

MAYOR'S DOWNTOWN CONGESTION TASK FORCE

DRAFT FINAL REPORT

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Government of the District of Columbia
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Introduction

Downtown is the economic engine of the District. Downtown businesses generate 30% of DC's economic output and approximately 350,000 people work in the greater downtown each day. In the past five years alone, 50,000 new jobs have been added in downtown. Additionally, new investments in residential, entertainment, and cultural attractions are increasing the number of people who live downtown or come to visit. With this success comes new pressure on our transportation system. Maintaining the operation of the system is critical to ensuring economic competitiveness both downtown and throughout the District so that this growth can continue.

On May 6, 2004, Mayor Williams convened the Downtown Congestion Management Task Force to consider the problems of congestion in the downtown, develop and analyze a range of potential solutions, and present recommendations for action. With the goal of better managing congestion and supporting economic development, the Task Force has examined a wide range of possible responses to existing transportation conditions. Broadly categorized, the strategies recommended for implementation fall into three groups. There are quick fixes, such as the immediate hiring of Traffic Control Officers to better manage traffic at critical points in the transportation systems. There are long-term improvements, such as expanding transit capacity and optimizing the allocation of roadway space. Although the full benefits of these recommendations will not be felt immediately, planning and research to properly implement these kinds of improvements must begin in the short-term. Finally, there are system changes, some of which can be implemented within a relatively short time frame. These include the establishment of a new Office of Motor Carriers within the District Department of Transportation and the assumption of expanded transportation management duties by the existing Business Improvement Districts.

This report summarizes the proceedings of the Task Force to date and presents the recommendations presented at the Task Force meeting of November 22, 2004. A full list of participants can be found in the appendix.

Review of Progress to Date

Initial identification of problems and potential solutions

The work of the Task Force began with an assessment of current challenges and opportunities. Volpe Center staff interviewed individual members of the Task Force to get their opinions on transportation problems in downtown Washington and potential solutions. The Downtown DC Business Improvement District also conducted an online poll of its membership on these issues. Comments from the interviews and survey tended to highlight similar transportation problems. Among the most commonly cited were:

- Traffic delays caused by double-parking, improper loading and unloading, and blocked intersections
- A need for improved public transportation
- Inadequate short-term parking and delays caused by vehicles circling for parking
- Delays at traffic signals
- Delays caused by street closures and motorcades

In geographic terms, respondents to the online poll reported experiencing the biggest problems on Constitution and Connecticut avenues; 14th and 18th Streets; and H, I, K, and L Streets north of the White House.

At this stage, there was no overall consensus on how to approach the congestion problems downtown, but there were several potential strategies that were mentioned repeatedly:

- Stepped-up enforcement of traffic and parking rules, possibly using a contingent of civilian (non-sworn) traffic control officers
- Enhancements to the transit system, such as additional Metrorail cars, better customer information, light rail lines, dedicated bus lanes and signal priority, repairs to the escalators and elevators, and transit-oriented development around outlying Metro stations
- Improved conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists, including a more attractive walking environment and more bicycle lanes and facilities
- Elements of Intelligent Transportation Systems, particularly traffic signal synchronization
- Better traveler information, such as information on motorcades and festivals and general traffic updates
- Focusing more of the parking supply on short-term rather than long-term parking

Two other strategies frequently mentioned at this stage – transportation demand management and downtown congestion charging – generated strong opinions on both sides.

Committees

After the initial meeting, Task Force members were divided into topic-area committees in order to study relevant transportation issues in more detail and discuss potential strategies. The five committees were:

- Motor Carriers
- Parking
- Pricing
- Traffic Operations
- Transit

Each committee was co-chaired by a member of the Council of the District of Columbia and by a private sector Task Force member. Most committees met two or three times (some met 4 or 5 times) over the course of May and June to research and discuss potential strategies; the following chart provides a summary of the range of topic areas addressed within each committee.

Committee	Range of topics discussed at meetings
Motor Carriers	Developing better systems for accommodating deliveries and tour buses; citywide truck routes; streamlining construction permitting; re-thinking the Downtown Circulator; master plan for freight movement; adopting International Fuel Tax Agreement in D.C.; real-time information
Parking	Increasing short-term parking availability; changes to parking requirements in zoning code; extending hours of operation for private garages; shared parking; increasing enforcement of on-street parking; variable pricing at WMATA stations; improved parking information; dynamic pricing of on-street spaces
Pricing	Imposing peak-hour roadway charges downtown; developing regional HOT lane network; applying market-based pricing to on-street parking and loading zones; improving traveler information; promoting pay-as-you-drive car insurance and location efficient mortgages
Traffic Operations	Optimizing traffic flow using existing infrastructure; improving intersection control and incident response; increasing traffic/parking enforcement; managing construction-related closures; improving pedestrian safety; changing the allocation of roadway lanes; improving flow through signal timing and turn restrictions; re-opening E Street
Transit	Acquiring additional transit vehicles and maintenance facilities; Downtown Circulator; bus signal priority; K Street transitway and dedicated transit lanes; employer-based transit benefit programs; changes to parking pricing; improving traffic enforcement and intersection control; changing the regional funding mechanism for WMATA; research on new transit technologies and partnerships

As the chart shows, each committee looked at a wide range of potential solutions, including many that were innovative or controversial. Despite differences of opinion, each committee worked diligently to build consensus on a core set of recommendations

that could move forward. In preparation for the July meeting of the full Task Force, each committee also prioritized its recommendations and prepared summaries for presentation.

Though each committee worked independently, almost all of the recommendations that were forwarded by the committees fell under one of five themes, or major action areas:

- **Making public transportation a more efficient and attractive option**
- **Optimizing downtown traffic circulation patterns**
- **Improving the management of curbside space**
- **Improving the management of on- and off-street parking**
- **Enabling smarter travel choices**

July meeting

At the July meeting of the full Task Force, members were assigned to one of these five major action areas. Each working group discussed the proposals coming forward from the committees and discussed whether to approve and/or modify them. In the process, they also noted recommendations that were potentially complementary or contradictory, worked to resolve any incongruities, and combined overlapping recommendations into a consolidated package of strategies. (A few recommendations were re-grouped to better match their topic).

