

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

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Item #5

MEMORANDUM

To: TPB Technical Committee
From: Steve Yaffe, Chair, TPB Regional Bus Subcommittee
Re: Regional Priority Bus Projects List
Date: December 5, 2008

Since its formation, the Regional Bus Subcommittee has been investigating long-range bus planning issues from a regional perspective. As work began on addressing these long-range issues, many transit operators observed that it was difficult to consider long-range planning when shrinking budgets and traffic congestion were combining to cause real problems for bus operations in the near future. The subcommittee decided to help address the short-term issues of bus operations in the region by creating a Regional Priority Bus Projects List. This short and concise list, to be presented to the TPB, would detail high priority bus projects of regional significance that could have positive impacts on the operations of transit service in the near term. The list was to focus on capital projects that could be programmed into a 6-year TIP.

In the spring of 2008, the subcommittee established categories of projects eligible for the priority list and developed a project submission form. The form was distributed to the region's transit operators at the June 24 subcommittee meeting. Submissions were accepted by TPB staff until September 18 in preparation for the September 23 subcommittee meeting.

At its September meeting, the Regional Bus Subcommittee reviewed 75 candidate projects submitted by 8 transit operators for the regional priority bus projects list. After a brief discussion, it was decided that a working group of the subcommittee would meet to discuss the prioritization process and determine criteria by which these projects can be evaluated. Gary Erenrich from Montgomery County DOT, Circe Torruellas from the District DOT and Steve Yaffe from Arlington County volunteered to participate in the working group.

The three working group members met with TPB staff on Monday, October 20, to discuss the prioritization process. The group established the following criteria for determining whether a submitted project was regionally significant:

- For bottlenecks or running way improvements: 5,000 passengers per day or an effective headway of 10-minutes
- For stops: at least 250 passengers per day
- For park-and-ride lots: serviced by at least 4 buses per hour (15 minute frequency) and a minimum of 200 parking spaces.
- Projects should be capital projects that would provide benefit to multiple transit operators or multiple jurisdictions in the region.

The working group reviewed the submitted projects and applied the above criteria. While all of the projects submitted had value and should be advocated for, the following 13 projects are recommended to be advanced as the first priority project list:

Priority Bus Project List

Bottlenecks/Running-way Improvements:

- 1 Duke Street, West of Telegraph Road
- 2 H Street between 18th and 14th Streets, NW
- 3 K Street Busway
- 4 Campus Drive/Paint Branch Pkwy and US 1 (Baltimore Ave)

Bus Stops:

- 5 Southern Towers
- 6 Union Station Bus Stops (Transit Center)

Transit Staging Areas:

- 7 Bus staging area for Washington/Arlington PM rush hour services
- 8 Van Dorn Metro Station Bus Staging Area
- 9 RFK Operators Lounge and Transit Center

Other Bus Facilities:

- 10 Landmark Transit Center
- 11 Pentagon Transfer Facility Bus Bays
- 12 Fort Totten Metro Bus Stops (Transit Center)
- 13 Lakeforest Transit Center

Project descriptions are listed below, followed by a table listing these projects and a map of the project locations.

Details of Selected Projects

1 - Duke Street, East of Telegraph Road

Description:

The Duke Street / Telegraph Road interchange is a major congestion point during the evening hours as traffic heads onto the Beltway in both directions and into Fairfax County and clogs the right lane on Duke. A one mile section of Duke Street going eastbound between Wheeler Ave and Telegraph road has created an unsafe environment for buses and bus passengers attempting to get onto a bus at stops along this section. Vehicles rarely allow buses to merge in front of them, congestion causes increased headways for buses, passenger sometimes walk between traffic to get onto a bus, and service at some stops has been discontinued between 3:00 PM and 7:00 PM due to the heavy congestion.

Regional Significance:

Duke Street is the major artery for DASH AT8 and WMATA 29K and 29N bus service. The AT8 and 29K and 29N have experienced a significant increase in ridership over the past

few years and are major routes and connections for customers traveling between Fairfax City / George Mason University, Northern Virginia Community College / Annandale, Lincolnia, Landmark Mall, the King Street Metro, and Old Town Alexandria.

