

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

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Memorandum

TO: Transportation Planning Board

FROM: Catherine M. Hudgins
Chair, TPB Access for All (AFA) Advisory Committee
Supervisor, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT: AFA Comments on 2010 Financially-Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan and General Transportation-Related Concerns of the Committee

DATE: October 20, 2010

The TPB Access for All Advisory (AFA) Committee received a presentation on the significant changes to the Draft 2010 Financially Constrained Long Range Transportation Plan (CLRP) at its July 8, 2010 meeting. During a roundtable discussion, the AFA provided a few comments on projects in the plan, and raised several other concerns about how the needs of people the AFA represents – low-income communities, minority communities and people with disabilities – can be better accounted for in the transportation planning process at the regional and local levels. The AFA is submitting the following comments based on discussion at the July 8, 2010 AFA meeting and recent AFA reports.

Specific Comments on New Projects and Significant Changes in the CLRP

Given that transportation funding is so tight, the AFA expressed concern that funding for some of the new CLRP projects could be spent in more efficient ways.

- The AFA wanted to know how implementing agencies take into consideration the cost and benefits of investing in construction projects with ongoing maintenance costs versus investing in facility enhancements (i.e., the D.C. Streetcars and the I-270 extension).
- The AFA expressed concern that Maryland is proposing to extend highway improvements as part of a \$3.4 billion project on I-270/US 15 from Shady Grove Metro Station to Biggs Ford Rd and recommended that transportation demand management (TDM) strategies be considered before expensive expansions are proposed.

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- The AFA would like to see more pedestrian, bicycle and transit improvements in the CLRP and urges local jurisdictions to make use of the Regional Bus Stop Inventory to improve bus stops for people with disabilities.

General Comments on Transportation-Related Concerns

The AFA recommended that the D.C., Maryland and Virginia Departments of Transportation (DOTs) be more cognizant of how construction projects can block pedestrian access for persons with disabilities.

- For example, people with disabilities are having difficulty navigating 14th Street NW due to construction in the Columbia Heights neighborhood of Washington, DC.

The AFA is very concerned about the MetroAccess fare increase, service reductions and eligibility changes and continues to recommend changes to the contract structure to address long-standing inefficiencies.

- On September 16, the AFA held a special meeting on concerns with MetroAccess eligibility changes, including conditional eligibility, trip-by- trip denials, the appeals process and long call center hold times. The AFA recommends that;
 - WMATA implement eligibility changes judiciously, while both tailoring customer assessments and ensuring fairness in the new process;
 - WMATA improve communications with customers on all program changes so customers have a clearer understanding about what to expect; and
 - The AFA follow-up on the implementation on the changes in six to nine months.
- MetroAccess customers will likely find it more difficult to meet their daily transportation needs given the recent fare increases, service reductions and eligibility changes.
 - The AFA recommends that an independent study be conducted in one year on how these changes impacted MetroAccess customers and persons with disabilities.
- Since 2008 one of the AFA's priority MetroAccess recommendations is that WMATA restructure the contract to lessen the concentration of responsibilities and operating functions in any one company. Most recently, this recommendation was made via an AFA letter to the WMATA Board in April.
 - The AFA requests a briefing from WMATA about plans for the current MV Transportation contract which expires in January 2011 and plans for the next contract.

The AFA supports coordinated land use and transportation planning.

- AFA members support the coordination of transportation and land use planning across the region so that transit and walking are viable options to satisfy more of the travel needs of people with disabilities, low-income communities and minority communities.