



CHARLES COUNTY TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Presentation for the Charles County
Commissioners
January 29, 2019



Transit Development Plan

- Serves as a guide for transit system development for a short-term period (typically five years)
- Provides a vision of the future public transportation system
- Planning process identifies:
 - Transit goals and objectives
 - Current status of transit services
 - Unmet transit needs
 - Plan for service improvements in the short-term

TDP Advisory Committee

- Project guided by a TDP Advisory Committee
- Committee comprised of community members and agencies affected by public transit services
- Provided input on project goals, transportation needs, outreach strategies, etc.
- Assisted in collection of appropriate data and information from previous studies or plans

VanGO Overview

- County staff
 - Administer grants
 - Oversee system planning and design
 - Implement marketing and outreach efforts
 - Ensure vendor compliance with contract and for quality assurance and customer service
 - Oversee planning and construction of new maintenance and operations building
- Transitioned to New Vendor on 7/1/17
 - Transit operations, including hiring drivers, dispatchers, and maintenance staff
 - Schedule paratransit and specialized trips
 - Perform vehicle maintenance

Current VanGO Services

- 16 Fixed Public Transit Services
 - Operate Monday through Saturday
 - Service hours vary between 6:30am and 10:30pm
- Specialized Transportation Services
 - ADA paratransit
 - Demand response transportation
 - Subscription service

VanGO Data

- Provided 839,900 passenger trips in FY17
- Decrease from previous year, though overall ridership between FY2012 and FY2017 increased 9.2%.

- FY19 Budget = \$7,383,193
 - Federal: \$2,820,538
 - State: \$140,805
 - County: \$3,862,850
 - Fares: \$404,000
 - Contracts: \$155,000

Needs Analysis

- Input from the TDP Advisory Committee
- Review of existing VanGO services and other transportation services
- Review of recent plans and studies
- Demographic analysis
- On-Board customer survey
- Community survey
- Employer survey
- Stakeholder/Agency Interviews

On-Board Customer Survey

Rider Age

- 25-49 years old = 41%
- 50-64 = 29%
- 19-24 = 20%
- 65+ = 6%

Employment Status

- 37% full-time
- 25% part-time
- 16% unemployed

Income

- Under \$20,000 = 39%
- Between \$20,000-\$40,000 = 23%

Availability to a Car

- Zero cars in household: 46%
- One car in household: 28%

On-Board Customer Survey

Trip Purpose

- Work: 38%
- Shopping: 23%

Satisfaction with VanGO services

- Satisfied = 42%
- Very satisfied = 26%

Possible service improvements

- Sunday service
- Later evening hours
- Additional bus stop shelters/benches
- More frequent services

Overall Liked Best and Least about VanGO

Best

- Availability
- Affordability
- Courtesy of Drivers and Staff

Least

- On-time performance
- Cleanliness of buses and stops
- Conduct of fellow passengers

Potential Service Alternatives

- Developed based on review of existing VanGO services and needs analysis
- Identified potential advantages and disadvantages of each
- Some include modifications with little impact on operating costs; others involve service expansions
- Presented to the TDP Advisory Committee
- After their review, developed conceptual plan to serve as guide for service development and organizational alternatives over next five years

Proposed Plan for Service Improvements

Short-Term

- Pinefield Route / Brandywine Connector Modifications

Mid-Term

- Increased Service Frequency on Selected Routes
- Expanded Service Hours

Long-Term

- Sunday Service on Selected Routes

Fare Policy Considerations

TDP includes these considerations:

- The current farebox recovery ratio is below MTA guidelines
- However, any increase to the fare structure may be a hardship to current and potential riders with lower incomes
- A general rule of thumb in communities where customers are mostly transit-dependent rather than choice riders is that for every 10% of fare increase, ridership will decrease by 3%.
- VanGO fares are lower than similar transit systems in Maryland, and other systems have monthly passes and fare media not currently employed by Charles County VanGO

ADA Paratransit Program Considerations

- Demand for ADA paratransit services has increased significantly in recent years:
 - Increase from 2,864 passenger trips in FY2016 to 4,439 in FY2017
 - Average per trip delivery cost was \$76.11 in FY2017, versus \$6.97 for fixed route trips
 - While ADA paratransit trips represent only a small percentage of those provided by VanGO (a little more than one half of a percent in FY2017), a little over 5% of the FY2017 operating cost was used for these trips

ADA Paratransit Program Considerations

- Under the ADA, transit systems can charge up to twice the fare over the price of a general public trip
- Encourage greater use of fixed route services:
 - Offer free fixed route fares for people who qualify for ADA paratransit services
 - Provide safer services (discussed in next alternative)
 - Reduce ride times (as noted in service improvements)
 - Continuously assess accessibility to bus stops and make improvements as needed
 - Identifying possible flexible first-mile/last-mile local services
 - Expand rider education and travel training
 - Conduct in-person assessments
- Implementing a taxi voucher or subsidy program to encourage use of private transportation services

Safety and Security Issues

- Common complaint through the rider survey concerned the activities of some people at the La Plata Park and Ride
- Concerns have been noted about loitering at the 301 Park and Ride location:
 - VanGO staff has been working with law enforcement personnel and a crime task force to discuss safety issues at these locations
- Through the rider survey it was also noted that the percentage of older adults using VanGO services is lower than most transit systems, possibly the result of seniors not feeling comfortable using services
 - To encourage greater use of fixed route services customers will need to feel secure at bus stops and transfer locations

Next Steps

- Endorsement from County Commissioners
 - Acceptance does not obligate County or MTA to fund any particular element at any time
 - Implementation of any component a function of funding availability
- Annual budget and MTA grant application process

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