

## National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

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### **M E M O R A N D U M**

**TO:** Transportation Planning Board

**FROM:** Robert Werth  
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President, Diamond Transportation Services, Inc.

**SUBJECT:** TPB Annual Transit Forum Overview

**DATE:** July 12, 2012

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The 23rd Annual Transit Forum was held on June 26, 2012. The purpose of the annual transit forum is to bring together representatives from the private transportation sector and local jurisdictions to discuss mutual regional transportation interests. Over 40 persons attended, including representatives from local jurisdictions, public bus operators, and thirteen private transportation providers or manufacturers. The agenda featured two keynote addresses, followed by a roundtable discussion among the attendees.

This first keynote address was given by Ms. Pierce Coffee, Director of Marketing for Transurban's 495 Express Lanes project. She presented an overview of the history and planned operation of the project. Previously known as the Capital Beltway HOT Lanes (Virginia), the 495 Express Lanes are scheduled to open by the end of 2012. Vehicles with 3 or more persons, as well as buses – both private and public – and motorcycles, will be able to use the toll lanes free of charge with the proper tolling transponder. Attendees had many questions on the operation of the toll system, including purchase, use, and fees for the EX-Pass Flex transponder, the eligibility of other transportation providers for free travel, and on travel information and the pricing and enforcement of the toll system. Ms. Coffee provided answers and references for the audience. However, some details are still awaiting decision by Virginia DOT.

The second keynote address was given by Mr. Arthur Guzzetti, Vice President of Policy for the American Public Transportation Association (APTA). He opened his remarks by stating that he was one of 36 million boardings on public transportation across the United States for the day, emphasizing that public transportation is a vital part of the national transportation system. He described an effective transportation system as a four-legged stool, in which the federal government, states, local governments, and private partners all play their part. Public agencies need the private sector as an investment partner as well as an operations partner. APTA has both private and public members, and it has been a breakthrough year for the private sector. The \$2.3 billion Denver Eagle P3 project is a leading example of private financing to balance risk and revenue in a way that benefits both private and public partners while providing critical new public transportation investment. This Design, Build, Finance, Operation and Maintenance (DBFOM) project will lead to two new commuter rail lines and a new rail maintenance facility for the Denver area, funded by a combination of local bonds and federal

grants and loans, and carried out by a private consortium in partnership with the regional transit district.

Mr. Guzzetti then addressed some of the specific elements of the current bill in Congress for surface transportation reauthorization, including interstate operator licensing and the allocation of funds between bus grants and New Starts funding. APTA supports expanded TIFIA grants and federal guarantees for low-cost capital through Private Activity Bonds; the Dulles rail is a terrific example of such. However, he emphasized that financing is not a replacement for funding, and that all attendees should promote increased awareness of the need for greater investment in the nation's transportation system.

The forum concluded with the roundtable discussion of transit plans and prospects. Each jurisdiction and transit operator in turn highlighted recent events and upcoming plans and projects for public transportation. In particular, potential business opportunities for the private sector were discussed.

The meeting highlights and a list of attendees are available on the Task Force website:

[http://www.mwcog.org/transportation/committee/committee/documents.asp?COMMITTEE\\_ID=101](http://www.mwcog.org/transportation/committee/committee/documents.asp?COMMITTEE_ID=101)