November meeting

The Task Force's work and final recommendations were formally presented to the Mayor at the November meeting. Two other elected officials on the Task Force – Carol Schwartz of the Council of the District of Columbia and Eleanor Holmes Norton of the U.S. House of Representatives – were also present for a briefing on the recommendations. The Task Force's final recommendations are summarized in the charts beginning on Page 8, and presented in more detail in the narrative beginning on Page 13.

Next Steps

Members of the public will have an opportunity to comment on the recommendations and to provide additional feedback at a public meeting on December 14.

Mayor Williams has already begun to plan for the implementation of a number of the near-term recommendations, including posting intersection control aides at key downtown locations and eliminating free parking at DC government agencies. The Mayor will also be working with the DC Council to develop legislation allowing DDOT to institute market-based pricing at curbside loading zones and parking spaces. A package of legislative changes will be proposed in order to provide for implementation of recommendations.

Data collection and “best practices” research are also ongoing in support of some of the longer-term recommendations, including work to study how downtown circulation patterns and lane usage can be improved. Over the longer term, implementing the recommendations will require a mixture of capital investment (particularly for transit) and institutional changes (e.g. with the establishment of an Office of Motor Carriers).

An annual transportation report may be an appropriate method of tracking the progress of the recommendations found within this report and the larger issues they are intended to address.

Summary Charts – Recommendations

I. Make public transportation a more efficient and attractive option

Recommendation	Action Items		
	Short-Term – 6 months	Medium-Term - 6 to 24 months	Long-Term – 2+ years
I-1. Improve internal public transit circulation.	<p>Begin service on the Downtown Circulator.</p> <p>Evaluate and select a design alternative for the K Street transitway.</p> <p>Begin coordinating with other agencies to select appropriate transit signal priority technologies and locations for installation.</p>	<p>Evaluate circulator routes and revise as appropriate.</p> <p>Finalize design for K Street transitway; secure construction funding.</p> <p>Procure and install transit signal priority equipment.</p>	<p>Plan and implement Phase II of circulator service.</p> <p>Begin construction of the K Street transitway.</p>
I-2. Increase supply of transit.	<p>Implement the regional agreement to allow purchase of additional Metrorail cars.</p>	<p>Develop strategies for funding additional Metro improvements.</p>	<p>Begin operation of 8-car trains during periods of greatest ridership.</p>
I-3. Pursue new transit technologies and partnerships.	<p>DDOT to consider all bid proposals, including those of private bus operators, for carrying out some elements of the circulator service.</p>		
I-4. Dedicated regional funding source for Metro and additional federal role.	<p>Work with MWCOC, the federal government, and the private sector to develop options for improving Metro's funding arrangements.</p>	<p>Secure agreement with federal government for ongoing financial commitment.</p>	

II: Optimize downtown traffic circulation patterns

Recommendation	Action Items		
	Short-Term – 6 months	Medium-Term - 6 to 24 months	Long-Term – 2+ years
II-1. Expand intersection management and traffic enforcement to improve operations and safety for motor vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles.	Recruit and assign traffic control staff and develop the administrative structure and operating procedures for this staff. Authorize peak-period surcharges on traffic fines.	Complete citywide installation of countdown pedestrian signals. Implement other improvements to intersection operation and safety.	Continually monitor intersection operations and safety.
II-2. Optimize overall downtown circulation and assess competing needs for roadway space.	Collect additional data and develop travel modeling to allow for the assessment of the effects of changes to the allocation of roadway space for various uses. Conduct dialogue on options for re-opening E Street to motor vehicle traffic.	Develop and test the effects of concepts that re-allocate the use of street space across the Downtown that will maximize travel efficiency and safety within and across modes.	Implement changes to the use of street space and/or traffic control to enhance travel efficiency and safety.
II-3. Designated Motor Carrier Routes (Trucks and Buses).	DDOT and the Stakeholder Advisory Committee will study recommendations for preferred truck and bus routes.	Seek final input from business and motor carrier community on draft routes. Decide on routes; design and implement signage; inform motor carriers.	
II-4. Develop multimodal traveler information systems and improve incident clearance.	Enhance existing internet and radio systems.	Participate in regional ATIS planning process.	Deploy multimodal, regional ATIS. Use best practices research to set performance targets for incident clearance.
II-5. Improve conditions for pedestrians.	Catalogue and repair problem locations.	Gather citizen input via DDOT pedestrian program.	Develop citywide Pedestrian Plan and address pedestrian environment issues.

III: Improve the management of curbside space

Recommendation	Action Items		
	Short-Term – 6 months	Medium-Term - 6 to 24 months	Long-Term – 2+ years
III-1 Improve overall curbside management through optimizing loading zone availability and changing current practices.	Develop GIS database of loading zones.	Develop optimum on-street loading plan; extend parking restrictions; increase enforcement.	
III-2 Establish a Motor Carrier and Tour Bus Management Office and a Motor Carrier Stakeholder Advisory Committee.	Recruit Motor Carrier Officer; Establish Stakeholder Advisory Committee; setup Motor carrier web site.	The Advisory committee to review the Motor Carrier implementation plans and advise the MCO on preferred truck and bus routes.	
III-3 Develop a program to streamline and coordinate construction curbside permitting.	Outline a streamlined business process for permits utilizing coordination among the ward-based technical teams and with the Office of Planning.	Stakeholder comment and implementation of permitting process.	
III-4 Develop long-term tour bus parking (daily and overnight) with driver lounge facilities.	Identify potential locations for both short term alternatives and long term options.	Work with tourist industry stakeholders to determine suitable locations; develop an access road to RFK stadium.	Finalize site, identify funding mechanisms and develop facility.
III-5. Facilitate coordination of arrival times at tourist destinations to avoid tour bus bottlenecks.	BIDs to work to promote coordination of arrival times.	BIDs to pursue further collaboration (e.g. joint ticketing) among visitor attractions.	

