

ITEM 8 - Information

April 21, 2004

Briefing on 2003 Report of the
TPB Access for All Advisory Committee

Staff

Recommendation: Receive briefing on the report covering the activities and recommendations of the Committee in 2003, and outlining planned activities for 2004.

Issues: None

Background: This item was deferred from the March 17, 2004 meeting. The TPB Access for All Advisory Committee (AFA) was created by the TPB in 2001. Its first report on its 2001 activities and recommendations was presented to the TPB in March 2002.

ACCESS FOR ALL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

2003 REPORT

TO THE

**NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION
TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD**

DRAFT

APRIL 21, 2004

NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD
METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Executive Summary

The National Capital Transportation Planning Board (TPB) established the Access for All Advisory Committee in 2001. The Access for All (AFA) Advisory Committee advises the TPB on transportation issues, programs, policies, and services that are important to low-income communities, minority communities and people with disabilities. The mission of this committee is to identify concerns of these groups and to determine whether and how these issues might be addressed within the TPB process. Committee membership includes twenty-five engaged community leaders as well as ex-officio representation from the major transportation implementing agencies within the Metropolitan Washington Region.

The committee chair is currently Kathy Porter, TPB Member and Mayor of Takoma Park. Kathy Porter was appointed as the chair of the committee in March 2003, after the former AFA chair, Peter Shapiro, led the committee for three years. Since the inception of the committee in 2001, the AFA has become an active voice for people not typically a part of the transportation planning process. The AFA presented its first report to the TPB in March 2002 to provide guidance to the region's transportation decision makers on ways to address the issues and concerns of persons that are typically not represented in the transportation planning process.

This report on AFA activities and recommendations is the second produced by the committee. Even though many of the issues are the same as in the first report, the committee has made considerable progress in expanding and detailing the issues and concerns as well as developing a thorough set of recommendations to address them. The recommendations are to be considered by TPB member agencies during the annual project solicitation process for the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the Financially Constrained Long Range Transportation Plan (CLRP).

This report discusses four near-term recommendations to the TPB and the regional implementing agencies, and future focus areas in 2004, summarized on the following pages.

2003 NEAR-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Develop More Effective Communication of Regional Transit Information (Page 16)

- The availability of clear and concise transit information from a variety of sources, especially bus services, should be expanded for the general public, people with limited English skills, and illiterate persons.
- Improve transit information for people with limited English proficiency (LEP) by implementing the AFA recommendations endorsed by the TPB on June 18, 2003. For more information on the recommendations see page 18 and Appendix A.

2. Prioritize Regional and Local Transportation Services for Low-Income Populations (Page 20)

- Low income communities which are transit dependant are scattered throughout the metropolitan area with a higher concentration near the inner part of the region. In light of current budget concerns and planned rail projects, the AFA stresses that bus service levels should be maintained for current transit-dependent customers.
- Reverse commute services should be expanded to allow improved access to jobs.
- Pedestrian and bicycle safety programs should continue to pay close attention to low-income populations.

3. Improve Transit Services for People with Disabilities (Page 23)

The following recommendations were transmitted from the TPB to the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Board of Directors on January 21, 2004 (Appendix C and D):

- Efforts to encourage more people with disabilities to use bus and rail need to be coordinated with county and city transit systems throughout the region. Many people access the WMATA system from the local systems, such as Ride-On and Fairfax Connector, which need to be fully accessible and reliable for the “Metro is Accessible¹” project to be effective.
- Improve reliability of the WMATA system to attract and retain the targeted riders. The AFA fully supports ensuring that elevators work routinely, improved

¹ “Metro is Accessible” is a WMATA outreach and marketing initiative to encourage more people with disabilities to use the rail and bus systems.

accessibility to bus stops and other improvements to increase the reliability of train and bus systems.

- A study of Metro's paratransit service should be conducted to identify ways to serve the greatest number of people with the available budget. The study should examine if there are there more cost-effective ways to better serve more people with disabilities who cannot use the fixed route system.

