Highlights from the
## 2017 PRIVATE PROVIDERS FORUM ON PUBLIC TRANSIT
May 9, 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
TPB Private Providers Task Force (PPTF): Robert Werth and Tim Collins (Co-Chairs)


**ATTENDEES:**

Cynthia Alarico, Fairfax County
Deanne Archey, Montgomery County
Samuel Bland, Regency Taxi
Richard Bowers, First Transit
Carolyn Callahan, Reston Limousine
Nobuhiko Daito, NVTC
Clinton Edwards, Virginia DRPT
Thomas Furlong, Diamond Transportation
Dan Goldfarb, NVTC
Meredith Hill, MDOT, The Secretary's Office
Charlie King, Red Top Cab
Jeffrey Lehmann, WMATC
Veronica Lowe, Frederick County
J.B. Marti, TransDev
Hal Morgan, Taxicab, Limousine, and Paratransit
    Association (TLPA)
Jeanne Muhuro, Fairfax County
Kyle Nembhard, MDOT Maryland Transit
    Administration
Bill Orleans, citizen

Glenn Padeway, Fairfax County
Perrin Palistrant, PRTC
Nick Perfili, WMATA
Robin Phillips, National RTAP
KJ Reynolds, Fleetpro
Carolyn Robinson, DC DFHV Accessible
    Advisory Committee
Bob Schneider, PRTC
Tony Simon, Reston Limousine
Steve Strauss, District of Columbia DOT
Kyle Summers, Alexandria Yellow Cab
Neville Waters, DC Department of For Hire
    Vehicles
Prachi Vakharia, RideAmigos
Andy Wexler, Arlington County
Randy White, Fairfax County
John Zarbo, Fairfax Department of
    Neighborhood and Community Services


**TPB STAFF:**

Arianna Koudanas
Wendy Klancher
Lynn Winchell-Mendy
Andy Meese

Ben Hampton
Eric Randall
Rich Roisman


## 1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Tim Collins welcomed the participants and asked them to introduce themselves. Housekeeping matters were also mentioned.

## 2. INNOVATION AND COORDINATION IN LOCAL TRANSIT AND NATIONAL CONNECTIONS

The first keynote address was given by Robin Phillips, of the National Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP). She discussed innovation and coordination in local transit, including ways public private partnerships can enhance transportation in rural and small urban areas, and the connections to a national public transportation network of intercity buses and rail.

Rural, and exurban, public transportation is either government funded – and always short of funds - or privately-operated – which only services profitable markets.  Between the two there's a moving line for operation of for non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT), local transit, and intercity or national connections. Ms. Phillips discussed the need for public agencies to capitalize on existing

private-provided services. She stressed the import of considering transportation services in rural and small urban areas inclusively and not differentiating between public and private providers. Instead of focusing on who is providing and paying for the service, she recommended that all transportation providers consider ways to integrate their operations as part of an overall system to move customers.

In Oregon, the state puts out bids for Medicaid NEMT; the public agency picks up any unfilled bids. This provides support for local transit and markets for transportation throughout the state. This system was set up when the Oregon Legislature realized that no system led to egregious trips costing hundreds of dollars. Better service is possible, with public agencies picking up the differential or top-up to support public trips on private services for NEMT and intercity.

She then spoke to TCRP research and the TRB G-16 working group, which is creating a data schema to allow demand response transit(DRT) to be visible and allow trip reservations. This is building on a system that's already been in use in the Scandinavian countries, starting in Denmark twenty years ago. GetHub is hosting the stakeholder discussion on this project. It is GTFS next step, which will offer itineraries including the DRT. Improving the visibility of schedules and services to the public is key.

Regarding intercity travel, she showed the map of MPOs in the nation, and how much rural area there is. Also shown were the Trans American Passenger Network map developed by America 2050 and the intercity map of the American Intercity Bus Riders Association; together they show the national network of public transportation.

Overall, the transportation system is changing rapidly. RideConnection in Oregon is trained Uber drivers to assist reduced-mobility customers and also leasing handicapped accessible vehicles to Lyft. There are similar efforts and grants to coordinate smaller services in several states, including Virginia.