IV. Improve the management of on- and off-street parking

Recommendation	Action Items		
	Short-Term – 6 months	Medium-Term - 6 to 24 months	Long-Term – 2+ years
IV-1. Encourage shared parking in targeted areas.	Choose implementing organization; identify high-priority locations.	Revise zoning code to expand uses and areas eligible to meet their parking requirement by sharing parking; identify potential partners and bring together.	
IV-2. Increase short-term parking availability by opening the former Convention Center to public short-term parking.	Determine feasibility. If feasible, issue RFP for operator.	Award contract and open to the public.	
IV-3. Encourage greater availability of reasonably priced short-term parking in private off-street facilities.	Perform existing conditions study to better understand supply and demand, high-priority locations; meet with private operators to assess interest and obstacles.	Design and authorize appropriate incentives; implement and evaluate pilot program.	If pilot program is successful, expand to other locations.

V. Enable smarter traveler choices

Recommendation	Action Items		
	Short-Term – 6 months	Medium-Term - 6 to 24 months	Long-Term – 2+ years
V-1. Use performance measures to manage on-street parking and set rates, including metering of on-street loading zones.	Perform existing conditions study; develop metrics of interest.	Procure and install appropriate technology; evaluate program.	If pilot program is successful, expand to other locations.
V-2. Work with the business improvement districts to provide new transportation management services, workplace transit benefits, and information on travel options.	Work with BIDs to incubate new traveler information and transportation management initiatives. Identify long-term financing strategies.	Evaluate the effectiveness of new initiatives and pursue the successful ones using market-based financing strategies.	
V-3. Adopt policies reducing free or subsidized parking at government agencies.	Issue order to DC OPM to begin process of eliminating below-market employee parking.	OPM: review leases, conduct financial analysis, and consult with employee unions.	

Committee Recommendations And Next Steps

I. Make public transportation a more efficient and attractive option

I-1. Improve internal public transit circulation

Description

This is a package of public transportation investments that includes the K Street Transitway, Downtown Circulator, dedicated bus lanes, and bus signal priority. Each is designed to reduce congestion by making transit a faster, more reliable choice for trips within and across the downtown area.

Next Steps

Downtown Circulator service will begin in 2005, with estimated annual operating costs of \$6.7 million.

Three alternative designs for the K Street transitway have been submitted. The next step will be for DDOT to evaluate and select the preferred design alternative. The design should be finalized during FY05. Construction funding will need to be secured before construction can begin; construction costs for the K Street transitway are estimated at \$32 million.

Priority for transit vehicles can be accomplished using technologies already on the market, but will require DDOT investment decisions and regulations on usage. Beginning in the near term, DDOT will coordinate with WMATA and the surrounding jurisdictions to identify an appropriate technology and high-priority corridors for installation. DDOT may wish to coordinate with emergency services on dual-use agreements.

Current Status

Downtown Circulator buses were purchased in October 2004. The buses are due to be delivered at the beginning of 2005. The K Street transitway consultant design work is beginning.

The Metro Matters Funding Agreement executed on October 21, 2004, includes funding (\$171.5 million) for a Bus Program. This will allow the purchase of 185 buses and improved bus facilities for service growth, including potential improvements to transit circulation in the downtown core.

I-2. Increase supply of transit

Description

This is a package of public transportation investments that calls for additional Metrorail cars, Metro buses, and transit vehicle maintenance and repair facilities. Each is designed to reduce congestion by making transit a more attractive and reliable alternative to driving, and by relieving peak-period overcrowding on buses and trains.

A plan for additional investment in Metro buses and maintenance and customer facilities should be developed in the next few years. The costs associated with these investments are: \$95 million for additional Metro buses, \$48 million for maintenance facilities, and \$30 million for customer facilities. The District should also develop a financing plan to pay for its share of the cost of additional Metrorail cars.

Next Steps

DDOT will work with the region to develop a financing plan for these investments, and identify potential sources for the District's share of the cost. Over the longer term, strategies for funding additional Metro improvements should be developed (see recommendation I-4). With respect to Metrorail, the ultimate goal is to begin operation of 8-car trains during peak periods to alleviate overcrowding and remove one of the barriers to increased ridership.

Current Status

The District has reached an agreement with its regional partners to fund the purchase of additional Metro cars. The Metro Matters Funding Agreement was executed on October 21, 2004 October 21st.

I-3. Pursue new transit technologies and partnerships.

Description

Transit service in the District of Columbia should take advantage of new technologies and partnerships to improve service to the public and protect the environment. Light rail and other fuel-efficient, low emission vehicles should be incorporated in District transit service. Opportunities for public/private partnerships in planning, financing and operating transit in the District should be explored; this includes consideration of alternative bid proposals for the downtown circulator service, such as those of private bus operators.

Next steps

DDOT and WMATA are currently developing an RFP for downtown Circulator service that will be put out to bid by all interested parties in December 2004.

DDOT will also continue to coordinate with the Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) and other programs of transit-related research.

Current Status

One example of this type of innovative partnership is DDOT's collaboration with Flexcar and Zipcar to initiate a car sharing pilot program in the District. Car-sharing is an unconventional form of transit that provides members with access to a fleet of shared cars. For some families, this option can eliminate the need to actually own a car, thus reducing the number of cars parked on neighborhood streets. This should reduce parking congestion and the associated traffic congestion related to cruising for scarce parking spaces. Zipcar and Flexcar have identified about 127 on-street parking locations for designated reserved car-share parking. Within DDOT, the Transportation Policy and Planning Administration and the Traffic Services Administration are reviewing and confirming these locations. TPPA is attempting to obtain Congestion Management and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program funding for pilot expenses.

An example of innovative technologies for transit is a demonstration project utilizing signal prioritization for buses being launched on Georgia Avenue. While outside of the study area for this Task Force, the results will be monitored for potential application to other parts of this city.