4. Promote More Development around Transit Stations, But Take Care of the Community that's Already There (Page 26)

- The AFA committee would like to see more development around transit stations, especially on the eastern side of the region. The committee recognizes that such development is a long-term recommendation. State and local policies should not only focus on the long-term transformation of transit station areas, but also need to focus on provisions to mitigate potentially negative impacts from such development, in the short- and long-term, such as the increased housing costs and displacement.

FUTURE FOCUS AREAS

The committee will focus on the following areas in 2004:

1. **Status report on 2003 AFA recommendations.** During 2004, the AFA anticipates receiving ongoing updates of the actions taken by TPB member agencies to address the recommendations identified in this report, particularly the specific recommendations on improving transit information and transit services for people with disabilities. This will be a major focus area of the committee during 2004.
2. **Pedestrian and bicycle access and safety.** The committee will examine ways to raise awareness and improve coordination on providing safe pedestrian and bicycle access to bus stops and rail stations with a focus on people with disabilities, minority communities, and low-income communities.
3. **Explore implications from the “Region Undivided” scenario in the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study.** The TPB’s Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study² could help the AFA explore the issues raised in the 1999 Brookings Institution “A Region Divided” report which highlighted east-west disparities in the Washington Region. The AFA will receive further briefings on the analytical results from the alternative future scenarios for 2030 and discuss the implications.
4. **Provide input to the access to jobs and reverse-commute program area.** The committee will receive updates and briefings on regional access to jobs planning efforts and discuss next steps to pursue in this area. The AFA will invite members of the COG/TPB ad-hoc inter jurisdictional and inter agency committee to participate in the AFA committee.
5. **Review impacts of the long-range transportation plan on low-income and minority communities.** Provide comments on a regional analysis of living and travel patterns of low-income and minority communities using 2000 Census Data in the new accessibility analysis.

² The Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study was created by the TPB to evaluate future transportation scenarios and development patterns. One of the scenarios being examined is the “Region Undivided” which shifts more forecast households and jobs to the eastern side of the region.

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- SECTION 1 - OVERVIEW

Mission

The National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) created the Access for All (AFA) Advisory Committee in 2001. The mission of the AFA committee is to identify concerns of low-income and minority populations and persons with disabilities, and to determine whether and how these issues might be addressed within the TPB planning process. The AFA Committee is comprised of diverse community leaders (listed on pages 12 to 14), representatives from transportation agencies (page 15), and is chaired by Kathy Porter, TPB member and the Mayor of Takoma Park.

The TPB has conducted community outreach activities that encourage the participation of low income and minority groups and persons with disabilities within the transportation planning process. The committee was created to ensure on on-going dialogue between regional decision makers and population groups typically underrepresented in the transportation planning process. Figure 1 provides a regional demographic profile of low-income populations, minority populations and people with disabilities from the 2000 Census.

Although this is a relatively new committee, the issues and concerns of the committee members are not so new. In fact many of the issues highlighted in this report are also of concern to the region's decision makers.

For instance, the committee supports the TPB's regional policy framework, *The Vision*. The Vision focuses on transportation-related concerns such as regional mobility, improving air quality, and the need for a fiscally sustainable transportation system³. The committee was established to ensure "Access for All" in the spirit of the first policy goal in the Vision:

Policy Goal 1: The Washington metropolitan region's transportation system will provide reasonable access at reasonable cost to everyone in the region.

