

Reforming WMATA Governance

Transportation Planning Board
Citizens Advisory Committee
Thursday September 15, 2011

Overview

- Background
 - Importance of WMATA to the region
 - Need for reform
- Governance Work Group
- Progress by WMATA Board
- Phase I Recommendations Report
- Phase II Recommendations
- Public Comments Received
- Next Steps

WMATA: A Model Transit Operation

- **Ridership:**
 - WMATA is the fourth-largest transit agency in the nation.
 - Its rail system ranks second behind only New York, and
 - The bus system is the sixth-largest
 - Metro transports nearly 800,000 customers on an average weekday.
 - WMATA includes Rail, Metrobus and MetroAccess
- **Continued growth in ridership:**
 - Between 1999 and 2008 ridership increased by 35%.
- WMATA used to be considered a **model U.S. metropolitan transit operation**. In recent years, that view has changed.

3

Background: Improving WMATA Governance

- Concerns over WMATA governance and oversight have been apparent since the June 2009 Red Line accident.
- The accident impacted public confidence in the system and raised concerns over the WMATA Board's capacity to resolve the problems.
- The agency and the Board's long term response also brought into question the Board's ability to prioritize safety and system reliability.

4

Background: Improving WMATA Governance

- Ineffective Board operations contributed to the decline of the rail and transit system over the years.
- For example, certain issues were highlighted as specific opportunities for improvement:
 - Size and make-up of the Board
 - Coordinated appointment process: subject matter expertise
 - Ridership requirement
 - Annual jurisdictional rotation of Board Chairmanship: encouraged parochialism and disjunctive leadership
 - Oversight by Signatories and appointing authorities
 - Lack of focus on high-level policy: excessive amount of Board time spent on day-to-day operations

5

A Call for Reform

- The WMATA framework established by Compact
- WMATA: A unique regional body
 - Serves the National Capital Region of Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia
 - Compact review involves multiple jurisdictions and funding partners
- Board Structure:
 - Similar to a public utility model as opposed to a private sector corporation model – this is not unique to WMATA.
 - The difference is, however, that most other transit properties are not subject to the same level of **interstate and multijurisdictional oversight and various mechanisms for funding** and, many other systems have dedicated sources of funding besides fares and other business revenues.

6

Governance Work Group

- The Governance Work Group, comprised of the three transportation executives from MD, DC and VA released a two-year work plan in January outlining areas for review and have identified three phases of recommendations and implementation options to achieve a significant improvement in the governance structure of the WMATA Board.

7

The Will for Reform

- At both the Board level and among the Executives
 - Governance Committee
 - Board's first ever Bylaws
 - Revised Procedures
 - Strategic Planning Sessions
 - Governance Work Group: Phase I Recommendations Report; Phase II currently under review
- Fixing the flaws in the board's operation is key to addressing and resolving some of the difficult issues facing the overall agency.

8

Phase I Recommendations

- Aim to improve leadership, regional, high-level policy focus, accountability and transparency.
 - Board member terms and term limits
 - Board Chair term
 - Board member qualifications and reporting requirements:
 - ridership, attendance
 - Overall Board composition
 - annual review by Signatories and Executives
 - High-level policy and regional focus
 - Frequency of meetings
 - Compensation: public disclosure
 - Enhance oversight authority of the TOC
 - Orientation Program
 - Public input process
 - Use of Executive Sessions

9

Phase II Recommendations

- Under discussion by the GWG with the Executives
- Includes the drafting of and advocating for any legislation that was recommended in Phase I, in addition to resolving any items that remain open for further discussion, such as:
 - Role of alternates
 - Size of Board
 - Jurisdictional Veto – appropriate use

10

Public Comments

- Public Comments received from just 3 groups
- Overall supportive of the Phase I Recommendations
- Comments included:
 - Public reports (ridership, attendance, annual work plan)
 - Define “experience”
 - Value of representation by elected officials
 - Board member term limits (Pros/Cons)
 - Chair term limits (Pros/Cons)
 - *Phase II issues:*
 - Jurisdictional Veto (retain/eliminate)
 - Role of Alternates/ Size of Board (retain/modify)
 - Uniform Compensation
 - Chairman appointed from outside the Board

11

Next Steps

- Provide the Governors and Mayor with consensus recommendations on the Phase I topics in time for the development of legislation to be considered in early 2012.
- The GWG will continue to engage with Board members and the Governance Committee to ensure
 - 1) that the positive steps outlined in the new Bylaws and revised Procedures are fully implemented moving forward and
 - 2) that the Board’s strategic planning sessions culminate in a successful, regional vision and mission for the agency.
- We will continue to seek input from interested stakeholders as we further evaluate the policy issues that require further discussion at this point.

12

Thank You

- Questions or Comments- Please feel free to contact us

Maryland

Bruce Gartner, MDOT: BGartner@mdot.state.md.us

DC

Steve Strauss, DDOT: Steve.Strauss@dc.gov

Virginia

Joe Swartz, DRPT: Joseph.Swartz@drpt.virginia.gov