Questions and discussion included:
- What is the role of taxi operators in NEMT – how do they fit in the puzzle? Need to consider taxis as part of local transit: travelers with heavy loads, one-way trips to airports, out of district connections etc. Need to find out where the transportation pieces fit together. There is a changing situation of demand and customer preferences. The industry is moving from equipment to coordination of information and centralized administration of travel needs. Airports do not always connect to intercity buses; needs to change. Taxi cab firms are improving websites and payment methods.
- Role of P3, succeeds previous regulated industries of the 1970s and earlier and then market system in-between. Some Uber drivers like self-employment and their role in the on-demand economy. Public funds need to network private investment and "match" or leverage to expand service. The TNCs offer improved customer security and better information; they raise expectations. Automated vehicles and car clubs or other car-sharing schemes will change things too.
- The Venn diagram shown in the presentation suggests coordination among local transit, intercity transit and national, but believe de-coordination is taking place. Medicare took away funding for NEMT. ADA service has moved to paratransit. Intercity bus has lost connections.
- VMT is going up, and more private vehicles are on the road. Coordination can provide solutions and prevent ride-dumping and the loss of smaller services due to decreasing coordination. Cost allocation models for public transportation from government and private providers is a national issue.

## 3. NATIONAL MOBILITY-ON-DEMAND PROJECTS AND LESSONS FOR LOCAL APPLICATION

The second keynote address was given by Prachi Vakharia, Director of Engagement at RideAmigos. She discussed the proliferation of new commuting options and the implications for local application. Ongoing projects in other cities in the nation were reviewed, focusing on mobility-on-demand projects and new business models among interfacing public and private providers. She emphasized the proliferation of new commuting options, including TNCs, transit services, and other mobility options. They need to be united in meeting demand by coming together in information, payment, and other business aspects.

Ongoing efforts to support improved coordination include:
- MARTA (Atlanta) on the go – an app for Uber rides to support first mile/last-mile connections to the transit system
- Dallas, Seattle area, and Los Angeles are all working with TNCs, the latter focusing on low-income users.
- Valley Metro (Phoenix) is focusing on integrated mobile ticketing/payment.
- TriMet (Portland) is integrating all shared trip options on an open trip planner.
- New Jersey, minimize parking demand by subsidizing TNC riders. Spending $150K/annually on subsidy is more cost-effective than $10M to build another parking garage.
- Altamont (FL), offers 20% discount to paratransit users who instead use TNCs.
- Pinellas (FL), offering more on-demand, flexible service.
- MBTA (Boston) offers $13 discount to use Uber

Moving ADA trips to TNCs requires action on suitable drivers, training, and getting accessible vehicles to the private sector. RideAmigos is a commuter management service encouraging mode shift to reduce car-dependency and use. Participating in an FTA grant in Palo Alto to offer employee incentives for non-auto use, including a parking cash out fee, ranging from $0.25 to $2 daily.

Pre-tax benefits can be used for UberPool. For major public events or conventions, get visitors to try alternatives. There have been failures, including Bridj, which is perceived as having good software, but did not attract riders; the business model didn't work without subsidy.

Questions and discussion included:
- How does the MBTA pilot work, are the TNC rides scheduled through the paratransit service, or is the subsidy paid directly. Not sure how MBTA does it, but at other transit agencies, the app shows all options.
- The alterative to paratransit allows users to choose. Customer pays fee, transit agency pays subsidy. There is also an accessibility issue; Uber and Lyft don't have accessible vehicles, but are contracting some.
- What are the incentives or subsidies to use TNCs for paratransit trips? Depends on location and agencies involved.
- Taxies are a fragmented industry; it is challenging for transit agencies to work with multiple providers.

## 4. TPB INTERCITY BUS COUNT SURVEY
Arianna Koudounas presented the findings of the TPB Intercity Bus Count Survey, the region's first survey of intercity bus operations and ridership. She highlighted key findings regarding intercity bus counts, including numbers and locations of boardings and alightings, as well as origins and

destinations. Some future study possibilities were recommended, including conducting a passenger survey and counting all seven days of intercity bus travel. She indicated that these findings and additional study could inform TDM and other TPB planning efforts.

Questions and discussion included:
- Is there any historical data, even from five years ago?  No, this is the first count of which there is record.
- Did UMTA do a count in the Seventies, before or as industry was deregulated?  Unknown.

## 5. NEW METROPOLITAN PLANNING AND TRANSIT RULES

Eric Randall, TPB Transportation Engineer, briefed the attendees on the changes to public transportation involvement at the TPB in response to a new metropolitan planning rule issued on May 27, 2016, by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA).  The planning rule updates federal surface transportation regulations with changes adopted in the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP–21) and the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, including a requirement for metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) to include intercity bus and commuter vanpool providers in the planning process, including consultation with providers and consideration of intercity bus and intermodal terminals. Planning for the 2018 update of the region's constrained long-range transportation plan was also discussed.

