

# National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

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## **Highlights From The EIGHTEENTH ANNUAL PUBLIC TRANSIT FORUM**

May 22, 2007, 11:00 a.m.

Place: COG Board Room

Chair: Robert Werth

### **ATTENDEES:**

Carrie Anderson-Watters, Frederick County  
Jim Bryant, Manassas Cab Co.  
Brandon Buchanan, American Bus Association  
Debbie Burns, FTA Washington Metropolitan Office  
Tyson Byrne, Baltimore Metropolitan Council  
Tim Collins, Veolia Transportation  
Steve Del Giudice, Arlington County Transit -- ART  
David Fetkenhour, The Convention Store  
Harold Foster, Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission  
Scott Gross, Loudoun County  
Laurel Hammig, Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission  
Jim Hamre, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority  
Al Himes, The City of Alexandria  
Nancy Kutz, Montgomery County  
Jeffrey Lehmann, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Commission  
Kelly MacKinnon, Arlington County Transit -- ART  
Eric Marx, Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission  
Jim Maslanka, City of Alexandria  
William S. Morrow, Jr., Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Commission  
Aaron Overman, Prince George's County  
Valerie Pardo, Virginia Department of Transportation-NOVA  
Von Pelot, Red Top Cab  
Lynn Rivers, Arlington County Transit -- ART  
Elizabeth Rodgers, Northern Virginia Transportation Commission  
Glenn Saffran, Maryland Transit Authority  
Sharmila Samarasinghe, Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transit  
Doreen Thompson, DC Taxicab Commission  
Kevin Thornton, Prince George's County  
Alex Verzosa, City of Fairfax  
Jack Weiner, Red Top Cab  
Ribbie Werth, PPTF/Diamond Transportation  
Randy White, Fairfax County  
Gil Williams, District of Columbia Division of Mass Transit

### COG Staff:

Beth Newman  
Michael Eichler

Donald McAuslan  
Gerald Miller

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

Mr. Werth welcomed the participants and asked them to introduce themselves.

**2. Private Sector Opportunities in the New TPB Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) and New Freedom Transportation Funding Programs**

Ms. Newman presented on the TPB Coordinated Human Service Transportation Plan. The TPB is the designated recipient for Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) and New Freedom funding for the National Capital Region. The TPB is currently soliciting projects for JARC and New Freedom funding. Ms. Newman noted that a Human Service Transportation Coordination Task Force was established by the TPB to oversee development of the Coordinated Plan, which was adopted by the TPB in April, 2007. She described the four strategies for meeting unmet transportation needs, as well as priority actions in the Coordinated Plan. She discussed the selection criteria that will be used to select projects for funding. She also noted that SAFETEA-LU will permit private, for-profit companies to apply for funding under these two programs.

During the question period after her presentation, Ms. Newman conveyed the following information:

- The priority actions described by the plan are categories of projects for which the selection committee would like to receive responses.
- The selection will occur some time in late July or August. Private sector agencies apply directly to COG, and if selected will become sub-recipients of the funds.
- An expansion of the guaranteed ride home program means an increase in the number of rides a person can take per year.
- Agencies and/or jurisdictions interested in submitting applications cannot be on the selection committee.
- The current round of funding is FY 2006 funds, and FY 2007 funds will be available about the same time next year.

A copy of Ms. Newman's presentation is available in the appendix. More information about the TPB Human Service Transportation Plan is available online at <http://www.tpbcoordination.org/>

**3. Update on a Proposed Regional Taxicab Regulators TPB Task Force**

Ms. Thompson described the structure and purpose of a proposed regional taxicab regulators task force of the TPB. The mission of the Task Force is to encourage information sharing among regional taxicab regulators and discuss the possibility of a regional reciprocity agreement that could be adopted by local jurisdictions. The TPB will be asked to approve the task force mission statement in June. She noted that the regulators had been meeting informally for some time and she was hopeful that the TPB would set up the task force to provide greater authority and staying-power to their efforts. The Task Force will coordinate with the Private Providers Task Force and the Human

Services Transportation Coordination Task Force. Ms. Thompson stated that membership on the Task Force is open to any jurisdiction in the TPB planning area that regulates taxis and that the task force plans to meet bi-monthly.

