

History of Transportation in Arlington (Pre-1910s–1960s)

Pre-1910s

Before the 1910s, Arlington was made up of small villages on a hilly landscape. Following the retroceding of Arlington County in the 1850s and the continuously growing population, infrastructure construction increased.

1910s–20s

These decades, which included World War I and the beginning of the Great Depression, also resulted in an expansion in Arlington's population and the need for more transportation options.

Aerial photo taken of Clarendon Circle in 1920.
Source: Arlington Historical Society



I | 1916–1918

Federal workforce tripled because of World War I, leading to an increase in Arlington's population

1930s–40s

With the Great Depression still prevalent, large numbers of the African-American population, who fell into debt, migrated from the South to the North. As a result, many African-Americans settled in Arlington County and became further segregated through transportation infrastructure.

A photo of the Queen City neighborhood.
Source: Arlington Historical Society



I | 1942

The Pentagon construction and surrounding roadway network was completed, displacing communities including an African-American neighborhood known as “Queen City”

1940s–60s

World War II sparked the popularity of rail transportation throughout the nation to transport troops and large amounts of materials. Once the war ended in 1945, the government lifted priorities on automobile parts and allowed for them to be used for consumerism. This led to an increase in the use of and demand for automobiles.

Aerial photo of Rosslyn in the 1960s, primarily filled with small businesses and parking spaces.



I | Post-1945

Motor vehicles became more affordable and more widely used, leading to the closure of streetcar companies and the rise of bus companies

III | 1891

The Washington, Arlington & Falls Church Railway Company formed to provide electric railway service

III | 1896

The Washington, Alexandria & Mount Vernon Railway Company extended its Mount Vernon line through Arlington to Washington

I | 1847

Congress retroceded Arlington from Washington, DC, to the Commonwealth of Virginia

Key Milestone

III | 1908

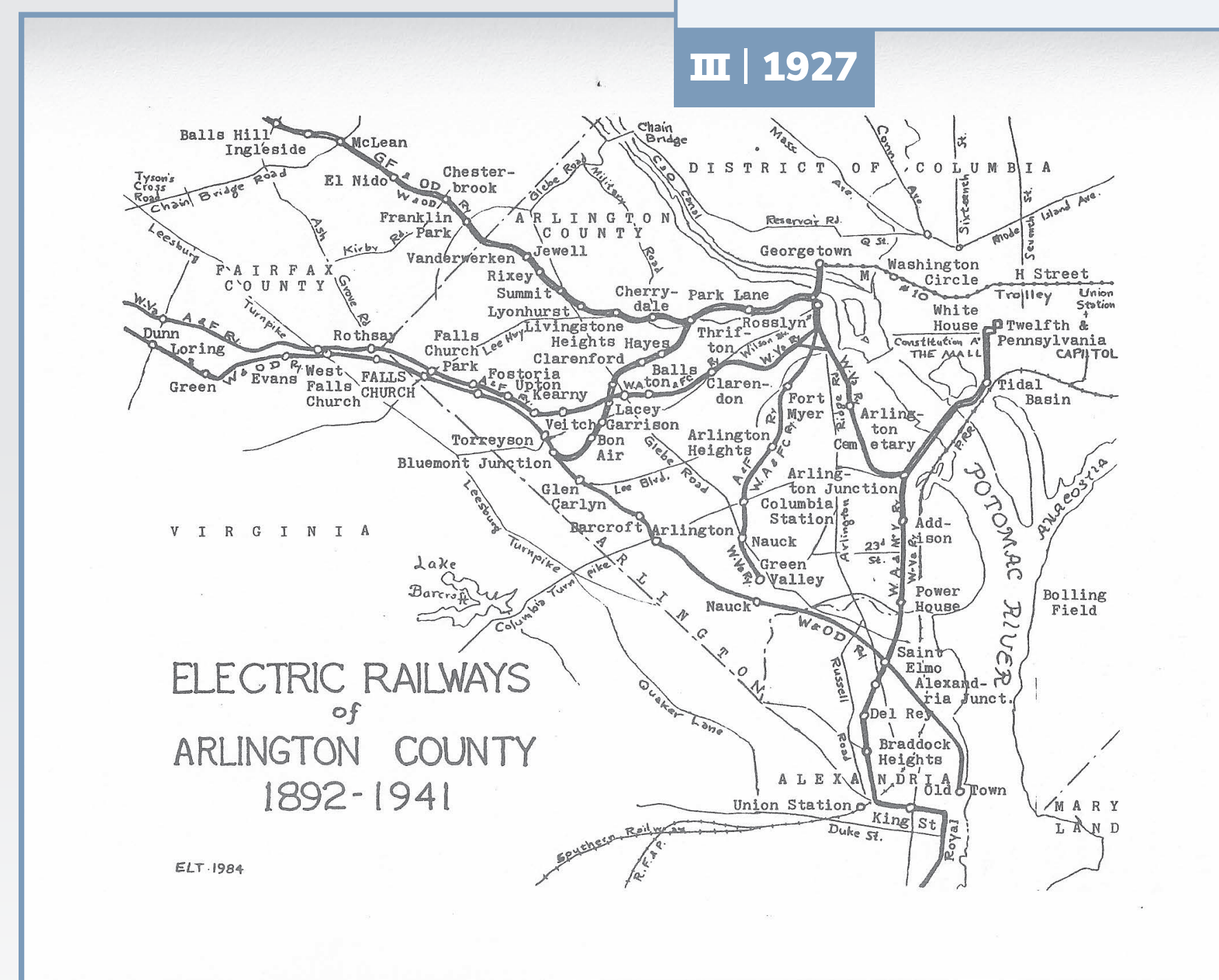
Washington Union Station was constructed, spurring passenger rail growth in the region

