

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

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Meeting Summary

Regional Bus Subcommittee

CHAIR: Aaron Overman, District of Columbia DOT

Tuesday January 26, 2010

Noon – 2 PM

Meeting Attendees:

Dorothy Hersey, MTA Regional
Planning

Al Himes, Alexandria Transit Company

Ryan Jones, PRTC

Sean Kennedy, WMATA

Maurice Keys, DDOT

Bill Orleans

Aaron Overman, DDOT

Douglas Stallworth, WMATA

Chuck Steigerwald, PRTC

Kevin Thornton, Prince George's
County DP&T

Alexis Verzosa, City of Fairfax

Randall White, Fairfax County Dept. of
Transportation

Steve Yaffe, Arlington County

TPB Staff in Attendance:

Michael Eichler

Rex Hodgson

Ron Kirby

Andrew Meese

Gerald Miller

Agenda Items:

Welcome and Introductions

Aaron Overman, DDOT

The chair welcomed the meeting participants and called the meeting to order. He asked the members in attendance to introduce themselves, and thanked the group for providing him the opportunity to chair the subcommittee this year.

Before continuing on with the meeting, Mr. Kirby took a moment to welcome Mr. Overman to the subcommittee. He also announced that the primary TPB staff coordinator for the subcommittee, Mr. Eichler, was leaving his position and would be replaced by Mr. Hodgson. Mr. Kirby thanked Mr. Eichler for his time

overseeing the subcommittee, and encouraged the group to show their appreciation through a round of applause.

Presentation on the Fairfax County Transit Development Plan

Randall White, Fairfax County Connector

Mr. White spoke to a slideshow detailing the process and results of the Fairfax County Transit Development Plan (TDP), which recommends changes in Metrobus and Fairfax Connector bus transit service for the county between 2010 and 2020. He noted that the final TDP report will be going to the county board either in February or March.

Mr. Stallworth noted that the presentation stated that approximately 11,000 surveys were collected. He inquired as to the survey response rate. Mr. White was unable to speak for the WMATA portion of the survey, but noted that an approximate 45% response rate for the Fairfax Connector portion of the survey.

Mr. Thornton inquired about the 20-minute telephone survey that received approximately 1000 responses. He asked what sort of motivation was used to encourage so many participants for such a lengthy survey. Mr. White replied that his contractor noted that the survey respondents showed a lot of interest and willingness to complete the survey. Mr. Kennedy inquired further about the phone survey, assuming the telephone survey was conducted on non-riders, and wondered if they had asked what it would take for them to use transit. Mr. White stated that the such data was likely collected but that he did not have it at this time.

Mr. Keys asked why the purchase of buses was phased throughout the ten years of the TDP. Mr. White replied that the buses would be purchased only when they were needed to supply the phased level of service specified in the plan.

Mr. Stallworth noted that the presentation mentioned a Phase 3 of the Tysons Circulator service, and asked for more details about such a service. Mr. White replied that the Phase 3 Tysons Circulator is not yet defined, and could be any of a variety of transit services, including people movers, street cars, dedicated transitways, etc. He stated the the purpose of this high quality circulator service would be to encourage high densities in areas not directly adjacent to the future Metrorail stations.

Mr. Yaffe inquired as to whether the final TDP report was available online yet. Mr. White noted that it would be publically available after it was presented to the Fairfax County Board later this winter.

Presentation of the TPB's US DOT Bus Livability Program grant application

Rex Hodgson, TPB Staff

Mr. Hodgson presented a status update on the TPB's US DOT Bus Livability Program grant application to the subcommittee. This effort, begun in December of 2009, is in response to a new US DOT grant program funding transit services that integrate land use, environmental justice and environmental planning. The TPB effort is to apply for funding for bus stop usability and accessibility improvements in areas with high concentrations of persons with disabilities, older adults, no-car households and middle-low income households. TPB staff received several applications from six jurisdictions, and an extra week was added for last minute changes or additions to the project list. The final project list will be presented to the TPB Steering Committee on February 5, 2010, for final approval.