During a discussion following her presentation, it was mentioned that reciprocity agreements and enforcement were major concerns. When asked whether a regional regulatory agency or commission might be established, Ms. Thompson responded that such a body has not yet been investigated. Another issue raised during the discussion is the different insurance and licensing requirements between District and Virginia taxis. It was mentioned that the biggest problem with reciprocity in the region is in Prince George's County, where no taxi cab reciprocity exists between the county and other regional jurisdictions.

#### **4. Update on TPB Regional Bus Subcommittee Activities**

Jim Hamre, Chair, TBP Regional Bus Subcommittee, presented an update on the activities of the regional bus subcommittee. He stated that the subcommittee, which first convened in January of 2007, has three main thrusts:

- 1) Facilitate the coordination of regional transit planning activities.
- 2) Act as a transit advisory resource for the TPB.
- 3) Strategize on how to implement the TPB vision, providing the opportunity to ensure that transit concerns are addressed and accommodated for in the long range planning process.

Next, he described the activities of the subcommittee to date:

- The committee has been working to develop an agreement on the roles and responsibilities for transit planning in the region, as required by SAFETEA-LU.
- The committee was briefed on bus transit's role in the TPB's modeling and long-range planning efforts, in an attempt to answer the question "what will the bus transit network look like in 2030, and how is it represented in the TPB travel demand model?"
- The committee has discussed and provided input on TPB staff's efforts at mapping regional bus service for use as a tool for planning future transit service. TPB staff has developed a measure of bus transit "availability," which incorporates bus stop location as well as level of service. Draft maps of this transit availability have been created based on the CLRP travel demand model bus inputs for 2030. These maps have been overlaid with the regional activity clusters/centers as well as the Round 7.0 land use forecasts to identify gaps between future transit service and future land use.
- The regional bus committee received briefings from TPB staff on the planning activities of other TPB committees and task forces

In responding to a question about the transit availability analysis, Mr. Miller reminded the forum that this analysis is for long-range planning, between 20 and 25 years in the future. Mr. Hamre followed that the regional bus study and bus transit network evaluation have been completed, but the results of these have not been incorporated into the TPB transportation demand model for 2030. This transit availability measure is intended to help identify which long-range transit plans have or have not been incorporated into the model.

## **5. Transit Plans and Prospects**

### Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

Mr. Hamre reported on the changes which have taken place since their new general manager, John Catoe, came on board this year: he is looking forward to focusing the authority as an operating company instead of a construction company. WMATA recently began a contract with Dupont to do a safety development effort which will include employee and customer safety. The WMATA FY 08 budget, to be passed in June, does not include raised fares or service reductions. However, small transfers of resources within the bus network can be expected, as well as small investments in additional bus service. He stated that, in the future, WMATA is looking more aggressively at major corridors, using the Regional Bus Study and Network Evaluation as inputs to this process. He stated that the primary focus for the future of bus transit is maintaining and enhancing service. When asked about the status of MetroAccess improvements, he reported that they are currently working on providing door-to-door service, but that same-day service is currently not a top priority.

### The District of Columbia

Mr. Williams reported that in the recent past, the District made a commitment to increase the population of the city and increase its number of businesses. These increases have happened and are continuing, which has resulted in an increase in demand for transportation. He said that transit is an integral part of meeting that demand. He provided an update on the District's Circulator service, which currently provides three routes and will have two more added in the near future. He also reported on the new limited-stop bus service pilot project, route 79 which runs on Georgia Ave/7<sup>th</sup> Street, and that the city can expect to see more limited-stop routes in the future. Finally, he mentioned the Anacostia streetcar demonstration project currently under construction.

One forum member recommended that DC investigate bringing back exclusive pedestrian phases (or "pedestrian scrambles") at downtown intersections with large volumes of pedestrians and turning traffic. Another forum member asked whether the city planned to expand the use of dedicated bus lanes, such as those currently being tested on 7<sup>th</sup> St. Mr. Williams replied that the 7<sup>th</sup> St. bus/bike lanes are getting "mixed reviews" partially due to the congestion at 7<sup>th</sup> and H Streets. Finally, a forum member inquired whether the 3<sup>rd</sup> Circulator route (Smithsonian/National Gallery of Art Loop) was a pilot. Mr. Williams replied that it was not a pilot, but it only operates during the tourist season.