-The TPB Vision

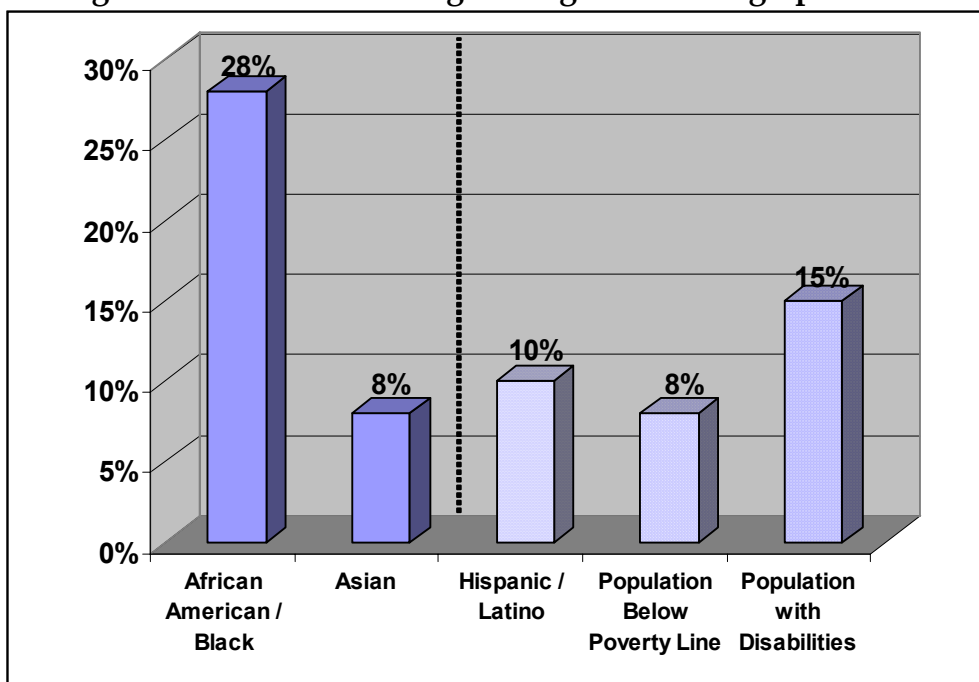
The recommendations identified in this report were derived from the activities described below. The committee developed the recommendations for the report between September 2002 and January 2004. These recommendations are to be used by TPB member agencies during the project solicitation process for the Transportation

³ The TPB Vision is available on the TPB website at:
<http://www.mwcog.org/transportation/activities/vision/default.asp>

Improvement Program (TIP) as well as the annual amendments to the Financially Constrained Long Range Transportation Plan (CLRP).

Section 2 of the report discusses the background and concerns for the four near-term recommendations. A brief summary of issues that the committee intends to take up in 2004 are provided in Section 3.

Figure 1: The 2000 Washington Regional Demographic Profile



Source: 2000 US Census⁴. African American/Black and Asian population data are discrete. The other three categories are not discrete because Hispanic/Latino, Population below the Poverty line, and Population with Disabilities can be counted in the other race groups. The Census Bureau defines Hispanic origin as an ethnicity, not a race.

Activities

Since the 2001 report, the full committee has met three times in 2002 and five times in 2003. In addition, a subcommittee on improving transit information for limited English speakers and a subgroup on improving transit service for people with disabilities was active over the last year. The committee has been working on a variety of issues, and major activities are described here. AFA issues or recommendations have been brought to the TPB in May, June, October, and December of 2003 and in January of 2004.

⁴ For the first time in the 2000 Census, respondents could identify themselves as belonging to more than one race. Three percent of the region identified themselves as belonging to more than one race—the locations of those people correlate the most with the locations of Hispanic concentrations. Data is for the Washington region which includes the District of Columbia; Arlington County, the City of Alexandria, the City of Fairfax, the City of Falls Church, Fairfax County, Prince William County and Loudoun County in Virginia; and Montgomery County, Prince George’s County and Frederick County and the cities within the counties.

Transit-Oriented Development and Affordable Housing

The committee held a special session on the effects of transit-oriented development (TOD) on low-income people in August 2002. The session featured presentations from representatives of planning agencies in Prince George's, Montgomery, and Arlington counties and the District of Columbia. The focus of the presentation was on policy tools to mitigate displacement near transit stations, such as the preservation of affordable housing.

Committee members participated in a national conference, "Rail~Volution⁵" in a session titled "TOD For Whom?" in October 2002. Peter Shapiro, then Chair of the AFA committee, moderated the session and AFA member Brenda Richardson participated as a speaker. The session represented community viewpoints on the positive and negative impacts of TOD- induced gentrification.