## 6. TPB UPDATES: HUMAN SERVICE TRANSPORTATION COORDINATION

Wendy Klancher, TPB Transportation Planner, briefed the attendees on the upcoming grant application solicitations for the Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility Program, which includes opportunities for private providers. This has been a long-running program at TPB and has been an opportunity for private providers from the start, and is one of the reasons for this event. The next solicitation for Enhanced Mobility grant applications will kick-off in August. There are stringent requirements,, not easy, but also not impossible.  The solicitation will be online, and requires matching funds, 50% for operating projects and 20% for capital projects.

Questions and discussion included:
- How are vehicles procured, from what listing, GAO?  No, TPB works with the Virginia DPRT listing, which has some six vehicle models to choose from.  These choices have been more than sufficient for many of the providers in attendance today.

## 7. ROUNDTABLE ON TRANSIT PLANS AND PROSPECTS

Arlington County
Andy Wexler reported that ART ridership is up, STAR ridership stable. A  fare increase is proposed for the end of June.  The Arlington County ten-year Transit Development Plan was approved last July.  The plan includes more ART service, replacing some Metrobus routes.  The County just renewed for one year the contract with National Express for the ART service; this is the final option year so there will be a forthcoming RFP.  There are also RFPs about to come out for a video and annunciator system, a call center renewal, and a for  a technology, smartcard, flexible service provider.  Both STAR operators are in the middle of long-term contacts.

Charles County (provided by e-mail)
Charles County has been with First Transit, Inc. as a service provider for the past five years.  Through a formal procurement that concluded last week, the county selected MV Transportation, Inc. as our new vendor starting July 1.  Expect to have an executed contract next week and will be working with them through the transition.  It is an initial three year contract with three two year options for a potential of nine years in total.

District of Columbia
Steve Strauss reported that DC Circulator is working on a bus order to replace old buses, including looking at all-electric buses. The plan is to convert all of one route to trial all-electric service. Circulator is also looking to expand facilities, which would then enable subsequent service expansion in a couple of years. DDOT is working with WMATA on limited-stop service on 16th Street. DDOT is also looking at various on-demand service options, which will be further developed over the next year into potential RFPs.

Neville Waters provided updates for the District Department of For Hire Vehicles (DDFHV). A Non-District Limousine permit, allowing point-to-point service is currently in pilot, with good demand. Otherwise, new licenses are only being issued to Electric Vehicles; the O Street charging station is getting good use as these types of vehicles increase. On August 31, after a six month transition, all taxicabs will be required to have a new meter device which will enable dynamic pricing.  The units will save about $2,000-2,500. The DC taxi app is in the hands of the industry.  A version 2.0 was just launched, and available via  the DC taxi cab website.

Fairfax County
John Zarbo reported that Fairfax County has completed installation of Push To Talk radio system for dispatching and GPS location on all county public service vehicles. A transportation subsidy card is being launched, which will replace the paper taxi card now in use. The county is looking at potential branding with MasterCard or Visa, as Chicago has done.  The MV Contract has just been extended for another year.

Randy White spoke about the Fairfax Connector, for which ITS equipment has just been installed on the whole fleet.  The automated passenger counting (APC) system is not being calibrated. All bus stops are being inventoried and identified for use in the system.  A service contract was extended through the end of 2019 with MV. In 2018, staff will start to work on the RFP for the next contract, which currently is about $75 million annually, operating over 300 vehicles. The county's TDP was approved in 2016, and an RFP to study flexible service is being prepared.

Glenn Padeway and Cynthia Alarico added  that Fairfax has received an FTA grant for mobility management that has launched an interactive map.  Clients can create a profile and get information tailored to their needs.

Frederick County
Veronica Lowe noted that the Taxi Access Program (TAP) in the county has been in use for 16 months now, providing approximately 450 to 500 rides a month. After a year a customer satisfaction survey was conducted with 95% of customers being satisfied or very satisfied. The county is working on a pilot project with the FTA on a Safety Management System (SMS) program with Montgomery and Charles counties to develop a Safety Plan and a Safety Management System template that will be used nationally to manage safety. Three diesel buses are being acquired.  The county is in the evaluation process of an RFP for dispatch software.  Also looking at expanding the transit facility and installing a shed over the electric bus charging stations and removing the defunct and empty fuel island.  Frederick has convened a Human Services Transportation Coordination Committee to assist local human service agencies that provide transportation support and coordination of services. The

ezFARE app has been well received and utilized by passengers. The 5 all-electric refurbished buses have been in operation for a year and doing well. All fixed route vehicles have AVL, APC, and free Wi-Fi.  "RouteShout" provides real time information to customers, with the ability for them to set alerts and other features. The county continues to work with Rideshare, Commuter Connections, Vanpool Incentive Program and Employers Outreach.

