

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

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M E M O R A N D U M

TO: TPB Technical Committee

FROM: Jim Hamre, Chair, TPB Regional Bus Subcommittee

SUBJECT: Request from the Bus Planning Subcommittee to Identify Funding for a Region-wide On-board Bus Survey

DATE: September 7, 2007

Introduction

The travel and demographic information obtained from surveys of bus users is vital for local transit and regional planning agencies. In 2000, a comprehensive, regional, on-board bus rider survey was conducted for bus operators within the Washington, DC, metropolitan area. The resulting dataset has been used for bus regional and local bus transit planning over the past 7 years.

WMATA has funding to contract for a survey of Metrobus riders in its Compact area in spring 2008. The Regional Bus Subcommittee has determined that it would be desirable to identify sources of funding to make possible a survey of the riders of the local bus systems throughout the region at the same time as the Metrobus survey.

Background

Current travel and demographic data obtained from bus surveys are necessary for regional and local transit planning. Regional and local bus transit planners are currently in need of up-to-date data for the following planning activities:

- Mid-range and long-range planning efforts currently underway by the TPB Regional Bus Subcommittee.
- Alternative Analysis Studies for the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) and the Bi-County Transitway (The Purple Line) which, under the FTA's New Starts program, require ridership projections based on surveys conducted within 5 years of the funding request.
- Calibration of the TPB's regional travel demand model.
- All future planning projects in the region, which would benefit from the improved data.

The Regional Bus Subcommittee received a briefing on an upcoming Metrobus survey at its July meeting. WMATA is currently in the process of preparing an on-board passenger survey of Metrobus passengers to be administered in spring 2008. WMATA has identified funding to survey only Metrobus routes and passengers.

After this briefing, the Regional Bus Subcommittee members agreed that this WMATA survey provides a great opportunity to assemble a full regional on-board bus survey dataset by contracting for a supplemental survey. This supplemental survey would capture riders not surveyed by WMATA: riders of local and county transit agencies, including agencies within the TPB planning area not served by Metrobus. The combination of the WMATA and supplemental surveys would result in a comprehensive regional dataset of bus transit usage. A regional bus survey of this magnitude has only been conducted twice in the past 35 years (1972 and 2000).

Transit operators from throughout the region expressed interest in participating in this survey effort, including:

- District of Columbia (Circulator)
- Prince George's County (The Bus, Connect-a-Ride)
- Montgomery County (Ride On)
- Frederick County (TransIT)
- Fairfax County (Connector)
- The City of Fairfax (Cue)
- The City of Alexandria (Dash)
- Prince William County (PRTC: OmniRide, OmniLink)
- Loudon County (LC Transit)

Request

The Regional Bus Subcommittee requests that the TPB Technical Committee consider ways to fund a supplemental on-board passenger survey to complement the WMATA survey. The subcommittee members indicated that it is very desirable to perform the supplemental survey at the same time and using the same survey instrument as the WMATA survey.

The supplemental survey, which will extend the survey to the non-WMATA bus transit operators throughout the region, is estimated to require approximately \$350,000 in funding.

Possible funding sources for the supplemental survey include technical assistance programs and the basic work program of the 2008 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), contributions from jurisdictions/operators where the survey will be conducted, and other funding sources yet to be identified. WMATA anticipates releasing the RFP for the Metrobus survey in Fall, 2007. Therefore, key decisions relating to the identification of funds as well as contracting and administrative details will need to be finalized soon.

It could be possible for TPB staff to consolidate the survey data upon the conclusion of the Metrobus and supplemental surveys. TPB staff would make the resulting data set available to transit operators and planning agencies throughout the region and report the conclusions of the survey to the TPB.