The AFA built on this effort in October 2003 when it co-hosted a public outreach meeting with the TPB Citizens Advisory Committee. The public forum "(Re) Building Communities Around Public Transit on the Eastern Side of the Region," was held at St. Luke's Center in eastern D.C. and looked at transit-oriented development (TOD) and its implications for the eastern side of the Washington region.

Transit Information for Limited English Speakers

One of the priority focus areas in 2002 and 2003 was improving transit information available in different languages. To further explore this area, a subcommittee was created and under the leadership of AFA member Kim Propeack, worked intensely on this issue between October 2002 and March 2003. A focus group was held in January 2003 with approximately 30 representatives from non-profit and social service agencies across the region to further understand how limited English proficiency (LEP) communities obtain information and which methods of communication are the most effective.

A detailed report with specific recommendations to improve transit information for LEP groups was developed and endorsed by the TPB on June 18, 2003, which is found in Appendix A. This AFA effort generated significant interest in the committee, and 11 additional individuals representing organizations from D.C., Maryland, and Virginia joined the AFA committee as a result.

⁵ The Rail ~Volution conference is an annual national conference focusing and promoting transit and livable communities.

Potential Impacts of the 2003 Constrained Long Range Transportation Plan (CLRP)

The AFA reviewed the proposed projects for the 2003 Constrained Long Range Plan (CLRP), which includes major studies, highway improvements, and transit and high occupancy vehicle (HOV) improvements. The proposed improvements for 2030 were mapped with the 2000 Census demographic information for the African-American, Asian, and Latino/Hispanic population, and the population below the official poverty line. The AFA developed a list of comments regarding potential impacts of the proposed 2003 CLRP on low-income communities, minority communities and people with disabilities. Kathy Porter presented the AFA comments on the draft 2003 CLRP to the TPB at the October 2003 meeting, provided in Appendix B.

Transit Services for People with Disabilities

In May of 2003, the committee began to focus on another 2001 report recommendation “regional paratransit services for low-income and persons with disabilities should be funded at higher levels and expanded.” A subgroup was formed to work on this issue and developed a list of recommendations to improve transit services for people with disabilities. These recommendations were approved by the full AFA committee and presented to the TPB by AFA member John Hudson at the December 2003 meeting. This presentation is provided in Appendix C. The recommendations were transmitted to the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Board of Directors from the TPB on January 21, 2004 (Appendix D).

The committee was invited to participate in the WMATA Regional Paratransit Task Force that will recommend actions on MetroAccess eligibility and methods to market transit services to persons with disabilities. The task force will be meeting from January to March 2004 and is scheduled to present recommendations to the WMATA board in April 2004.

Membership

Kathy Porter, TPB Member and Mayor of Takoma Park, chairs the advisory committee. Twenty-five non-profit and community agency representatives serve on the committee. The TPB approved changes and additions to the AFA membership at its June 18, 2003 meeting, the current membership is listed below. The committee also has ex-officio representation from the major transportation implementing agencies in the Washington metropolitan region.

Organization	Description	Jurisdiction	Representative
Action Langley Park	A non-profit organization dedicated to an improved quality of life in and around Maryland's Langley Park neighborhood.	Maryland	Nora Eidelman
American Cancer Society	A nationwide community-based organization dedicated to eliminating cancer and advocating for transportation services for people with illnesses and disabilities.	Regional	Emelda Curry
American Council for the Blind	Strives to improve the well-being of all blind and visually impaired people.	National	Pat Sheehan
Elderly and Handicapped Advisory Committee for WMATA	Advises the WMATA Board on issues related to public transit service for seniors and people with disabilities.	Regional	
Able Labor	Assists Hispanic workers in the Virginia suburbs.	Virginia	Paul Leach
Anacostia Economic Development Corporation (AEDC)	A non-profit community development corporation (CDC) Addresses economic development needs of Anacostia/Far S.E.	District of Columbia	Albert Hopkins
Arlington County Disability Advisory Commission	Provides input to state agencies on persons with disabilities. Designated as Virginia's Local Disability Services Board (LDSB)	Virginia	Raymond Keith
Boat People S.O.S., Inc.	Assists Vietnamese immigrants and refugees establish community-based organizations locally and nationally.	Virginia	Dr. Nguyen Dinh Thang
Business Development Assistance Group, Inc.	Promotes growth of small and minority businesses. Multicultural business development and business training in dual languages.	Virginia	Toa Do

