

ITEM 10 - Information

September 19, 2007

Briefing on the TPB Access for All (AFA) Advisory Committee
Comments on the 2007 CLRP

Staff

Recommendation: Receive briefing on the enclosed report describing the committee's comments on projects in the long range plan and continuing concerns and recommendations.

Issues: None

Background: The AFA annually presents comments on the long-range plan to the TPB; last year the AFA chair, Kathy Porter, presented comments on the plan to the TPB on September 20, 2006. The AFA reviewed maps of major projects in the proposed plan and locations of low-income communities, minority communities, persons with disabilities and limited English speakers at the July 26, 2007 AFA meeting. This review prompted the comments on the plan. The enclosed AFA comments are on proposed new projects in the plan and transportation related concerns.



**ACCESS FOR ALL ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENTS ON
THE DRAFT 2007 FINANCIALLY CONSTRAINED LONG-
RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN**
September 19, 2007

The TPB Access for All Advisory Committee is submitting the following comments regarding the Draft 2007 Financially Constrained Long-Range Plan (CLRP) based on comments received at the July 26, 2007 AFA meeting and recent AFA reports.

Specific Comments on Proposed New Projects in the CLRP

Ensure that paratransit vehicles can use the I-95/I-395 and Capital Beltway HOT lanes at no charge. Current policy allows paratransit vehicles to use high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes both on the way to pick up customers (when the vehicle may be occupied by only the driver), and while transporting customers. This policy helps make paratransit service more dependable and timely. The AFA wants the Virginia Department of Transportation and local governments to ensure that this policy be extended to all HOT lanes and allow paratransit vehicles to use the priced lanes at no charge.

Persons with disabilities should be included in the early stages of planning for the Silver Spring Transit Center. The AFA is pleased to see the plans for a multi-modal Silver Spring Transit Center. The committee urges that the Maryland Transit Administration and Montgomery County include customers with a wide range of disabilities in the early stages of planning of the transit center, rather than after the major decisions have been made, to ensure that the transit center be fully accessible and easy to use by all customers. Language access to transit by persons with limited English skills should also be considered in planning the new transit center.

Community bus service should be an integral part of both the Dulles Rail Project and the I-95/I-395 HOT Lanes. Community bus service is a frequently used mode of transportation by people with low-incomes, those with limited-English skills and persons with disabilities. The Virginia Department of Transportation and local governments should ensure that bus service isn't negatively affected after the addition of rail along the Dulles corridor and is a key component of HOT Lanes on I-95/I-395 and the Capital Beltway.

General Comments on Transportation-Related Concerns

Language Access

WMATA and local jurisdictions should implement recommendation from the AFA's recent report "Improving Language Access to Transit in the National Capital Region" endorsed by the TPB on May 16, 2007¹. In particular, the committee would like to see WMATA implement a pilot program to test improved language access ideas in areas with high-concentrations of limited-English speakers.

MetroAccess

The AFA committee applauds WMATA's efforts to develop a MetroAccess door-to-door service policy. **The committee hopes that the implementation of the door-to-door service policy will evolve and be flexible enough to allow for consumer feedback and for drivers to use their own judgment as specific situations arise.** The TPB's Independent Review of MetroAccess has been postponed until January 2008 to allow the system to adjust to the implementation of door-to-door service scheduled to begin in the fall.

The AFA continues to **stress the importance of involving MetroAccess customers in monitoring the service and providing feedback** to decision-makers. In 2006, the TPB's Demand Responsive Study included a priority recommendation for a new MetroAccess user group that would bring together users, transportation providers, and MetroAccess management. The user group should be able to communicate directly with the WMATA Board, and should be involved in monitoring customer satisfaction through surveys, a mystery rider program, and performance reports².

WMATA should **provide the MetroAccess application and customer guide in Spanish** and ensure that MetroAccess customers with limited English skills can communicate with reservationists the MetroAccess call center.



¹ The report can be found at: <http://www.mwcog.org/transportation/committee/afa>.

² *Improving Demand Responsive Services for People with Disabilities in the Washington Region*, National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board, Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. February 15, 2006. <https://www.mwcog.org/uploads/committee-documents/v1ZfWV420070731094539.pdf>

The AFA committee supports the **use of more taxicabs in the provision of MetroAccess** service given the improved dependability and efficiency private taxicab companies tend to provide.

Accessible Taxicabs



The AFA would like to see **more wheelchair-accessible taxicab service** in the region and recommends that the local, state, and federal government provide subsidies to private taxi companies to encourage accessible cabs in the District of Columbia and Prince George's County.

Accessible Metrorail Stations

The AFA stresses that **WMATA consult further with visually-impaired customers before deciding to change the color of the warning lights along Metrorail platforms** to red or yellow. Some visually-impaired customers find the red lights harder to distinguish than the white lights.

The AFA supports **additional accessibility improvements in Metrorail stations**, such as more tactile warning strips at the edges of Metrorail platforms, improved lighting, better signage about the location of elevators, and access for visual-impaired customers to the train arrival information provided on passenger information displays.