### City of Alexandria

Mr. Maslanka reported that the city has 3 vendors providing transit service and that none are currently up for renewal. He said they are looking to make their systems more efficient, including the possibility of a new traffic management system, and swipe-card technology for paratransit billing. He reported that the city has implemented new taxi regulations: requirements include providing some accessible taxi cabs. Currently the city has one company with one accessible cab, but they will soon have a few more. Finally, Alexandria requires large developments to file a transportation management plan: developers must provide means to manage the number of vehicles coming and going into the developments. Many of these developments employ shuttles, which could be an opportunity for private providers.

#### City of Fairfax

Mr. Verzosa reported that the city is working to make their buses green. They are working with a Canadian company who has offered, through a grant, to install hydrogen fuel injectors on the city's buses as a pilot project. The installation of these fuel injectors will increase the efficiency of burning diesel fuel and reduce pollution. He said the city will purchase 6 new buses to replace vehicles in the existing fleet: they are leaning towards diesel/electric hybrids. He reported that the city continues to contract with Red Top to provide paratransit service. Finally, he reported that the George Mason University shuttle bus, formerly a joint effort with Fairfax City's Cue bus, is now operated by Reston Limo, and provides service between the university's Fairfax and Prince William campuses as well as the Vienna Metrorail station.

#### Arlington County

Mr. Del Guidis reported that all of the county's transit contracts, for both ART and STAR, have been recently renewed. The County has purchased land for a new bus maintenance facility off of US-1 with construction beginning soon. They have also recently purchased new heavy-duty low-floor CNG 35-foot buses which will be in service in the fall: they will employ consultants to review routes and determine how to best use the vehicles. However, there will be limited expansion of service, as they are retiring much of their existing fleet and replacing them with new vehicles. The County hopes to develop a mid-range growth plan and convert much of the fleet to larger vehicles, as many routes currently operate at crush loads. He reported that STAR has implemented a new, graduated fare structure, and that STAR is working with the community to adjust the program to contain costs and manage demand: all ART vehicles are accessible and can help reduce the demand for STAR. He reported on new transit initiatives in the County, including the Crystal City Transit Way and the Columbia Pike Streetcar. The County has received FTA approval and a categorical exclusion for the first phase of Crystal City Transit Way, which is currently under design and will replace the WMATA route 9S. Finally, the County is working to assess the impact of the reorganization of WMATA: the jurisdictions will now be doing the design and construction of new facilities, but it is still unclear who will operate the new systems. The County is also undertaking improvements to existing WMATA stations and facilities, including Roslyn and Crystal City. He stated that a major challenge lies in the local jurisdictions taking on the design and construction of improvements of WMATA facilities.

Fairfax County

Mr. White reported that as of May 21, the Fairfax Connector system is completely SmartTrip enabled, and that the installations went extremely well, with few fare box problems. He stated that the Connector is planning bike racks on all buses, beginning in the fall. The county has installed 10 prototype bus stop illumination devices, which include signal lights and solar powered side-illumination lights: these lights increase the visibility of passengers waiting at the stops, and illuminate the bus schedules. The county plans to expand the installation of these lights. The Fairfax County system is undergoing a substantial fleet replacement, with 68 buses under contract and 28 additional buses on order for delivery in 2008. The County has broken ground on the West Ox bus operating facility: this facility will be shared with WMATA and should be open in 2009. Also, they are working on renovations of the Herndon bus facility. He stated that the County is planning to transfer operations of several bus lines from WMATA. He reported that the County has a new contract with TSP to operate a telephone information center, and that TranSystems has been awarded a contract for bus maintenance. Finally, he noted that the County's contracts are written so that other jurisdictions can work with the County to use their vendors.

Loudoun County

Mr. Gross reported that the 34 County-operated commuter buses are basically full, with many routes operating at crush loads. In order to accommodate this increase in ridership, the County is revising schedules and shifting larger buses off of local reverse-commute routes. He said the County is planning for impact of the future Dulles Corridor rail project, including permanent park-and-ride lot in Leesburg. He reported that the County is anticipating congestion management challenges, and will likely have to develop a new bus system providing service to Tysons Corner. The forum raised the issue that Loudoun County does not have a taxi cab ordinance which causes problems for the rest of the region: operators can locate in Loudoun but provide service in other jurisdictions. Mr. Gross reported that there is no organization within the Loudoun County government to handle these issues, though they clearly need to be addressed.

Frederick County

Ms. Anderson-Watters stated that the County's new transportation development plan has been approved, which will expand service and add new shuttle services. She stated that the County is hoping to secure future funding to double their bus fleet and cut headways in half. She said the County recently procured new dispatch and paratransit software, and they hope to increase efficiency of paratransit service, including possible installation of automatic vehicle location (AVL) on all paratransit vehicles. She said the County is also looking to increase size of administrative offices: they have filled their current office space and both commuter bus and employee parking lots.

