transfer.
  - Studies show 10 minute headways are the cut-off for “frequent” convenience.
  - When that can’t be achieved, still need to minimize wait times.
- Need to have weekend and evening service, especially for care trips.

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