2 - H Street between 18th and 14th Streets, NW

Description:

Congestion at H Street bus stops (at Madison and Jackson) caused by frequent service of multiple carriers and tour buses visiting Lafayette Park. Not only is traffic slowed, but buses often have difficulty serving these stops in a safe and timely manner.

Regional Significance:

This bottleneck has a high impact on service reliability for multiple carriers in Washington.

3 - K Street (22nd Street-Massachusetts)

Description:

K Street, NW, between Mt. Vernon Triangle and Washington Circle is one of the most congested corridors in the District during the AM and PM peak periods. Several transit services traverse K Street including the longest District Line, the 30's, which runs from Southeast to Upper Northwest, DC. In addition to the 30's and the Circulator Bus, several other regional Metrobus routes operate on K Street and are impacted by the high volume of single occupancy vehicles maneuvering off and onto K Street to access parking garages and metered parking spaces on the service road. All of these vehicles and their confluence on K Street during the AM and PM peak periods cause a serious bottleneck within the District of Columbia.

Regional Significance:

Over 40,000 vehicles are carried on K Street on a typical weekday. In addition to these vehicles over 15 transit bus routes and other commuter bus routes utilize K Street to access the major law offices, government agencies and businesses which represent a major regional employment and activity center in the District. All of these traffic generators result in a considerable bottleneck at the core of the District.

4 - Campus Drive/Paint Branch Pkwy and US 1 (Baltimore Ave)

Description:

Campus Drive/Paint Branch Pkwy and US 1 (Baltimore Ave) – Considerable accumulation of traffic at intersection signal extending north to US 1 and Cherry Hill Road.

Regional Significance:

The corridor is vibrant from Rhode Island Ave. Metrorail Station through Beltsville. It offers varying landuses throughout this stretch and provides a path to retail, restaurants, residential enclaves, and cultural centers. Four transit operators provide service to and through this intersection, including Metrobus, TheBus, Connect-a-Ride and the UMD Shuttle.

5 - Southern Towers

Description:

Southern Towers is a large scale mixed-use development in the City. The current bus stops within Southern Towers are unsafe as bus passengers must board and alight in the middle of a busy parking lot. Amenities such as shelters and safe boarding and landing areas are highly needed.

Regional Significance:

Home to thousands of residents and hundreds of offices, Southern Towers generates the highest bus ridership among DASH and WMATA services. WMATA offers four routes through Southern Towers while DASH offers one route. Routes serving Southern Towers provide a link between the City of Alexandria, Arlington County, and Fairfax County. Southern Towers also hosts several offices with tenants offering a wide array of services.

6 - Union Station Bus Stops (Transit Center)

Description:

The District Department of Transportation (DDOT) is conducting a study on the Union Station facility to investigate the development, design and construction of a new Intermodal Transportation Center at Burnham Place and Union Station in Northeast, Washington, DC. As part of this, and working with the DDOT team that previously worked in the re-design of the Columbus Circle we are in need to improve and rehabilitate the bus passenger's amenities in this area. New shelters with easy and safe connection to the facility, improved sidewalks and signage identifying stop locations for both Metrobuses and DC Circulators are in dire need. Approximately 9 bus routes serve the station directly, and 3 serve it a block away from it; these include routes: 97, D4, D8, X8, 96, D6, N22, 80, DC Circulator, D3, D1 and X1 .

Regional Significance:

Union Station services a vast number of communities in the District, especially Wards 5 and 6, but in addition it serves approximately 32 million visitors a year, among them many commuters from Maryland and Virginia. Any enhancement in connectivity to all modes, including bus, will not only be a regional, but of national benefit to the many visitors to our region.

7 - Bus staging area for Washington/Arlington PM rush hour services

Description:

Our current bus staging area for many afternoon trips (Old Jefferson Davis Highway in Crystal City) will soon not be available due to construction. A suitable replacement site has not yet been found.