I-4. Dedicated regional funding source for Metro and additional federal role

Description

Unlike most major transit systems, WMATA does not have dedicated source of revenue. This is often cited as an obstacle to greater investment in transit services. For example, a review by the US Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that the lack of a dedicated funding source "subject[s] the agency to the appropriations processes of the federal, state, and local governments that fund its programs," which creates a "challenging environment" for long-term capital planning.

Because Metro serves the nation's capital and many of its riders are federal employees, an additional federal funding role is also warranted. Both of these funding improvements will allow Metro to conduct a more efficient allocation of resources and improve its transit services, providing congestion relief and additional mobility.

Next Steps

While DDOT cannot bring this about on its own, it can work with MWCOG, the federal government, and the private sector to develop options for improving Metro's funding

arrangements, particularly with respect to long-term capital planning. MWCOG has begun the process of convening a multidisciplinary group to address Metro funding. A medium-term goal would be to secure an agreement with the federal government for an ongoing financial commitment appropriate to WMATA's needs.

An essential element in the Metro Matters Funding Agreement is the Security Program, which calls for \$143.5 million for a back-up operations control center and communications. Funding for the Security Program should be met by the federal government, as it is directly tied to the viability of the federal government in the event of a terrorist attack.

Current Status

As a result of the execution of the October 21, 2004 Metro Matters Funding Agreement, the first step to funding WMATA's clearly defined capital program has been initiated. Moreover, this agreement also introduces expenditure-based budgeting, which will provide funding just-in-time for future capital expenditures. Funding Metro Matters is the foundation to the WMATA Capital Improvement Program and illustrates the benefits of creating unique funding partnerships between WMATA, the contributing jurisdictions, and eventually other creative partners, such as Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) to work cooperatively to alleviate congestion in Downtown, Washington, D.C.

The success of the Metro Matters Funding Agreement lends momentum to the MWCOG panel appointed to address the situation. The panel is scheduled to issue a report in mid-December recommending alternative sources of revenue. A series of five meetings began October 7th.

II: Optimize downtown traffic circulation patterns

II-1. Expand intersection management and traffic enforcement to improve operations and safety for motor vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles.

Description

Intersection control staff at key downtown locations will direct traffic, prevent intersections from being blocked, enforce double-parking restrictions, and direct motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians to obey traffic signals so that travel by all modes is safer and more efficient.

While the primary focus of this effort is on managing traffic operations, there should also be enforcement efforts in which motorists will be ticketed for running red lights, blocking the box, etc. These efforts should be widely publicized so that motorists are aware of the regulations and the associated penalties. The design of the traffic control operations should also give strong consideration to the safety of enforcement personnel.

Because traffic and parking violations impose higher costs on other travelers during peak periods relative to other times, the District should implement peak-period surcharges on the fines for traffic and parking offenses that involve disrupting the flow of traffic.

At key intersections with very high pedestrian volumes, improve flows via wider crosswalks and sidewalks, and conduct studies to determine whether pedestrian-only signal phases will improve efficiency (e.g. near Metro stations). The intersection of Connecticut Avenue and K Street, NW should be studied as an initial candidate for one or both of these treatments.

Next Steps

The intersection control program can begin quickly, as the new staff positions have already been approved within the Department of Public Works. To support the program, an accompanying publicity program and a plan for high profile intersection enforcement efforts should be developed. Regulations will also be revised to allow peak-period traffic and parking fine surcharges.

Key intersections for operations and safety improvements will be identified and studied, with a major focus on pedestrian capacity and safety improvements. Improvements to intersections to better operations and safety will be coordinated with recommendations for improving overall downtown circulation (Recommendation II-2).

Over the long term, intersection operations and safety should be continually monitored for opportunities to make improvements.

Current Status

Traffic Control Officers were placed in key downtown intersections during peak hours beginning October 28. Pedestrian Countdown Signals have been installed at 100 intersections in and around the Downtown, and will be installed citywide next year.

II-2. Optimize overall downtown circulation and assess competing needs for roadway space.

Description

The appropriateness of current uses of roadway space (travel lanes, parking, loading zones, etc.) will be analyzed to determine ways of improving overall travel efficiency and safety, reducing congestion, and promoting the vitality of the downtown. Among other improvements, bus/bike lanes are a means of making bus service more reliable and convenient and encouraging more travelers to choose bicycling as a mode of travel.

Traffic simulation models will be used to analyze travel times for all modes in major downtown corridors and assess the potential to reduce travel times through changes to roadway layout, directionality (one-way/two-way), turn restrictions, and signal timing.

Efforts will be made to re-open E Street to motor vehicle traffic to the extent that this is consistent with national security concerns.

Among the potential options for changes to roadway space allocation are:

- Converting general-purpose motor vehicle lanes to transit lanes to increase the overall number of people that can be carried.
- Converting on-street parking to loading zones, left- and/or right-turn bays, or general-purpose travel lanes.
- Adding dedicated bus/bike lanes through conversion of on-street parking lanes and general-purpose travel lanes and, where there is sufficient right-of-way, through new construction.

Next Steps

DDOT will pursue a dialogue to assess the appropriateness of re-opening E Street to motor vehicle traffic.

Additional data collection will be necessary to develop travel modeling to allow for the assessment of the effects of changes to the allocation of roadway space for various uses. Scenarios to be developed and tested should include the re-allocation of street space across the Downtown to maximize travel efficiency and safety (within and across modes). The effects of changes in signal operations, including bus priority, will also be

tested. To evaluate the impacts of these scenarios, measures of effectiveness that treat all travelers equally must be created.

Once the appropriate measures have been selected, they will be implemented and monitored for ongoing effectiveness.

Current Status

Portions of the study (time delay, transit/pedestrian friendly nodes, corridor analysis for enhanced transitways) are underway. DDOT is currently scoping other elements.