Montgomery County

Ms. Kutz provided an update on the County's "RideOn" service, whose ridership continues to grow: RideOn has had monthly ridership increases for the past 28 months, resulting in a projected 28.3 million riders for FY 2007. She stated that the Montgomery

County Council is enthusiastic about new hybrid/electric buses. She informed the forum that the County is ending their contract with First Transit, and will be working with MV Transportation under a one-year contract to transfer transit service operations in-house. She reported that, for the first time in a while, the County has issued new taxi cab licenses. She reported that many cab companies have increased their fleets, and that the county now has a new cab company. The County will issue 65 new taxi cab licenses in 2008.

When asked why operation of RideOn was being brought in house, she stated that her staff decided that in-house operation was the most efficient way to increase levels of service to meet new demand. When asked about the county-wide taxi cab customer service hotline, she responded that they are still receiving a large number of calls, many with reports of rude drivers, late cabs, and missed trips. When asked whether the issuance of new taxi-cab certificates includes a requirement for accessible taxi cabs, she responded that the current taxi cab code requires 20% of the taxi cab fleet to be accessible, but that the new code does not maintain such a requirement. She concluded by stating that there has been a 33% decrease in the demand for accessible cabs, which she attributes to improvements in MetroAccess paratransit service.

#### Prince George's County

Mr. Overman said that the County has had no major expansions in the past year, only adding 3 buses to help with reliability. He stated that the new National Harbor project is currently their biggest challenge. He said that service to National Harbor will be shared between the County's "The Bus" and MetroBus. He noted that the National Harbor plan calls for over 4,000 employees and a variety of retail, resulting in a need for a high level of bus service. He said that the County is currently accepting bids for a bus shelter amenity project, providing 500 bus shelters. On December 6, 2006, the County initiated a free-fare program for all seniors and persons with disabilities on all routes at all times. Finally, he provided an update on the County's Transit Service Operations Plan: the work on this plan, which will have a 5-year planning horizon, is still on-going.

Additionally, Mr. Foster submitted a written update on the Prince George's County Master Plan of Transportation, developed by the Prince George's County Planning Department, M-NCPPC. This document is included in the appendix.

#### Maryland Transit Authority (MTA)

Mr. Saffran provided a background on the MTA, which operates train (MARC) and commuter bus service in the Metropolitan Washington region. He stated that MTA's commuter bus system operates 235 coaches per day along 22 routes using 14 different contracts. He stated that one small contract will soon come up for bid, and that for the first time the contract structure will encourage subcontracting. He stated that 75% of the MTA's larger contracts will be up for bid in 2009: these 5-year contracts will total over \$100 million. MTA's commuter bus service added 19 new round trips last year, adding more trips in overcrowded areas and looking into markets with no service. He reported

that the MTA is still looking into smart card technology on commuter bus and commuter rail, and that the implementation of such technology is most likely 2 years away.

Northern Virginia Transit Commission

Ms. Rodgers commented on the Fairfax City fuel injection demonstration. She said that the Virginia Railway Express is moving to a private maintenance contract. Finally, she mentioned that NVTC has negotiated a contract for services to educate seniors on how to use fixed route transportation.

Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission

Mr. Marx described PRTC's 6<sup>th</sup> straight year of double-digit ridership increases, stating that the system passed 10,000 passengers per day. PRTC will be expanding, adding or extending routes, and that the greatest challenge with such expansion is finding parking for the commuter buses. He said that Fauquier County may be joining PRTC in the near future, and fledgling service would be provided to that county. PRTC's continued growth has created many logistical challenges at PRTC's offices, and they are considering a new western facility. He reported that PRTC is installing electronic fareboxes, but that they will not yet be smartcard-enabled. They are also working with a consultant to provide an implementation plan for a system-wide communication system, including AVL, WiFi on buses, on-board monitoring of bus systems, real-time video, etc. Finally, he stated that PRTC is involved with the HOT lane transit planning, and that they have great interest in ensuring that the implementation goes smoothly.

Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transit

Ms. Samarasinghe provided an overview of the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation. She described VDRPT's three activity areas: rail, transit and commuter service. She provided a brief update on the Dulles Corridor Rail project, stating that construction is expected to start in the spring of 2008. She briefly described a new light rail project in Norfolk, which includes 11 stations and 4 park and ride lots. She then mentioned other state-wide rail and transit projects: Richmond High Speed Rail corridor; Trans Dominion Express rail project; Washington to Richmond corridor project including a 3<sup>rd</sup> parallel track and improvements on the Quantico Creek Bridge. Finally, she stated that VDRPT was spearheading the transit study of the I-95 HOT lanes project.

Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority

A representative from MWAA was unable to attend the forum.

Tri-County Council of Southern Maryland

A representative of the Council was unable to attend the forum.

Washington Metropolitan Area Transportation Commission (WMATC)

Mr. Morrow reported that he was encouraged by the new taxi cab regulator's task force, noting that previous efforts lacked permanency. He felt that this new effort under the prevue of the TPB will help address that issue. He stated that this provides an opportunity for real improvements for public and the industry. He also provided a brief update on the WMATC website, with carrier lists available for download.



**APPENDIX:**

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1. Presentation: Private Provider Participation in Human Service Transportation
2. Proposed Mission Of The TPB Regional Taxicab Regulators (RTR) Task Force
3. Prince George's County Master Plan of Transportation





## **PROPOSED MISSION OF THE TPB REGIONAL TAXICAB REGULATORS (RTR) TASK FORCE**

### **Mission**

The mission of the Regional Taxicab Regulators Task Force is to:

- Encourage close cooperation and sharing of information between municipal and county taxicab regulators in the National Capital region and to work to resolve common problems; and
- Explore the possibility of developing standards to improve the quality of service for taxicab customers in their respective jurisdictions.

### **Goals**

1. Develop a regional reciprocity agreement that will be distributed widely within participating jurisdictions for review and possible adoption;
2. Discussion and exchange of ideas among government officials concerning the regulation of taxicabs;
3. Coordination of efforts to improve the regulatory framework of taxicabs; and
4. Coordination with the TPB Private Providers Task Force and the TPB Human Services Transportation Coordination Task Force to strengthen the alliance between public and private interests.

### **Membership**

Task force members represent the local, regional or state taxicab regulating agencies from TPB member jurisdictions. Taxicab regulating agencies from jurisdictions outside of the TPB planning area are also encouraged to participate. Task Force meetings are open to the public. The following jurisdictions and agencies are currently members:

#### **Jurisdictions**

Arlington County  
City of Alexandria  
City of Falls Church  
District of Columbia  
Fairfax County  
Frederick County  
Loudoun County  
Montgomery County  
Prince George's County  
Prince William County

Maryland Public Service Commission  
Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority  
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit  
Commission

#### **Agencies**

Participating Jurisdictions or Agencies Outside of the TPB Planning Area:

Anne Arundel County  
Baltimore-Washington International Airport  
City of Annapolis

**Governance**

Governance of this task force will follow standard TPB protocols. The task force will be established by TPB and it will report to the TPB. It will meet every other month, or as needed. A chair will be selected by the task force. The chair will serve a one-year term and the chair position will rotate between representatives from the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia.

## **Prince George's County Master Plan of Transportation**

(Prince George's County Planning Department, M-NCPPC)

A. The Countywide Master Plan of Transportation is now 25 years old. The Prince George's County Council directed the Planning Department to update this plan when it approved the current General Plan in October 2002.

The MPofT will be initiated within the next month and will serve as the strategic transportation planning document for Prince George's County through the near to medium-term future. It will recommend a multi-modal transportation network that can support and accommodate the growth and development patterns envisioned for this County in the 2002 General Plan.

B. MPofT will consist of three major elements, or layers:

1. Bikeways, Trails and Pedestrian Mobility
2. Transit
3. Roads and Highways

Each layer will recommend specific transportation facilities, services and initiatives that will enable that particular mode of travel to complement and support both the other modes and the land use and growth policies and plans in Prince George's County.

C. The Transit Element will include recommendations for fixed guideway facilities and improvements in this County, especially - but not necessarily only:

1. Possible future extensions to the Purple Line beyond New Carrollton
2. Cross-river transit service to National Harbor from northern Virginia
3. Metrorail extensions or enhancements from Greenbelt and Branch Avenue

The Transit Element will also be coordinated with the Prince George's County Five Year Transit Service Operations Plan (TSOP) to ensure that MPofT recommendations are consistent with future bus service proposals, particularly in the Developed and Developing Tiers of the County.