Regional Significance:

This staging site is used by several carriers that provide commuter service in Washington and Arlington. Bus staging is a major concern for all carriers, but especially for those with long deadheads along congested roadways. To help ensure on-time starts deadheads are often padded to allow for travel through frequently (but not always) congested areas necessitating a place to park on those days when traffic is relatively free-flowing. Establishing permanent staging areas close-in would assist all commuter services.

8 - Van Dorn Metro Station

Description:

Although there are enough areas for buses to load and alight passengers at the Van Dorn Metro Station; there is not enough areas to stage buses for their next trip. This has created confusion among bus operators and increase in headways for several routes that begin at the station.

Regional Significance:

The Van Dorn Metro Station serves as a major terminal point for many DASH and Fairfax County Connector routes. DASH and Fairfax County Connector buses utilizing the station provide a link between southern Fairfax County including Springfield, Lorton, and Fort Belvoir and the City of Alexandria.

9 - RFK Operators Lounge and Transit CenterDescription:

DDOT is working with the DC Sports Commission, in charge of the RFK stadium facility, to construct a Motorcoach Operator's Lounge facility in order to promote the use of their lots as motor coach parking to serve tour and commuter buses (over 250 buses come to the District daily from MD and VA) that come into the city/region. The region is in need of such motor coach amenities/facilities (ei. Restrooms, rest areas, bus parking, etc...) to enhance the coach mass transit (private/public) experience in the region.

Regional Significance:

Enhance the regional motor coach experience and provide the MD and VA jurisdictions with additional possible savings in travel and deadhead costs for commuter buses.

10 – Landmark Transit CenterDescription:

The location and function of the current bus facility at Landmark Mall provide a logistical challenge for bus operators as buses must travel through a large parking lot and through a parking garage to access the bus facility, which is located near the back entrance of the mall. To exit the facility, buses must loop through the parking garage and parking lot to access the roadway. Future plans call for a large mixed-use development at Landmark with transit and a transit center being a main focus.

Regional Significance:

Landmark mall is a major transit and transfer center for DASH, WMATA, and the Fairfax County Connector customers. Improving access for buses and the construction of a transit center near the entrance of the new mixed-use development will improve headway times on many routes operated by DASH, WMATA, and the Fairfax County Connector; provide a better transfer link between the three transit operators; and enhance customer's experience.

11 - Pentagon Transfer Facility Bus BaysDescription:

PRTC is currently restricted to two bus bays at the Pentagon facility. Increased demand for service and our resulting growth increase our need for platform space at the Pentagon.

Regional Significance:

Congestion at this facility caused by buses having to wait to access one of the two bays we are given may cause operational and safety concerns for all carriers serving the facility. Rising demand and increased ridership makes space here a common concern for all carriers who serve this major transfer facility.

12 - Fort Totten Metro Bus Stops (Transit Center)

Description:

The District is currently working with WMATA in the Fort Totten Rail Station Access Study, which is looking among other things, how to better improve and rehabilitate the bus passenger's amenities in this area. The Study is looking at the rehabilitation of sidewalks, new shelters with easy and safe connection to the rail facility, improved lighting and signage identifying stop locations for Metro buses, as well as the rail facility. Approximately 12 bus routes serve the station, specifically Maryland and District residents. The bus routes include: 60, 64, 80, E2, E3, E4, K2, K6, R1, R2, R3, R5.

Regional Significance:

This bus stop/transit center location at Fort Totten Metro Rail Station serves over fifty thousand bus riders everyday from Prince Georges County, Montgomery County and the District. Improvements to the bus stops and additional amenities will benefit many of the daily bus riders in the region.

13 - Lakeforest Transit Center

Description:

The Lakeforest Transit Center is located in the Gaithersburg area of Montgomery County with the highest daily ridership not connected to a Metrorail Station. This center requires more space, driver amenities, and better circulation. There are seven (7) Ride On routes and two (2) Metrobus routes that serve this center.

Regional Significance:

An expansion of this center is needed for current and future expansions. This is a key location for transferability not connected to a Metrorail Station.