III | 1912

Washington and Old Dominion Railroad was formed

III | 1927

The Washington-Virginia Railway went bankrupt, but local Arlington residents formed the Arlington & Fairfax Railway Company to take over the system



III | 1937



Source: National Capital Trolley Museum

Due to ongoing deterioration of infrastructure, the Arlington & Fairfax Railway shut down, but was later purchased by an investor to transform the remaining streetcars into autorailers—which were a combination of trolley streetcars and motorbuses

I | 1941

Arlington adopted its first long-range countywide transportation plan: Major Thoroughfares for Arlington

Key Milestone

Congress authorized a 40,000-mile interstate system; Virginia's system was comprised of 1,070 miles

I | 1956



Aerial photo taken of the intersection of Washington Boulevard, Clarendon Boulevard, and Wilson Boulevard in the 1950s.

Arlington County's first Comprehensive Plan was published, which consisted of the Major Thoroughfare and Collector Streets Plan

I | 1960

Arlington put a \$54 million bond issue on its November ballot to support building a Metro line below the Rosslyn-Ballston corridor. It passed with over 70% support

III | 1968

Legend

- I** Context
- III** Rail Transit
- I** Vehicle
- I** Pedestrian & Micromobility
- I** Technology
- I** Bus Transit
- I** Key Milestone

History of Transportation in Arlington (1970s–2010s)