II-3. Designated motor carrier routes (trucks and buses)

Description

The motor carrier study recommends establishing a preferred truck and motor coach route system in the District of Columbia. A further review of the proposed motor carrier route system should be undertaken by DDOT and private industry stakeholders to address, among other things: (1) the viability of the routes for the motor carriers and (2) the impact of the proposed routing system on downtown businesses, neighborhoods and congestion.

Next Steps

In the short term, The Motor Carrier Office (to be established), working with the Motor Carrier Stakeholders Advisory Group (to be established), will review and comment on the Motor Carrier study and recommended routing system. In the medium term, before finalizing route system the Motor Carrier Office will make every attempt to actively seek input from community and business groups. The Motor Carrier Office will develop an outreach program working with trade associations and community leaders to educate truck and motor coach owners and District residents about the preferred routes and travel times. Route signage will need to be designed and installed.

Current Status

Recruitment for a Motor Carrier Office coordinator has begun.

II-4. Develop multimodal traveler information systems and improve incident clearance

Description

Roughly half of all traffic delays stem from “incidents” such as breakdowns, crashes, and road closures. Providing better information about these incidents – and working to clear them more quickly – will help alleviate related delays.

This recommendation was consolidated from several different proposals for improving information on road closures, motorcades, and incidents, and more generally on regional travel conditions. The vision is for the District to work in concert with the region to provide travelers with static and real-time information on traffic conditions, incidents and closures, parking availability, and public transit. Information delivery will use the best technologies available now (which might include the internet, telephone, variable message signs, and/or handheld or in-vehicle devices) but also be open to emerging technologies. Content and delivery would also be tailored to the needs of different audiences, such as visitors, commuters, and commercial drivers. This recommendation will be coordinated with the expanded transportation duties to be taken on by the Business Improvement Districts; see Recommendation V-2 for more information.

Drawing on best practices from other cities, the District can also set performance targets for the clearance of minor traffic incidents and reducing the impact of these incidents on traffic flow, while also safeguarding the safety of emergency personnel.

Next Steps

In the short term, the District can work to enhance its existing traveler information services on the internet and on AM radio – broadening the scope of coverage, ensuring more timely updates, and improving the user interfaces.

Over the medium to long term, the District should work with Maryland and Virginia to develop a sophisticated regional traveler information system, similar to those found in the Seattle and San Francisco areas. These services, collectively known as Advanced Traveler Information System (ATIS), use websites and the 5-1-1 telephone service to provide travelers with up-to-the-minute updates on traffic conditions as well as information on alternatives such as public transit, ferries, ridesharing, and bicycling.

This planning effort will require addressing areas such as:

- Institutional and funding arrangements between the partners (who are likely to include DDOT, VDOT, MDOT, WMATA, and MWCOG)
- Market research on travelers’ information needs and preferences for delivery
- Decisions about system content and updates
- Technical and infrastructure requirements
- Compliance with ITS standards and national deployment guidelines for 511
- Operations and maintenance

- Marketing and deployment schedule
- System evaluation

Based on the experience of other metro areas, and because it is important that users' initial experiences with the system be positive, it is likely to be several years before a fully tested ATIS can be deployed. At the same time, the system can also build on the existing traveler information services in the region, such as Metro's web- and phone-based transit itinerary planner.

Over the longer term, DDOT will also continue to work with emergency response agencies on traffic control procedures at incidents and update procedures periodically based on best practices and performance standards.

Current Status

DDOT is part of a regional consortium that is working to develop this type of system. Work is underway with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments and the Capital Wireless Integrated Network (both regional bodies) to finalize a plan of action for implementation of short- and long-term recommendations. Integrating the technologies of the numerous jurisdictions and operators that make up the transportation network in this region has presented a unique challenge.

II-5. Improve conditions for pedestrians

Description

Walking is a healthy, non-polluting mode of travel that is especially important for the downtown area. A safe walking environment is key to the use of alternative transportation. A citywide pedestrian plan, ongoing citizen input, and investments in sidewalks, crosswalks, and streetscapes will yield valuable benefits not only for pedestrian mobility and safety, but also for the accessibility and attractiveness of downtown.

Next Steps

In the short term, problem sidewalk locations need to be catalogued and repaired, particularly in places where vertical displacements exceed 1½ inches. Over the medium to longer term, citizen input via the DDOT pedestrian program can also be expanded. This allows for more ready identification of areas in need of maintenance, as well as a forum for considering broader pedestrian issues such as paving materials, sidewalk obstructions, street-level retail, snow removal, multi-use paths, and street furniture. It will also assist in the development of a citywide pedestrian plan. The pedestrian plan will consider issues of signal timing, geometric design, and vehicle speed as they impact the pedestrian environment and set goals for improvement.

Current Status

DDOT is currently performing a complete inventory of where sidewalks do and do not exist adjacent to public roadways. Where they do exist, additional data is being gathered to assess the adequacy of the sidewalk (width, grade, condition, etc.). An outside assessment of DDOT's current pedestrian functions has been completed and recommendations of how to improve this program area have been made. The pedestrian coordinator position is currently vacant and a priority has been placed on filling this position as an initial step toward overall program enhancement.

III: Improve the management of curbside space

III-1. Improve overall curbside management through optimizing loading zone availability and change of current practices

Description

This is a package of recommendations to ensure adequate parking availability for motor carriers that includes elements of data collection, regulation, pricing, and enforcement. Overall the following management elements were recommended:

- Develop a detailed GIS inventory of downtown curbside space and regulations
- Use the GIS data as a management tool to match curbside regulations with site-specific needs more closely
- Propose optimum on-street loading zone regulations per block
- Tighten regulations for on-street loading zones to allow active loading and unloading only
- Extend automobile prohibited parking from 9:30 to 11 AM at automobile parking meters on current peak hour restricted corridors and allow motor carrier parking at all parking meters during those times
- Identify convenient drop-off and short-term parking areas for tour buses and commuter buses
- Gather additional data on tour bus operations
- Require more off-street loading areas in new development and stem the loss of alleyways
- Study the potential for short-term tour bus parking in non-retail areas
- Improve enforcement of all curbside uses, including that of street vendors

Next Steps

The development of the GIS database is the foundation of most of the rest of the strategies, since decision-making requires reference to baseline data. Data collection of the current on and off-street loading zone capacity within the study area should be a short-term goal. In the medium term, the Motor Carrier Office can develop an optimum on-street loading zone plan for the Downtown for trucks and buses, tighten (as necessary) the regulations for use of loading zones, and extend the automobile parking restrictions. DPW and Metro Police can work on increased enforcement of double parking, inappropriate commercial parking in loading zones and construction related motor carrier violations.