Montgomery County
Deanna Archey reported on the county's plans for a new limited stop service on MD 355, the Ride On extra.  The buses will have USB ports, Wi-Fi, real time info screens at stops and branding for the service.

Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) and MDOT Maryland Transit Administration (MTA)
Kyle Nembhard reported that the Baltimore Link reorganization of bus services launches June 18, with a new network for the city.  In addition, MTA just completed a study of BRT for MD 355.

Meredith Hill spoke to an MDOT TSO evaluation of transportation demand management (TDM) across the state. MDOT TSO is work with research partners including University of Maryland, Maryland Department of Planning, and Maryland Department of Commerce to look at the impacts of mega-commuters on the transportation network. MDOT is working with partners and stakeholders to identify informative workforce and transportation data and with state and local economic development offices to consider transportation impacts early and often in business site-selection processes.

Meredith Hill spoke to MDOT's commitment to participate in cross-county collaborations regarding regional transit services including a recent agreement between MDOT, Howard and Montgomery counties to continue examining the feasibility of Bus Rapid Transit service on US 29.

Northern Virginia Transit Commission (NVTC)
Dan Goldfarb spoke to the major activities at NVTC including finding funding for conceptual engineering on the VA 7 BRT system. NVTC is also working on transit and TDM projects for the Inside the Beltway I-66 funds of $10 million annually. The first set of projects are now coming under agreement and there will be a new call for projects at the end of  the year.  Also looking at similar options for the 395 Express Lanes expansion.

Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission
Bob Schneider reported on activities at PRTC. First is the development of a strategic plan for an area that is heavily commuter-focused between DC and Fredericksburg, and the role of transit and TDM. Revenue from fuel taxes is down, leading to a 5% fare increase this summer. In other news, PRTC has implemented MoveIt bus tracking and planning system. PRTC is conducting a bus stop inventory and is looking at potential new signage.  Mobile ticketing, the construction of the western maintenance facility and options for fast ferries are all being studied.

Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT)
Clinton Edwards noted that DRPT is supporting an intercity bus pilot, operating clong I-81 and I-66 from the new Virginia Tech multimodal center to Union Station. The contract will start in the new fiscal year.

Washington Metropolitan Area Transportation Commission (WMATC)
Jeffrey Lehmann noted that WMATC oversees approximately 612 firms, which operate around 5,356 vehicles. As background, WMATC licenses private passenger carriers including contractors, and exercises some oversight over taxicabs on interstate trips. School buses, WMATA, and state and local government-operated transit services are exempt. Regarding transportation networking companies

(TNCs), the Commission adopted a rulemaking on June 9, 2016, to clarify WMATC jurisdiction over TNCs. The decision was that transportation services provided in vehicles seating nine or fewer persons in affiliation with a duly authorized TNC fall within a licensing exemption for bona fide taxicab service. The exemption for bona fide taxicab service continues to apply to non-TNC service that meets the following four criteria at all times: 1) the vehicle seating capacity is nine or fewer persons, 2) the passengers select the trip origin and destination, 3) the service is priced at mileage or hourly based rates (not flat fares), and 4) the passengers have exclusive use of the vehicle (no shared rides). He added that DC, Maryland, and Virginia have recognized TNCs as a new form of transportation, and have instituted new regulatory structures to oversee them. Private companies operating in the Washington Metropolitan Area whose services do not meet the bona fide taxicab service exemption, or another statutory exemption, need licenses from WMATC. There was commentary that the TNC ruling enables TNC drivers to circumvent the minimum insurance requirements placed on other passenger carriers, putting the latter at a competitive disadvantage.
Washington Area Metropolitan Transit Authority (WMATA)
Nick Perfili spoke to Metrobus service chaining what will take place at the end of June, including the restructuring of the s-line service along 16th Street NW in the District.  In Prince George's County, bus services will be oriented more towards serving Metrorail stations that downtown.  The Indian Head service is being eliminated.  There will be more trips in key corridors, including a lifeline service to replace the rail lines at the end of day due to the reduced Metrorail hours of service.   Two SES corridor studies are in progress, including the Forestville J12, K9 corridor and the Columbia Pike, 16-line corridor.

## 8. Open Discussion / Other Business / Adjourn

Citizen Bill Orleans expressed his opinion that the former Regional Taxicab Regulators (RTR) Task Force should be reconstituted.  He believes that if taxis could provide more demand-response or paratransit transportation throughout the region, money would be saved.

No further discussion took place, and Co-Chair Collins adjourned the meeting.

—

All documents for the meeting are available on the COG website, available at:
https://www.mwcog.org/events/2017/5/9/annual-private-providers-forum-on-public-transit/

xxx