Bottlenecks and Running-way Improvements

Number	Name	Operators/Jurisdictions	Routes
1	Duke Street, West of Telegraph Road	Dash, Metrobus	3
2	H Street between 18th and 14th Streets, NW	PRTC, LC Transit, MTA, Metrobus	10+
3	K Street (22nd Street-Massachusetts)	PRTC, LC Transit, MTA, Metrobus, Circulator	10+
4	Campus Drive/Paint Branch Pkwy and US 1 (Baltimore Ave)	TheBus, Connect-a-Ride, Metrobus, UMD Shuttle	10+

Bus Stops

Number	Name	Operators/Jurisdictions	Routes
5	Southern Towers	Dash, Metrobus	5
6	Union Station Bus Stops (Transit Center)	Metrobus, Circulator, Private Shuttles	9

Bus Staging Areas

Number	Name	Operators/Jurisdictions	Routes
7	Bus staging area for Washington/Arlington PM rush hour services	PRTC, other commuter services	many
8	Van Dorn Metro Station	Metrobus, Dash, Fairfax Connector	11
9	RFK Operators Lounge and Transit Center	LC Transit, MTA, PRTC, others	many

Other Bus Facilities

Number	Name	Operators/Jurisdictions	Routes
10	Landmark Transit Center	Metrobus, Dash, Fairfax Connector	14
11	Pentagon Transfer Facility Bus Bays	Metrobus, DASH, Fairfax Connector, LC Transit PTRC	82
12	Fort Totten Metro Bus Stops (Transit Center)	Metrobus: DC, Prince Georges and Montgomery Counties	6
13	Lakeforest Transit Center	Metrobus, RideOn	9