Current Status

The District Government has a robust GIS database and DDOT has many existing GIS layers (data points with a specific locational reference). The curb and roadway use restrictions are not all currently in the GIS system citywide, however. DDOT has started entering this data for the downtown and will hire consultant support to complete this

effort and analyze the data toward specific block-by-block changes to address this recommendation.

III-2. Establish a Motor Carrier and Tour Bus Management Office and a Motor Carrier Stakeholder Advisory Committee

Description

Develop a motor carrier management unit within DDOT to serve as a single point of contact for truck operators and tour bus operators in the District of Columbia. The office will be responsible for communicating District government requirements related to truck and tour bus operations, licensing, permits, etc; provide information on regulations and enforcement; assist truck and tour bus operators with parking/loading and unloading and other operational issues. Develop a motor carrier advisory committee to the Motor Carrier Office consisting of federal and local agencies and representatives from various motor carrier and business users.

Next Steps

In the short term recruit a Motor Carrier Office program manager; develop administrative structure and operating procedures; prepare annual budget, informational material, and establish working relationships with other related District and federal agencies. Create a web site for motor carrier information and public outreach.

Advisory Committee: Nominate members representing a broad spectrum of motor carrier interests. Establish committee charter and procedures for conducting business. Schedule meetings to review motor carrier policy recommendations and develop implementation plans.

Current Status

The process to recruit the Motor Carrier Office program manager has been initiated.

III-3. Develop a program to streamline and coordinate construction curbside permitting

Description

Develop a public space permit process that addresses construction site requirements on a project-specific basis to mitigate neighborhood impacts, with (1) an efficient, user-friendly permit application process; (2) enforcement of approved site utilization and traffic control plans; (3) designated local truck routes and appropriate “blanket” waivers by project on truck use restrictions that otherwise might apply; (4) avoidance of public space “creep” through on-site inspections; and (5) coordination of plans for multiple construction projects in the same local area.

Next Steps

DDOT (Public Space Management and Traffic Services) and industry stakeholders (District of Columbia Building Industry Alliance) are already meeting regularly to sort out procedures for a more streamlined, better coordinated administration of public space issues as they relate to construction projects. In the short term DDOT will outline a streamlined business process using ward based teams to coordinate the construction permitting process. Once the preferred truck routes are determined DDOT will adopt them.

Current Status

Proceeding as outlined in next steps.

III-4. Develop long-term tour bus parking (daily and overnight) with driver lounge facilities

Description

Provide long-term parking with adjacent comfort facilities for drivers. These facilities, if conveniently located, will reduce congestion by eliminating the need for drivers to search for parking, double park, drive in circles waiting to pick up customers, or tie up scarce curbside space with illegal parking. Overnight parking will also allow motor coaches to park in the District overnight instead of traveling elsewhere, keeping tourist dollars in town. There may also be opportunities for shared parking with downtown hotels.

Next Steps

In the short term potential locations for comfort facilities and long-term parking must be identified and developed. WMATA lots should be considered for daytime use by motor coaches and drivers. Facilities must be secure, and staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

In the medium term work with attractions, hotels, and restaurants to determine suitable locations. Once developed, advertise locations and facilities through all means possible. Developing an access road to RFK stadium will open up that area for development and make it more appealing for bus use and storage. Hotels and restaurants may wish to assist in financing to encourage motor coaches to stay in the city overnight.

Current Status

This recommendation was contained in the motor carrier report; work will proceed as outlined in next steps. The bus deck at Union Station currently provides 24-hour secure parking. There will be some loss of capacity during the garage expansion project which will probably get underway in the Spring of 2005. After the garage expansion has been completed in 2006, additional tour bus capacity will exist here. The RFK access road has been tested and a resurfacing plan is being devised. Proposals have been made for tour bus parking at the Old Convention Center site. Demolition will start soon and tour bus parking might be available there late next spring.

III-5. Facilitate coordination of arrival times at tourist destinations

Description

Work with tourist destinations and the motor coach industry to stagger arrival times at key destinations, and to coordinate the use of on-street space for loading and unloading of passengers. In addition to reducing localized traffic delays, this will likely provide a better visitor experience.

Next Steps

Individual attractions could implement a system of timed tickets – even for attractions that are otherwise free of charge. The distribution of timed tickets in numbers limited to those who can comfortably visit an attraction during a given time period should help spread out arrivals and departures at particular sites, and thereby reduce congestion. Any coordination of arrival and visitation times among several attractions, if not performed by individual tour groups or operators, might be accomplished by the BIDs.

Current Status

Although coordination activities have not begun, several museums along the National Mall already use timed tickets either for regular daily admission or for special exhibitions.

IV. Improve the management of on- and off-street parking

IV-1. Encourage shared parking in targeted areas.

Description

Downtown is largely built-out and there are relatively few locations suitable for new construction. As there are limited possibilities for the construction of additional parking capacity, it will be necessary to make better use of existing resources.

Shared parking enables two or more uses in the same area with different core hours of operation to use the same parking facilities. There are limited opportunities to implement shared parking, and concerns over security must be addressed.

Next Steps

This is a likely candidate for work by the BIDs, as they introduce expanded transportation services. High-priority areas should be identified through an existing conditions study; the highest priority areas will be those where parking is scarce and time-separated uses exist.

