

AFA COMMENTS ON THE 2005 AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTRAINED LONG-RANGE PLAN (CLRP)

The TPB Access for All Advisory Committee submits the following comments regarding the project submissions for the air quality conformity assessment for the 2005 Amendments to the Constrained Long-Range Plan (CLRP), which are scheduled for consideration by the TPB on April 20, 2005.

The Access for All Advisory Committee advises the TPB on transportation issues, programs, policies, and services that are important to low-income communities, minority communities and people with disabilities. The mission of this committee is to identify concerns of low-income and minority populations and persons with disabilities, and to determine whether and how these issues might be addressed within the TPB process.

WORK TOGETHER TO IMPROVE ACCESSIBILITY TO BUS STOPS

Since 2001 the Access for All Committee has called for short-term maintenance and improvement of the transit system. The committee is pleased that the Metro Matters funding agreement is part of the proposed 2005 CLRP, especially the \$28 million allocated for bus customer facilities.



Although heavily used, this bus stop does not have a shelter, information on routes or schedules, nighttime lighting, or safe sidewalk access.

THE AFA RECOMMENDS THAT WMATA AND OTHER LOCAL TRANSIT AGENCIES:

- Ensure that shelters allow adequate room for wheelchairs;
- Connect bus stop pads to surrounding infrastructure;
- Provide adequate lighting at bus stops;
- Provide better information on schedules, routes, and maps, in both Spanish and English;
- Prioritize bus stop improvements in low-income areas with transit-dependant populations; and
- Place greater priority on physical bus stop improvements, rather than ITS improvements.

THE AFA ALSO RECOMMENDS THAT LOCAL JURISDICTIONS RESPONSIBLE FOR SIDEWALKS AROUND BUS STOPS:

- Prioritize infrastructure improvements that provide better access to bus stops, including sidewalk, crosswalk, and curb ramp improvements; and
- Complete data collection for the regional bus stop inventory.

IMPROVE TRANSIT SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES



Bumpy strips warn passengers that the edge of the platform is near.



The October 20th, 2004, Disability Awareness Day activities sponsored by the TPB and AFA highlighted accessibility challenges of the region's transit system:

- Not all of the region's buses are wheelchair accessible.
- Bumpy strips warning rail passengers that the edge of the platform is near are present in only 54 of 83 Metrorail stations.
- Elevator outages at Metrorail stations seriously impede travel for people who are unable to use stairs or escalators.
- Inefficient operation of paratransit services results in confusion and delays.

HOV POLICIES FOR PARATRANSIT VEHICLES

Current policy apparently allows paratransit vehicles to use high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes both on the way to pick up customers (when the vehicle may be occupied by a solo driver), and while transporting customers. This policy helps make paratransit service more dependable and timely. The committee believes that this policy should be extended to High Occupancy/Toll (HOT) lanes as well, including the proposed Capital Beltway HOT lanes in Virginia, so that the disabled community can share in the benefits of these facilities.

REGIONAL PARATRANSIT

The AFA hopes that its recently initiated study on ways to improve paratransit services in the region will shed light on better ways to serve more people with disabilities unable to use the fixed-route system.



Specially equipped shuttle buses allow people with disabilities to circumvent Metro stations where elevators are out of service.

BALANCE TRANSPORTATION AND LAND USE NEEDS ON THE EASTERN AND WESTERN SIDES

In reviewing the maps of major improvements in the plan, committee members observed that there are more transportation improvements on the western side of the region than on the eastern side. The committee is concerned about the transportation burdens faced by residents of the eastern side of the region, particularly commuters who must grapple with long commutes to job-rich western jurisdictions.

The committee would like to see new transportation projects in the CLRP that improve accessibility for residents of the eastern side of the region. More transit is needed for transit dependent communities, particularly in Prince George's County. Committee members are disappointed that the Bi-County Transitway (the Purple Line) between Silver Spring and New Carrollton is included in the CLRP only as a study, which means that anticipated funding has not yet been identified. Furthermore, the committee believes the Bi-County Transitway study should extend beyond New Carrollton further south into Prince George's County, including new rail service across the Woodrow Wilson Bridge.

In addition to new transportation improvements, the committee would like to see more jobs and housing development on the eastern side of the region, especially near transit stations. However, states and localities should make provisions to mitigate potentially negative impacts from such development in the short- and long-term, such as increased housing costs and displacement.

ADDRESS PREVIOUS AFA CONCERNS REGARDING TRANSIT

The committee believes that the following AFA comments on the 2003 and 2004 CLRP remain largely valid and have not yet been addressed by the CLRP:

- The region needs more transit service in the reverse commute direction and expanded transit service for workers whose jobs do not follow traditional nine-to-five hours.
- Transit information for people who have limited English proficiency (LEP) should continue to be improved and made more widely available.