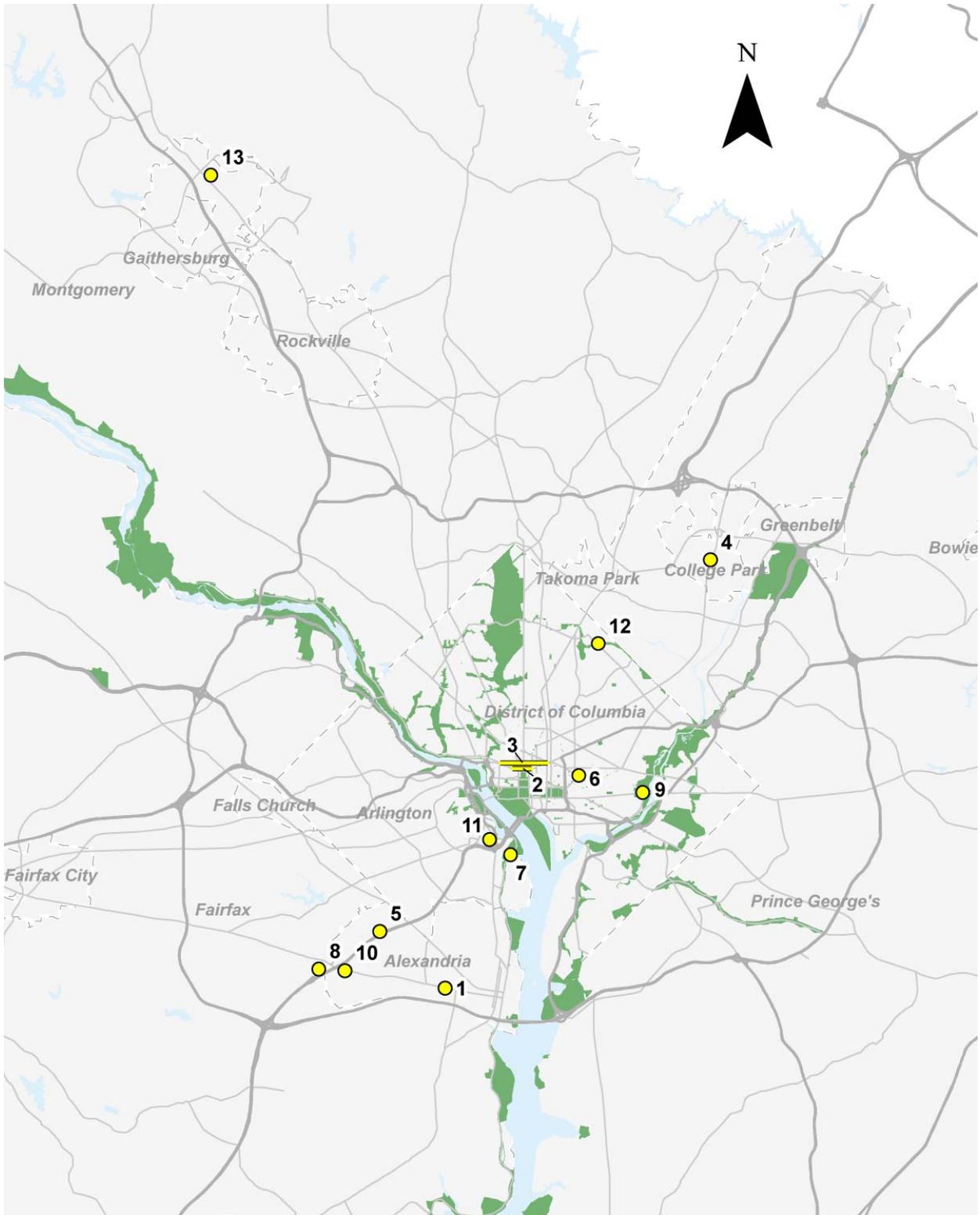


Figure 1: Map of selected Priority Projects.

Areas of Additional Support

The subcommittee also recommended creating sets of projects that receive the strong endorsement. These sets are Bus Storage and Maintenance Facilities, Regional Marketing and Customer Information, and Emerging Corridors.

Bus Storage and Maintenance Facilities

The Washington region's transit operators have an urgent need for additional bus storage and maintenance facilities. Often considered undesirable land uses, it is very difficult to find suitable locations for these facilities. Operators expressed in the project submissions a short-term need for storage and maintenance facilities for at least 338 new buses. It is very important that these needs be met to enable future growth of the bus transit system.

- SE Bus Garage (Capital Improvements)
- Bus Storage (Rocky Springs Road)
- Bus storage and maintenance facilities
- Additional Bus Maintenance and Storage Facilities
- PRTC Transit Center Bus Storage – Additional Western Facility

Regional Marketing and Customer Information

The subcommittee recommends that all operators/jurisdictions pledge to spend 1% of their operating budget on marketing and customer information. Recommended projects falling under this category are:

Emerging Corridors

The subcommittee identified several projects that did not meet the regional criteria described above, but that are important to provide increased service to emerging residential and employment corridors in the region.

- Increased service between Frederick and the Washington D.C. Area
- Loudoun County Tyson's Express Bus as part of Dulles Rail
- Haymarket OmniRide – Metro Direct
- Service between Frederick Train Stations and the Urbana Park-N-Ride
- Bus seating capacity
- Gainesville OmniRide
- I-270 through Frederick and Montgomery Counties
- U.S. 15 through Frederick City
- Frederick Town Mall Bus Stop
- Park-N-Ride lot north of Frederick
- Haymarket/Dominion Valley Commuter Lot

HOT Lane Transit Ramps

The subcommittee acknowledges the inclusion of the transit-only express lane ramp to Seminary road. but would like to encourage the inclusion of two additional transit-only ramps in the I-95/395 HOT Lanes project. It is important that projects that increase capacity for private vehicles and raise revenue also provide support for bus transit.

- Shirley Hwy Express Lane Ramp to the Pentagon Transit Center
- Shirley Hwy Express Lane Ramp to the Shirlington Transit Center

WMATA Priority Corridor Network

Many projects submitted by the region's transit operators fall under the WMATA Priority Corridor Network service area. The subcommittee fully supports this short-term and fast-paced effort to drastically increase bus service in the region, and acknowledges that the local jurisdictions will need to do their part to improve transit running ways and bus stops along these corridors. Projects submitted along these corridors include:

- Crystal City – Potomac Yard Transit way
- 16th Street Metro Extra Bus Service.
- Veirs Mill BRT/University Boulevard BRT
- US 1 (Hyattsville) to Laurel Corridor Improvements
- Georgia Avenue Busway
- Georgia @ Colesville to Wheaton through Silver Spring
- East West Highway from Silver Spring to Bethesda