Opportunities for and impediments to encouraging shared parking should be identified. One opportunity would be a revision of the zoning code to expand uses eligible to meet their parking requirement by sharing parking or to eliminate minimum parking requirements entirely and make this provision applicable throughout the downtown.

The implementing agency may work with the Offices of Planning and Zoning to identify opportunities for shared parking as new building or special use permits are submitted.

Current Status

DDOT is in the process of identifying a potential pilot site.

IV-2. Increase short-term parking availability by opening the former convention center to public short-term parking

Description

Although a number of private parking facilities exist in the downtown area, many are unavailable for short-term use due to the hours of operation and existing monthly leases. The Task Force supports use of the old convention center site as a venue for 1000 short-term parking spaces. The parking rate structure should be set so as to discourage all-day commuter parking. Preliminary DDOT analysis suggests that, if the rate structure is set appropriately, this facility will temporarily reduce the congestion caused by people circling for parking, which is believed to be a significant contributor to downtown congestion. However, further study may be required to accurately understand the impacts of providing additional parking vis-à-vis congestion relief.

Next Steps

The feasibility of this recommendation will depend on the construction schedule for the reuse of the former convention center site.

If feasible, the next steps are for the Washington Convention Center Authority to issue an RFP for a parking operator and award the contract. This recommendation is necessarily short-term in nature; construction on the site is due to begin within the next five years.

Current Status

Demolition of the Old Convention Center is slated to begin in Fall 2004 and the temporary parking facility – including 30 off-street tour bus parking spaces – will be available in the late spring of 2005.

IV-3. Encourage greater availability of reasonably priced short-term parking in private off-street facilities

Description

In certain areas downtown, off-street short-term parking is in short supply. Many private facilities are open to tenants only or operate largely through monthly or annual contracts. Encouraging existing facilities to open to short-term parkers will make better use of existing resources. Revenue guarantees or other incentives may help to encourage private operators to consider making spaces available for short-term (rather than all day) parking and, where the parking spaces are not open to the public, opening them to the public for short-term parking. This will be less costly than constructing and operating municipal parking. If the program is successful, it will be a win-win-win situation: profitable for the operators, inexpensive for the District, and beneficial for short-term parkers.

Next Steps

- Use the existing conditions study to identify worthwhile locations through analysis of parking inventory and turnover.
- Meet with private parking owners and operators to better understand the current market and the potential impact of different incentives.
- Use this information to study the potential for private revenue generation.
- Identify and remedy existing public-side obstacles.
- Identify potential partners and construct an agreement.
- Implement pilot program, evaluate, and expand as appropriate.

Current Status

DDOT is in the process of identifying a potential pilot site.

V. Enable smarter traveler choices

V-1. Use performance measures to manage on-street parking and set rates, including metering of on-street loading zones

Description

Downtown curbside space is a scarce and valuable asset, but is not currently priced or managed in ways that promote its intended uses. Parking meters use fixed rates rather than responding to supply and demand, and loading zone spaces are not priced at all. This mis-pricing reduces vehicle turnover, thus reducing the number of available parking and loading spaces and giving rise to the double-parking and circling for spaces that exacerbate downtown's congestion. Furthermore, it contributes to the false perception of inadequate parking downtown.

To provide objective benchmarks for evaluating program outcomes, performance measures are being used increasingly throughout the public and private sectors. Performance measures are objective standards for performance; in the case of parking, occupancy and turnover are often used. The application of performance measures to the District's on-street parking spaces and loading zones will help to align curbside management with the District's broader goals for economic development and mobility. It will also allow meter rates to rise and fall with supply and demand.

This program is expected to be roughly revenue-neutral or slightly positive when taken as a whole. Local meter rates may rise or fall as a result of the program, but overall parking utilization and meter revenue should rise. The costs of the program include new infrastructure (advanced parking meters) and staff time for developing, tracking, and refining the performance measures.

Next Steps

Implementing this measure will require legislation allowing meter rates to be set according to performance measures. The legislation may also enumerate the specific set of performance measures – such as occupancy and turnover rates – to be used. It is likely that the program will begin as a pilot project focusing on a particular area, which could then be evaluated for its suitability for wider application.

The first step toward implementation will be to set targets in each geographic area for the set of performance measures. As an example, on a certain retail block the goals might be (1) to achieve an average parking occupancy of 85-95% during the period from 8 am to 7 pm and (2) to achieve an average (mean) parking stay between 1.5 and 2.0 hours per vehicle. Similar metrics and goals would be set for on-street loading zones, though of course the target duration would be shorter.

Meter rates and, if still deemed necessary, maximum parking/loading times will then be adjusted up or down to achieve these targets. Other pricing innovations that could help

achieve the goals will include graduated rates, charges that vary by time of day, and expanded hours of meter operation. (Most of these changes will require the installation of advanced parking meters that are capable of handling such rate structures. These meters also have the advantage of being able to accept payment by debit, credit, or smart card rather than just coins.) Such advance payment forms could, by facilitating “checking in and out” of parking spaces, allow exact payment for time spent, and thereby eliminate both overpayments of meters for fear of parking fines and underestimating needed meter times leading to parking fines.

Progress toward the goals will then be tracked using before-and-after observational studies conducted by DDOT.

Current Status

Full-block metering for car parking in Georgetown was tested and approved. Meters have been ordered for installation on M St. and Wisconsin Ave. in Georgetown. Other locations for initial piloting and installation are being evaluated.

V-2. Work with the business improvement districts to provide new transportation management services, workplace transit benefits, and information on travel options

Description

Transportation Management Associations (TMAs) help businesses manage their transportation-related impacts by creating Transportation Management Plans (TMPs) and providing support services for employees commuting by means other than single occupancy vehicles.

Business improvement districts (BIDs) are private nonprofit organizations that provide services that range from safety and cleaning to promoting economic development. Greater downtown Washington, D.C. is served by four business improvement districts: Capitol Hill, Downtown, Golden Triangle, and Georgetown. Each BID currently has its own transportation focus within their service area, but there is no downtown-wide traveler information or management program in place.

