



**Customer Service and Operations Committee**

**Board Information Item III-B**

**March 12, 2015**

**MetroAccess Study Update**

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority  
**Board Action/Information Summary**

Action  Information

MEAD Number:  
201315

Resolution:  
 Yes  No

**TITLE:**

MetroAccess Long-Term Sustainability Update

**PRESENTATION SUMMARY:**

In light of rising costs of MetroAccess, the Board of Directors included in its FY2015 budget resolution an assignment for staff to conduct a long-term sustainability study of the service by June 2015. This presentation is a progress report on the assignment, providing an updated financial context for the study and highlighting key findings that have potentially favorable fiscal impacts.

**PURPOSE:**

To provide the Customer Service and Operations Committee the preliminary results of the Board-directed study on the long-term sustainability of MetroAccess, affording the Board the opportunity to review the recommended policy direction of identifying paratransit alternatives and considering both customer service and financial implications for the current budget process.

**DESCRIPTION:**

**Key Highlights:**

- Paratransit is the most expensive form of “specialized transportation” because of the many obligations that Metro must meet in providing it under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and our customers with disabilities tell us it is the most reliable mode for meeting their needs.
- Paratransit cost can be best mitigated by offering better alternatives, but because it is a civil right, we must offer a value proposition to customers if we want them to consider alternative services. The study validates the provision of these alternatives and cites successful examples of this approach from other transit properties.
- The provision of paratransit alternatives requires the support of the jurisdictions, and there are many opportunities to implement these alternatives throughout the region, thereby avoiding significant cost and producing greater customer satisfaction and quality of life.

**Background and History:**

- MetroAccess cost is directly tied to ridership, and annual ridership increases have ranged from as low as 4% to as high as 22% in the last ten years. Through

Metro's efforts to provide more robust marketing of fixed-route services, (supported by an enhanced paratransit eligibility certification process that offers travel training), ridership was temporarily reduced, but it began increasing again in FY 2014 in keeping with national trends.

- At a growth rate of 4% annually, MetroAccess will add another one million passengers by 2025, increasing the MetroAccess cost by over \$40 million.
- As human service agency program budgets decrease, thousands of customers with disabilities are being referred to paratransit. Currently, these agencies provide nearly 750,000 trips per year, and we are at risk for inheriting this customer base.

### **Discussion:**

- The sustainability study on MetroAccess examines the impact of demographics on growth of the service; the potential for more use of bus and rail services; the effectiveness of MetroAccess in comparison to human service, healthcare and other providers in addressing riders' needs; alternative service delivery models for MetroAccess riders; and the impact of MetroAccess costs on riders and funding jurisdictions.
- The study will illustrate how the National Capital Region compares to national trends on the disability population and its associated impacts on paratransit service. It will also make a similar comparison between WMATA and other transit agencies across the nation in terms of our approach to meeting the challenge of addressing the increased demand.
- Metro is already providing over one million trips per year to eligible MetroAccess customers, and we must continue to make improvements to fixed-route services (to include bus stops) to encourage those customers to continue to choose fixed-route as an option.
- Metro is reaching out to human service agencies to discuss more effective ways to meet the customers' needs, to include leveraging fixed-route services and exploring better paratransit alternatives, but more needs to be done to ensure the ongoing sustainability of MetroAccess for the future.
- The movement of trips from human service agencies to paratransit is not only a cost issue, but also one of service quality. The HSAs are much more knowledgeable in the customers' disability types and special needs, and when they provide service directly, it is invariably better for and better received by the customer.
- Two pilot projects have already proven successful – CAPS-MD and CAPS-DC. CAPS-MD involves a single human services agency in Montgomery County, and CAPS-DC leverages two qualified taxi providers in the District of Columbia. Similar capacity for both types of pilots exists in Virginia, and staff is preparing to discuss the development of additional pilots with all jurisdictions. The study supports these projects and will recommend ways to expand this approach for the maximum regional benefit.

### **FUNDING IMPACT:**

No impact on funding because those aspects of the recommendations that are already in progress have been included in the assumptions of the proposed budget as submitted.

### **TIMELINE:**

<b>Previous Actions</b>	March 2014 – Board commissioned staff to conduct study, due June 2015 with subsequent actions by end of year.
<b>Anticipated actions after presentation</b>	June 2015 – issuance of formal study, to be followed by subsequent discussion at future CSO committee meeting.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Support paratransit alternative projects as described herein.



Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

# Long-Term Sustainability Study of MetroAccess

Customer Service and Operations Committee

March 12, 2015

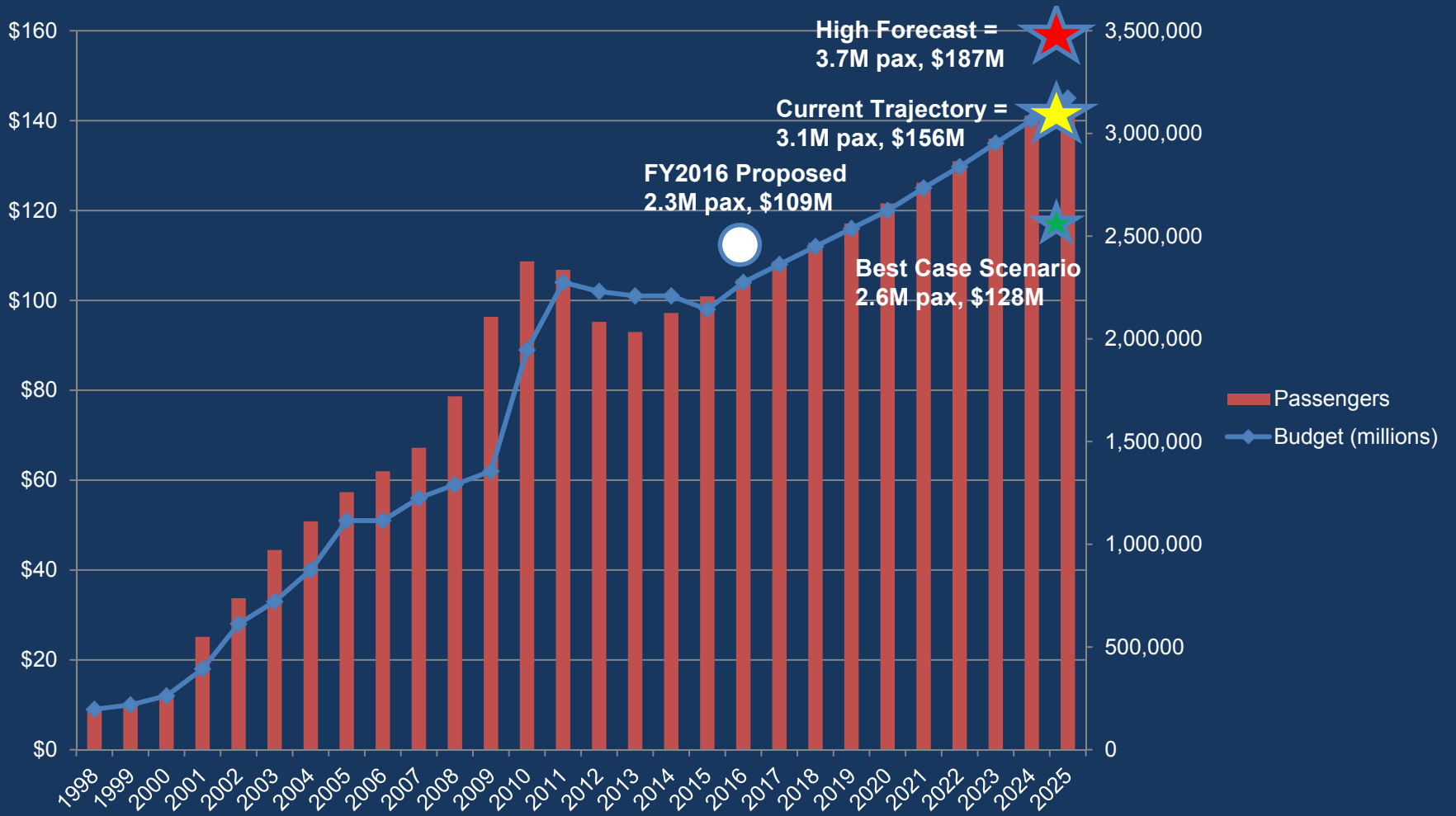


# Board Resolution 2014-15

- Study the long-term sustainability of MetroAccess and related services in coordination with other regional and jurisdictional examinations of transportation services for people with disabilities, including:
  - Demographic changes that will impact the number of eligible riders
  - Improvements to bus/rail facilities to promote accessibility on fixed route transit
  - Effectiveness of MetroAccess in comparison to human service healthcare and other providers in addressing riders' needs
  - Alternative service delivery models for MetroAccess riders
  - Impact of MetroAccess costs on riders and funding jurisdictions
- After receipt of input from the Board, propose a plan for meeting MetroAccess riders' needs through 2025



# Ridership and Cost Outlook





# Study Findings

## DEMAND MANAGEMENT

- ✓ Maintain ADA-defined policies on service area, fares
- ✓ Bus Stop Improvements
- ✓ Expanded Travel Training
- Improved Marketing of Bus/Rail to Constituency
- Trip-by-Trip Eligibility Enforcement

## COST REDUCTION

- Explore dedicated, Metro-owned facilities that minimize deadhead and consolidate resources
- Decentralize delivery of service through jurisdiction-based services, funded separately from WMATA





# Study Findings

## LEVERAGE HUMAN SERVICES AGENCIES (HSA)

- Enable HSA to directly operate service by providing:
  - ✓ In-Kind Contributions
    - Vehicles
    - Subsidy
- Establish customized solutions for each jurisdiction with the possible capability of being administered regionally in the future
- The CAPS pilot projects have been successful and are consistent with national best practices



## Next Steps

- Final report of sustainability study released, June 2015
- Action plan to be provided to the Board this summer with new initiatives to be built into FY2017 budget process
- Customer-facing policy components to be vetted concurrently with Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Access Services will work with jurisdictional staff on bus stop improvement and HSA partnerships – suggest designating point of contact from each jurisdiction able to make funding recommendations