

Where do you live?

Suburbs or D.C.?

Park and Ride

Those living in the suburbs might think that taking Metro in from the farthest stop would save a lot of money, but it's not the case. The farther away you are from the Metro station, the gap in the cost of driving vs. riding narrows, so much so that it might behoove you to drive every once in a while.

Calculation:

Here's a scenario using Metro's Savings Calculator to determine the cost of driving between Metro Center and Huntington.

It would cost **\$400/month** to commute by car, including gas and parking costs, according to AAA Mid-Atlantic.

Compare that with \$344, the monthly cost of riding Metrorail from Huntington after paying to park at the station. With daily parking at Huntington costing \$4.50, a round-trip rush-hour commute of \$7.70 and the cost to drive to the departure station, the numbers add up.

The daily difference between riding and driving is **\$2 to \$3.**

Which one will save you time? Will you be more comfortable in traffic than on the train?

Conclusion

Scenarios vary, but Metro is not the obvious choice because savings are negligible. Visit Metro's Savings Calculator to crunch your numbers.



Singles in the City

There's a reason why many Washingtonians don't have cars: They're expensive. "The cheapest part of owning a car is the gas; people never believe it," said John Townsend II of AAA Mid-Atlantic. "Look at the cost of parking, the average cost of operating the car per mile, insurance, maintenance — all those things factor into owning a car." According to AAA, in 2011, the average cost of owning a sedan rose to \$8,776 per year, or 58.5 cents per mile based on driving 15,000 miles a year. How badly do you need one?

Calculation:

Let's say you live in Clarendon and want to get to Metro Center.

\$4/day
X **21 workdays**
= **\$84 spent**
on your Metro commute in June

Before you add up the cost of gas, maintenance, insurance and wear-and-tear on your car, contrast that \$84 with the cost of parking downtown:

"The average cost to park in an unreserved parking space in downtown Washington is \$240 per month."
— John Townsend II of AAA Mid-Atlantic.

That means by riding Metro, you'll save more than \$150 a month on parking alone.

Conclusion

If you have the option of walking to a Metro station and using Metrorail for your commute, you're saving a significant amount of money.

Does Metro Save You Money?

The answer to the question seems obvious. Of course a \$1.95 ride from Virginia to Metro Center is cheaper than the cost of parking downtown. But the question becomes more complicated when you park at a Metro station to ride in or you have free or reduced parking at work. For many Washingtonians, the question doesn't matter. "Thirty percent of persons in D.C. do not own a car," said John Townsend II of AAA Mid-Atlantic. "We have one of the largest ratios of people who don't own cars in the country." For those people, public transportation is a must. But for the 70 percent of us who own cars and have to decide whether to drive or take Metro, there are ways to calculate the costs. You might be surprised by the results. KATHERINE BOYLE (THE WASHINGTON POST)

Other Factors

► **Carpooling and Kiss and Ride:** Those who can avoid parking may have the best options. Townsend recommends Metro's Kiss and Rides — where drivers can discharge and pick up passengers — for people who want to see savings skyrocket. Alternatively, carpooling can cut costs in half, including the price of Metro station parking.

► **Time:** Is it quicker to drive or take Metro? That depends on your route and the hours. During non-rush-hour times, it's often more efficient to drive. Remember, during nonpeak hours, you'll probably wait longer for a train.

The Bottom Line: Some days, it might be worth shelling out a few extra dollars to take the car. Annually, Metro is cheaper for people commuting into the District. But scenarios vary, and sometimes savings are negligible, making Metro not the always-obvious choice. **Use WMATA's Savings Calculator (at WMATA.com under "Rider Tools") to decide whether Metro can save you money, time and headaches.**