Mr. Orleans asked if the Prince George's submission included the 28 bus stops that Greenbelt submission addressed, expressing concern over redundancy between the two submissions. Mr. Hodgson stated that he could not speak for Prince George's County, but expected that if their original submission for 1,600 bus stops did include the 28 bus stops identified by Greenbelt. He noted that Prince George's County would not have any difficulty finding ways to spend that money to make improvements to any of the many other bus stops that were identified.

Mr. Stallworth noted that Montgomery County's submission to implement real-time transit info seems to be more expensive, per bus stop, as compared to DDOT's submission for NextBus real-time transit info. Mr. Hodgson noted that Montgomery County's submission includes funding for developing the technology for their real-time info system, whereas the NextBus system is already in place. Mr. Kennedy added that Montgomery County still needs to put transponders on buses and make other capital improvements in order to implement their system.

Mr. Thornton inquired whether the funds could be used for administrative costs, such as back-end servers and software for running real-time bus arrival signs. Mr. Hodgson noted that project administrative (implementation) expenses are allowed, but recurring program administration and operating costs are not eligible. Mr. Yaffe asked for confirmation that project administration costs are capped at 10% of total project costs. Mr. Hodgson stated that he was unsure of any limitation.

Mr. Kirby stated that it is important to note that it is likely selected applications will not be funded in full, therefore projects that can be scaled back are better candidates for funding under the grant. The components of this application appear to be well suited for potential scaling.

Update on Consultant Study to Develop Implementation Guidelines for Prioritizing Bus Transit on Arterials in the Washington Region.

Michael Eichler, TPB Staff

Mr. Eichler handed out a copy of a recent COG RFP for a consultant study to develop implementation guidelines for prioritizing bus transit on arterials in the region. He noted that the RFP was released on Friday, January 23, 2010.

Update on the TPB Scenario Study

Michael Eichler, TPB Staff

Mr. Eichler presented a slide show on the status of the CLRP Aspirations Scenario, including preliminary analysis results. The scenario combines land use shifts, roadway pricing and high-quality bus rapid transit service in an attempt to reduce congestion and provide increased mobility throughout the region. Preliminary results illustrate increased regional VMT, but decreased regional congestion and total travel time.

Discussion of Year 2010 Agenda Items

Mr. Overman asked the group of any potential agenda items the membership would like to be covered during upcoming meetings.

Mr. Yaffe suggested a monitoring program for the Pentagon Transit Center study would be a good addition to the slate. He also noted he would like to see the results of the report on shuttle services due to the White House on April 5th (Executive Order 13514).

Mr. Steigerwald asked for an update on the DDOT Commuter Bus Management Plan development, noting that the last that he had heard of the project, there was a need for coordination on bus stop signage between commuter bus operators and WMATA.

Mr. Stallworth suggested it would be a good time to look at the over-all role of Metrobus as a regional and local transit service operator. Related to this, he also reminded the group of the previous fare simplification work that rationalized the fares across all bus operators in the region, and that since then some operators have resumed modifying their own fares. He suggested that discussion of regional fare structures would be appropriate.

Mr. Verzosa stated that presentations on service cuts across the different operators would be appreciated.

Mr. Yaffe stated that, from a bus rider's perspective, all the transit operators participating in the regional fare structure are the same – only the color of the bus may vary. As such, he suggested that the group work together to present a united platform for coordination of bus transit policies and services in the region. Mr. Keys continued that there needs to be better coordination between all modes of transit in the region. Mr. Overman noted that often different modes compete for limited road space, and that better coordination needs to be conducted in order to ensure that all modes can successfully co-exist.

Mr. Yaffe ended with a plea that when evaluating fare increases, operators consider the potential impact on dwell times, noting that passengers paying in cash may need to feed on one dollar, one quarter and two dimes, and the time for older riders to handle and deposit dimes would increase overall dwell and consequently travel time.

Mr. Overman noted that there would be no meeting in February, to give TPB staff the opportunity to transition the meeting management responsibilities. He then concluded the meeting with a discussion of the meeting time, noting that he will not have a problem with the current time of the meeting as long as it can be guaranteed to begin and end on time. It was suggested that the meeting time be changed to 11:30 to allow more time for lunch before the meeting substance begins.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:00 PM.

The next meeting of the TPB's Regional Bus Subcommittee will be held on March 23, 2010.

All meeting materials are available for download from the subcommittee's website: <http://www.mwcog.org/TPB/RBS/docs/>