Organization	Description	Jurisdiction	Representative
CASA of Maryland, Inc.	Non-profit chapter in Montgomery County committed to reduce poverty, discrimination, and improve life opportunities, in the Hispanic community.	Maryland	Kim Propeack
Chinese Culture and Community Service Center	Operates senior self-help programs and assists people who have limited English skills.	Maryland	Angela Hsu
Council of Latino Agencies	Supports and promotes the betterment of the Latino community and acts as a voice of the Latino community in the District of Columbia.	District of Columbia	Eugenio Arene
DC Latino Task Force	Seeks government services for the Latino community in DC.	District of Columbia	Daniel Jones
Fairfax Area Disability Services Board (FADSB)	Works toward including people with disabilities into mainstream community life.	Virginia	John Hudson
Fairfax County Department of Family Services	Offers a wide range of community programs and services for residents of Fairfax County. Ms. Barbour specializes in accessing, providing and communicating about transportation for low-income and limited English speakers.	Virginia	Jocelyn Barbour
Ibero American Chamber of Commerce	To promote the success for business enterprise through Access, Network and Advocacy to business opportunities.	District of Columbia	Juan Albert
Girl Scout Council of the Nation's Capital	Promotes the development of girls and outreach in low-income and minority neighborhoods in the Washington area.	Regional	Roseann Abdu
Montgomery County Department of Housing and Community Affairs Hispanic/Latino Initiative	Provides language assistance for Spanish speakers in accessing government services, including transportation related services.	Maryland	Myriam Torrico

Organization	Description	Jurisdiction	Representative
National Foreign Language Center University of Maryland	The center's mission is to improve the capacity in the U.S. to communicate in languages other than English.	National	William Rivers
Prince George's County Black Chamber of Commerce	Represents the interests of the African-American business community.	Maryland	Rex Little
Surface Transportation Policy Project (STPP)	The goal of STPP is to ensure that transportation policy and investments help conserve energy, protect environmental and aesthetic quality, strengthen the economy, promote social equity, and make communities more livable.	National	Nancy Jakowitsch
The Américas Institute	A community-based research and policy organization working on transportation planning and policy options for the District of Columbia	District of Columbia	Harold Foster
The Brookings Institution	Produced the 1999 report, <i>A Region Divided</i> , which highlighted east-west imbalances in the Washington Metropolitan Region	National	Amy Liu
Washington Regional Network for Livable Communities (WRN)	WRN advocates transportation investments, land use policies, and community designs that enhance existing communities and the environment of the National Capital Region.	Regional	Cheryl Cort
Wider Opportunities for Women	Specializes in literacy, welfare-to-work transition, and career development programs. (Access to Jobs COG committee)	Regional	Jennifer Brooks
Women Like Us	Works on economic development and environmental projects in Anacostia.	District of Columbia	Brenda Richardson

Implementing Agency	Representative(s)
District of Columbia Department of Transportation	Gil Williams
Maryland Department of Transportation	Paul Oberle Fatimah Hasan
Virginia Department of Transportation	Kanti Srikanth
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority	Patricia Tomczyszyn Angela Martin
Federal Highway Administration	Tracey France Sandra Jackson
Federal Transit Administration	Deborah Burns

- SECTION 2 -

2003 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Develop More Effective Communication of Regional Transit Information