1970s–80s

1980s–90s

1990s–2000s

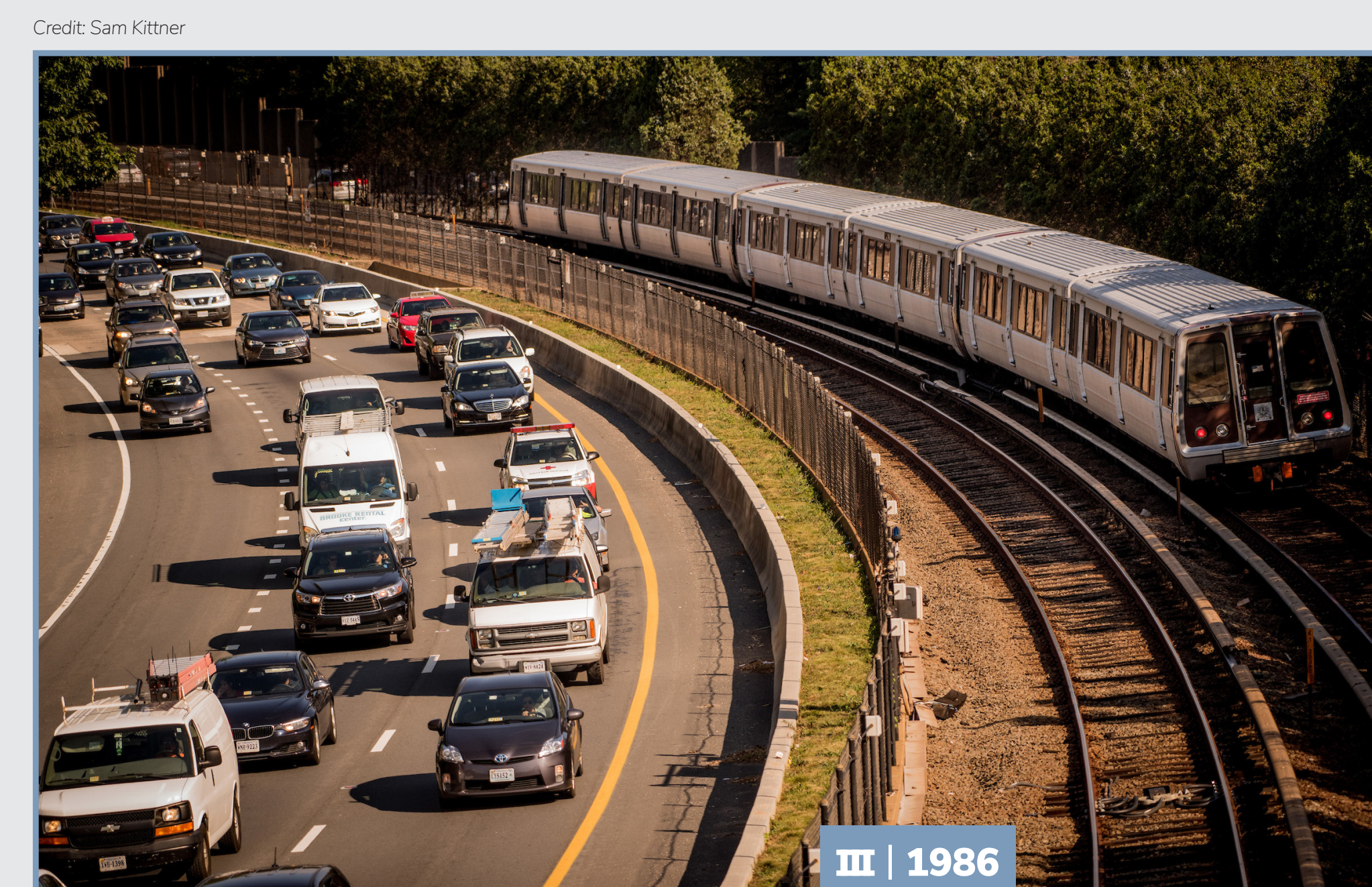