This recommendation proposes to take advantage of the existing BID structure to provide TMA services for the downtown area.

These new initiatives could include:

- Resources for living car-free in downtown DC;
- Expanded employer-based marketing of alternatives to single occupancy vehicle commuter travel;
- Administration of employer-based transit benefit and commute trip reduction programs;

- Delivery and service vehicle demand management (in coordination with interested property owners and managers); and
- An integrated mapping system for the greater downtown that allows visitors to a website to find information about parking availability, transit, shuttles, bicycle facilities and tour bus parking.
- Paratransit or shuttle bus services

Next Steps

DDOT, in conjunction with the Business Improvement Districts, is pursuing a plan to fund the development and implementation of new traveler information and transportation management initiatives in the downtown, potentially via the application of CMAQ funding in the short term and market-based funding in the long term. Once these new efforts are evaluated for effectiveness, the BIDs would pursue private financing for the successful initiatives.

Current Status

Program activities have been scoped out and a joint funding application has been completed and submitted to FHWA for Congestion Management and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds. Research is continuing pending grant approval.

V-3. Adopt policies reducing free or subsidized parking at government agencies.

Description

Marketplace choices are distorted when prices do not reflect true costs. In this case, some District and federal government employees receive workplace parking spaces for much less than their free-market value, thereby reducing the incentive to commute via public transportation or other modes of travel, and exacerbating peak-hour congestion problems.

The District government will lead by example by eliminating free or subsidized parking at its downtown agencies. In place of free or subsidized parking, transit benefits may be offered. The District will look to other governments and organizations to follow suit and do their part to reduce congestion and pollution.

Next Steps

First, an executive order needs to be issued instructing the Office of Property Management to begin the process of eliminating below-market parking at DC government agencies.

Beyond that, there are several potential means of implementation. One is simply to charge employees the approximate market value for the parking they use. Another option is to mandate the use of "parking cash-out," allowing each employee to choose either the parking space or a cash payment equal to the value of the space, as he/she prefers. (In some cases, the unclaimed spaces can then be leased to non-employees for a market-based fee.) Another option that may be available in some cases is to sell or lease the parking area altogether.

Finding the appropriate strategy will require analysis of financial impacts on the District, review of leases and legal agreements, and consultation with representatives of DC employees.

Current Status

Work on this item will proceed as outlined in next steps. In addition to the next steps outlined above, there is legislation pending before the Council known as the Clean Air Compliance Fee Act. This legislation would effectively eliminate free employee parking at government agencies, non-governmental organizations (e.g., universities and hospitals) and at private sector businesses. This legislation is consistent with the Task Force's emphasis on eliminating free or subsidized parking. The Task Force raised several concerns about implementation that will need to be addressed if the pending law is to be effective. If these concerns can be addressed, this legislation will provide economic incentives for carpools and transit use -- thereby reducing congestion. Furthermore, revenues could help finance some of the transit improvements recommended above.

Appendix: Downtown Congestion Task Force Membership

The Honorable Sharon Ambrose	Council of the District of Columbia
Mr. Lon Anderson	Director, Public & Government Relations, Mid-Atlantic American Automobile Association
Mr. Darren Bowie	Chairperson, ANC 2B
Mr. Richard Bradley	Executive Director, Downtown DC Business Improvement District
The Honorable Harold Brazil	Council of the District of Columbia
Ms. Lynn Breaux	Executive Director, Restaurant Association Metropolitan Washington
Ms. Cheryl Cort	Executive Director, Washington Regional Network for Livable Communities
Mr. Anthony Costa	Assistant Regional Administrator, GSA National Capitol Region
The Honorable Jack Evans	Council of the District of Columbia
Ms. Patricia Gallagher	Executive Director, National Capital Planning Commission
Mr. Eric Gilliland	Executive Director, Washington Area Bicyclist Association
Mr. Kingdon Gould, III	Vice President, Gould Property Company
The Honorable Jim Graham	Council of the District of Columbia
Mr. Ken Gray	Executive Director, Georgetown BID
Mr. David Guernsey	President, Guernsey Office Products
Mr. Robert Hall	ANC Commissioner, ANC 6C 05
Mr. Gary Henderson	Division Administrator, FHWA - DC Division Office
Mr. Robert Hicks	Transportation Director, Public Technology Institute
Ms. Susan Hinton	Transportation Liaison, National Park Service, National Capital Region
Mr. William Howland	Acting Director, District Department of Public Works
Mr. Marty Janis	CEO, Atlantic Services
Chief Brian Jordan	Assistant Chief of Police, Metropolitan Police Department
Mr. Matt Klein	President, Akridge Company
Ms. Barbara Lang	President & CEO, D.C. Chamber of Commerce
Mr. Terry Lynch	Executive Director, Downtown Cluster of Congregations
Mr. Bill Mahorney	Director of Safety & Regulatory Programs, American Bus Association
Mr. Tom Mobley	Gen. Mgr. & CEO, Washington Convention Center Authority

Ms. Jo-Ann Neuhaus	Executive Director, Penn Quarter Neighborhood Association
The Honorable Eleanor Holmes Norton	U.S. House of Representatives
Mr. Joe Passaneau	Passaneau and Partners
Mr. Bob Peck	President, Greater Washington Board of Trade
Mr. David Perry	Deputy Director, Federal City Council
Ms. Marcia Rosenthal	Executive Director, Golden Triangle BID
The Honorable Carol Schwartz	Council of the District of Columbia
Mr. Dan Tangherlini	Director, District Department of Transportation
Chief Kenneth Ellerbe	Assistant Fire Chief, District of Columbia Fire and EMS
Mr. Edward Thomas	Assistant General Manager, WMATA
Ms. Ellen Valentino	Exec. Vice President, MD-DE-DC Soft Drink Association
Mr. James Williams	President, DC Building Industries Association
Ms. Yeni Wong	President, Riverdale International
Ms. Patricia Zingsheim	Chief, Downtown Planning, District Office of Planning