Background

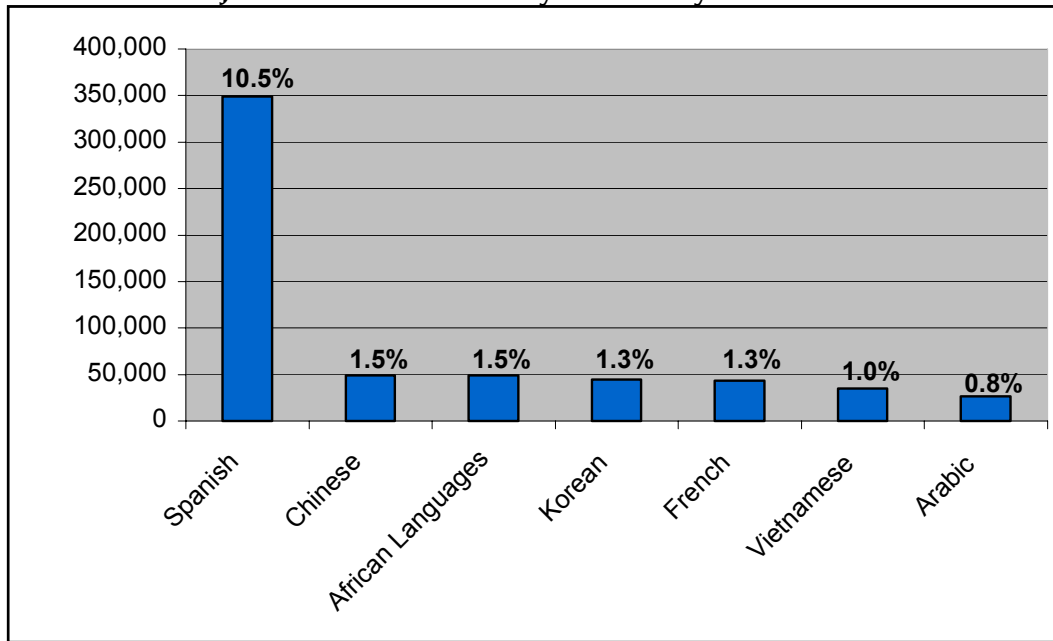
Clear and concise transit information is an essential customer service to promote transit use. Without readily available information at rail stations, bus stops, on the web and at customer service outlets, transit use is not going to reach its full potential.

In general, transit information is difficult to understand. It tends to be dense and relies on a basic geographic knowledge to understand sketch maps. In addition, several different types of transit service are owned and operated by numerous transit agencies within the region. Regional transit service is provided by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), which operates Metrorail and Metrobus in the District of Columbia, Suburban Maryland and Northern Virginia. Many other transit services, such as local and express bus services and commuter rail are operated in the region.

Furthermore, numerous languages are spoken in the region. The 2000 Census indicates that twenty-three percent of the region's 3.9 million people speak a language other than English at home, ten percent of which speak English less than "very well". The languages other than English most often spoken at home are Spanish, Chinese, African languages (including Amharic, the language spoken in Ethiopia), Korean, French, Vietnamese and Arabic, as shown in Figure 2 below. Non-English speaking groups in the region are not only diverse; they are also geographically dispersed throughout the region.

Given the complex set of languages spoken, the frequent international visitors in the metropolitan Washington region, and to assist illiterate individuals, universal symbols and pictures should be used to communicate with transit customers more often than written language.

Figure 2: Languages Other Than English Most Often Spoken at Home in Jurisdictions Currently Served by Metrorail



Source: 2000 Census. Jurisdictions include Arlington County, the City of Alexandria, the District of Columbia, the City of Fairfax, the City of Falls Church, Fairfax County, Montgomery County and Prince George’s County.

As stated earlier, the AFA created a subcommittee that produced a detailed report on transit information for Limited English Proficiency (LEP)⁶ customers which is provided in Appendix A. WMATA has responded to several of the recommendations in this AFA report, including testing a translation service for the website, plans to add Spanish greeting and options on the general information phone line, is designing bilingual bus schedules in Spanish and English and is producing a video for limited English speakers in several languages on how to use the rail and bus system.

