

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

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Memorandum

TO: Transportation Planning Board

FROM: Patrick Wojahn
Chair, TPB Access for All (AFA) Advisory Committee
College Park City Council

SUBJECT: AFA Comments on 2012 Draft Financially-Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan and General Transportation-Related Concerns of the Committee

DATE: June 13, 2012

The TPB Access for All Advisory (AFA) Committee received a presentation on the significant changes to the Draft 2012 Financially Constrained Long Range Transportation Plan (CLRP) at its May 3, 2012 meeting. During a roundtable discussion, the AFA provided the following comments on projects in the plan, and raised several other concerns about issues for low-income communities, minority communities and people with disabilities and suggestions to address these issues at the regional and local level. The AFA is submitting the following comments based on discussion at the May meeting and other discussions during AFA meetings in 2012.

Comments on New Projects and Significant Changes in the CLRP

The AFA supports public transportation options that are accessible and affordable.

- The AFA approves of the many public transportation projects included in the 2012 CLRP and stresses the importance of ensuring that these options are accessible and affordable to low-income communities and people with disabilities.
- The AFA would also like to ensure that low fares and accessibility remain a priority as these projects proceed.

The AFA requested clarification of the costs, benefits, and funding of specific CLRP projects.

- The AFA raised a question about how new transit projects, such as the proposed BRT from Van Dorn to Pentagon Metrorail stations, may impact the funding of other large-scale transit projects, such as the Silver Line Phase II.

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- The committee raised a concern about what the costs and benefits are of providing Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) or rail service in corridors where bus transit already exists, also referring to the Van Dorn to Pentagon Metrorail stations.
- More generally, the AFA asked for an explanation of what happens to the other projects in the plan when new projects are added. Members asked if there was really funding for all of these projects.

General Comments on Transportation-Related Concerns

The AFA has expressed strong opposition to fare increases on MetroBus, MetroRail and MetroAccess that were approved as part of WMATA's FY2013 budget.

- The AFA opposes increasing the surcharge for using paper fare-cards on MetroRail because this could significantly disadvantage people with limited incomes throughout the region.
- The AFA opposes increasing the cash payment surcharge on MetroBus because this will significantly disadvantage riders who are reliant on cash payments. The surcharge increase will have significant impacts specifically on low-income and minority riders since nearly half of MetroBus riders who pay with cash are low-income residents, and a majority are minority residents.
- The AFA strongly opposes raising MetroAccess fares, and recommends that WMATA should restructure the MetroAccess fare system to simplify and lower rates. The current MetroAccess fares are making it difficult for people reliant on paratransit service to meet their daily transportation needs and the increase will exacerbate the problem. With the fare increase implemented last year, many MetroAccess users have found it difficult to pay for the much needed service.

The AFA expressed concern about the District Department of Transportation's (DDOT) red top meter program, which has recently been suspended.

- There has been a lack of communications from DDOT to the disability community concerning the details and the suspension of the red top meter program. Persons with disabilities and advocacy organizations were not told why the program was suspended, or when it might come back online.
- There doesn't seem to be much opportunity for public input on the program, especially from those with disabilities.
- When the program was in place, there were too few meters that were not well distributed throughout the city.
- In addition, many of the meters that are in place are hard to access by people with mobility limitations. These meters should to accessible by all potential users.

As WMATA evaluates proposals responding the new MetroAccess RFP, the AFA recommends that particular attention should be paid to the following:

- The MetroAccess contract(s) should be structured in such a way to ensure clear lines of communication, reporting and responsibility between scheduling, dispatching, the call center and the transportation vendors.
- If the “Multiple Contractor with a Broker” model is utilized, the contract should be written so that the broker is truly independent of conflicting considerations and acts on behalf of Metro. The broker should not operate any MetroAccess service.
- The transition to the new paratransit business model and contractors should be seamless, and there should be no interruptions in service.

The AFA applauds the TPB’s efforts to develop guidance for complete streets policies throughout the region.

- Providing safe and accessible pedestrian infrastructure is necessary to accommodate all road users throughout the region. This is especially important to people with disabilities, including those who use wheelchairs, or have other mobility or visual impairments. This policy guidance is a great step in the direction of making all transportation infrastructure compliant with ADAAG standards (ADA Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities).
- The AFA would like to see the following strategies for addressing safe and accessible pedestrian infrastructure included in complete streets policies throughout the region:
 - Accessible pedestrian signals, markings, and signage at intersections.
 - Audible, visual, and vibro-tactile information features at bus stop and bus bays;
 - Adequate crossing times at intersections to allow people with disabilities and older adults to safely cross; and
 - The maintenance of safe pedestrian access for people with visual and physical disabilities as roadways are being constructed or upgraded.