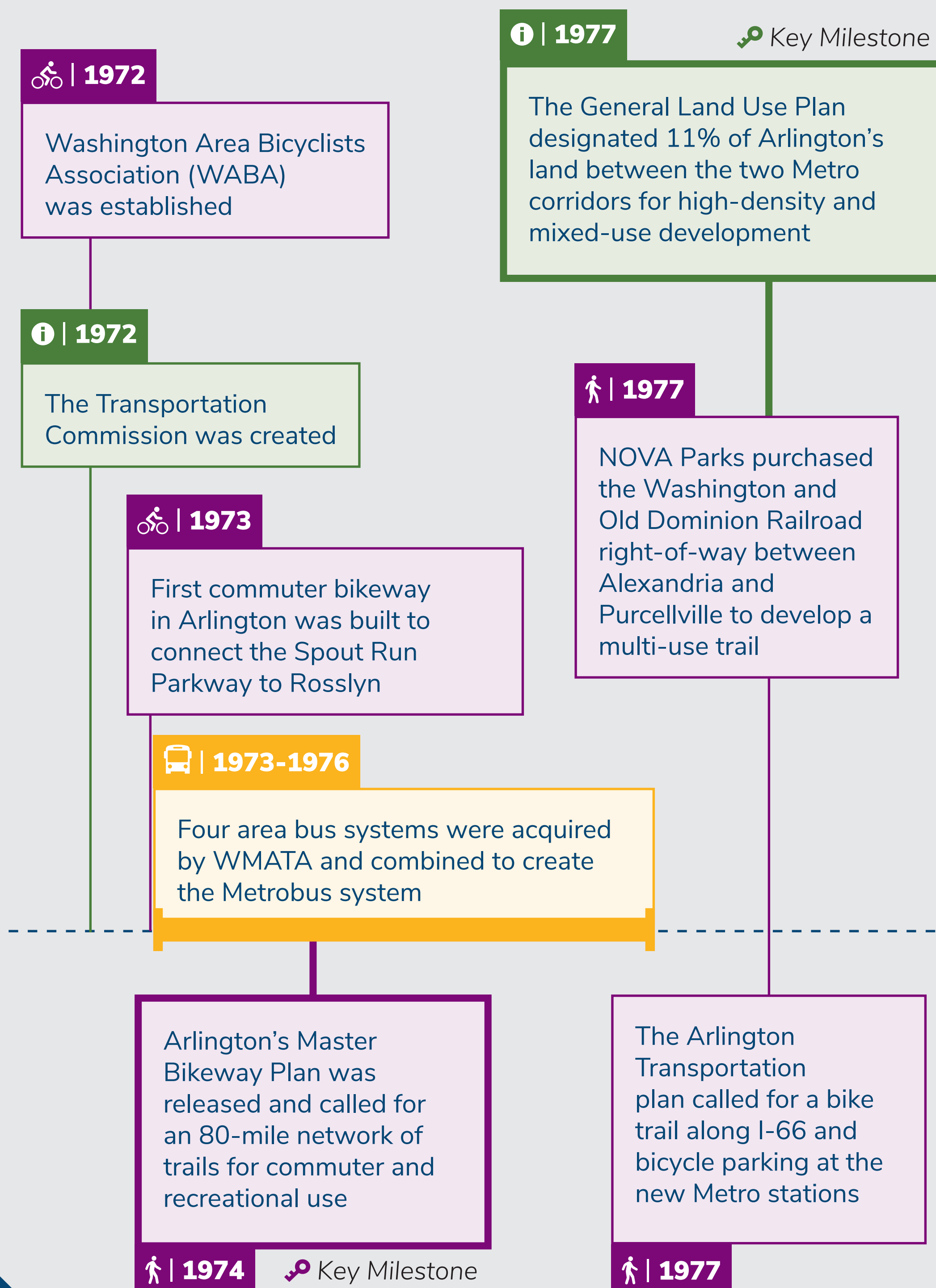
2000s–10s

Increasing gas prices and the Emergency Highway Energy Conservation Act of 1974 spur a nationwide effort to reduce oil consumption. Furthermore, there was a national focus on public transportation to provide people options other than driving.

In 1982, President Reagan created an 80/20 policy that allotted 80 percent of the Federal Highway Trust Fund to highways, while the rest would be allotted to public transportation projects.

This decade featured rapid growth in technology that sparked transportation improvements, such as GPS, modern transit fare cards, and cell phones. The passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 helped bring about a focus on physical accessibility.

This decade began a shift toward greater use of more renewable energy sources, since natural resources could not keep up with the demand. As a result, hybrid automobiles became a popular alternative over gas-powered automobiles. Technological advancements led to a spark in the use of intelligent transportation systems (ITS) to monitor and manage traffic.



Credit: Sam Kittner

bus | 1982 **Key Milestone**

I-66 was built after 30 years of planning

III | 1986 **Key Milestone**

Metrorail started service in the median of I-66 between Ballston and Vienna

bicycle | 1982 **Key Milestone**

The Custis Trail along I-66 opened between Rosslyn and Falls Church

bus | 1984

Dulles Access Road from I-66 was built

i | 1986

The Major Thoroughfare and Collector Streets Plan was replaced by the Master Transportation Plan

bicycle | 1988

The National Park Service extended the Mount Vernon Trail north to connect to the end of the Custis Trail in Rosslyn, creating a continuous connection along the Potomac River waterfront

III | 1991 **Key Milestone**

Five Metrorail lines were opened: Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, and Blue

bicycle | 1994

\$7.3 million was allocated to the Arlington Bicycle Transportation Plan

bus | 1990

Arlington Subway Shuttle Taxi (SST) began serving the south-central portion of Metrobus Route 22, which now encompasses Ballston, Shirlington, and Pentagon City

i | 1990

The Americans with Disabilities Act was passed, laying the groundwork for transformative improvements to pedestrian connectivity, transit access, and more

bus | 1990

Trolley replica buses, which were equipped with lifts to assist persons with disabilities, were implemented throughout Crystal City

Credit: Jonathan Kozowyk



bus | 1998 **Key Milestone**

Arlington Transit (ART) was launched

Key Milestone

II | 2003 **Key Milestone**

SCOOT-based traffic adaptive signal control subsystem was implemented to manage 65 traffic signals



bus | 2009-2013

ART set a goal for reducing its carbon footprint by transitioning their fleet to CNG buses

i | 2004-2010

The County Board tasked County staff to undertake a complete revision of the County's Master Transportation Plan. Portions of these updates were adopted on a rolling basis

II | 2005

Google Maps for desktop was launched

II | 2005

Google Maps for mobile was launched and available on Blackberry, Palm, and other mobile devices. Google Maps for Android and iOS/iPhone launched in 2008 and 2012, respectively

i | 2008

The Recession occurred, causing gas prices to increase, which led to more public transportation use

Are there other key events in Arlington's transportation history that aren't shown?

History (and Future) of Transportation in Arlington (2010s-Present)

2010s–Present

The COVID-19 Pandemic upended the ways people travel and use transportation. During the pandemic, many people worked from home. Even after the pandemic, commuters experienced a substantially different commute than before, with 72% of Arlington commuters reporting a change in commute.



🚌 | 2016

Arlington's section of the Crystal City-Potomac Yard Transitway (branded as Metroway) opens

🚶 | 2022

Arlington was named a Platinum-level Walk Friendly Community

🚲 | 2024

Arlington was named a Gold Level Bicycle Friendly Community by the League of American Bicyclists

🚊 | 2022

The second phase of the Metrorail's Silver Line was completed with six stations

🚲 | 2018

Dockless bikes and e-scooters first allowed in Arlington as part of a 9-month trial

📍 Key Milestone



📍 | 2021

The first five-year Vision Zero Action Plan was adopted in May 2021; the Action Plan outlines a set of actions that Arlington County and partners will take toward achieving zero transportation-related deaths and serious injuries by 2030

📍 | 2020

A resident travel survey was conducted and concluded the percentage of residents working from home the entire week increased from 4% to 52% during the pandemic

🚗 | 2017

The I-66 Express Lanes Inside the Beltway began full operation

🚊 | 2014

The first phase of the Metrorail's Silver Line was opened with five stations

🚗 | 2014

The Virginia I-495 Express Lanes opened, marking a first in Northern Virginia for dynamically priced tolls and HOV/transit options

🚗 | 2011

Uber and Lyft begin on-demand ride-hailing operations in the Washington, DC area

Legend

- 📍 Context
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- 🚶🚲 Pedestrian & Micromobility
- 📱 Technology
- 🚌 Bus Transit
- 📍 Key Milestone

The Future...

What future accomplishments would you like to see the new transportation plan support?

How would you write Arlington's transportation future?