There are other recent good examples of improved and effective communication of transit information. The Downtown D.C. Business Improvement District (BID), with assistance from the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) and WMATA, developed large bus route maps which have been posted in approximately 300 bus shelters in downtown D.C. The maps are customized for each stop with “You are here” markers, and highlighted routes that serve the specific bus stop. Another example of improved transit information is the free distribution of Metrobus route maps from WMATA, which previously charged for the maps. Finally, the new service on Columbia Pike in Arlington County “Pike Ride” has had success in promoting the service with

⁶ An LEP person is defined as an individual with a primary or home language other than English who must, due to limited fluency in English, communicate in that language. DOJ’s LEP Guidance was enforced in an executive order⁶ signed by President Clinton on August 11, 2000. It requires Federal agencies receiving financial assistance to use the Guidance to better address the needs of non-English speaking people seeking access to transportation-related programs and activities.

flyers and advertising on buses.⁷ In addition, improved route information with spinning information tubes have been installed at “Pike Ride” bus stops. The AFA committee supports these innovative efforts and hopes to see more of these types of improvements implemented through out the region and expanded, particularly in more low-income communities.

Concerns

The AFA LEP transit information report in Appendix A details many of the committee concerns. A summary of these concerns are provided here.

The committee has expressed concern about the need for additional information for LEP groups in various formats. The internet was not felt to be as helpful as other sources of information, such as verbal information provided via the phone assistance services or written information using simple and clear language provided in transit areas, social service agencies and community organizations. Effective written materials should use simple language and lots of visuals, and rely more on universal symbols and images rather than words.

Identifying which languages should be translated also proved to be concern. Although Spanish-speakers are the largest language minority in the region, the committee was apprehensive to suggest that all transit information be translated into only Spanish. Therefore, in determining which languages to translate information into, the committee believes that it is incumbent upon transportation agencies to continue to use federal guidance and survey research to translate transit information into a meaningful vehicle for people not proficient in English.

This report emphasizes the transit needs of non-English speaking persons. The committee will address other transportation modes in future activities.

Recommendations

- A. The availability of clear and concise transit information** from a variety of sources, especially bus services, should be expanded for the general public, people with limited English skills, and illiterate persons. The AFA would like to see efforts such as the Downtown D.C. BID bus route maps and the “Pike Ride” information expanded to other areas of region, especially in more low-income communities.
- B. Improve transit information for people with limited English proficiency (LEP)** by implementing the AFA recommendations from the subcommittee report endorsed by the TPB on June 18, 2003. The report is provided in Appendix A.

⁷ *Pike Ride Intercept Survey*. Prepared for Arlington County. Prepared by WB&A Market Research. January 21, 2004 (final).

The recommendations in the AFA subcommittee report range from short- to long-term, and build upon the existing efforts of the transit agencies to provide language access. The recommendations are scalable, meaning that they could be implemented in a limited geographic area in one language first, and if successful, implemented on a larger scale in additional languages.

Some recommendations from the AFA subcommittee report found in Appendix A include the following:

- Promote and Improve Existing Language Assistance Services
 - Improve the existing phone transit information services (i.e. less wait time)
 - Advertise phone information services more widely in various languages
 - Add multilingual greetings and options

- Provide Additional Language Assistance Services and Materials
 - Improve multilingual information at bus stops
 - Survey riders to determine which language translations need to be provided
 - A standard set of transit symbols should be developed for the region

- Expand Language Assistance Services
 - Recruit bilingual transit agency employees
 - Improve language assistance for people with physical and cognitive disabilities

2. Prioritize Regional and Local Transportation Services for Low-Income Populations

The needs of low-income people, particularly those who do not own cars, should be given priority consideration when transportation decisions are made in the Washington region. Such decisions include short-term concerns, such as maintaining bus services and providing safer conditions for pedestrians. They also include longer-range planning questions, including which new projects will be given priority in an era of tight budgets.

Background

Transportation funding in the Washington region is tight. In February 2004, the TPB released a report, "Time to Act," which found that over the next six years, the region needs to increase revenues by more than 100 percent just to meet priority needs.

The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) in particular has warned that it faces a \$2.2 billion shortfall over the next six years to fund vital preservation expenses, plus pay for additional equipment and services to accommodate new riders. If the system is allowed to deteriorate, low income people who are transit-dependent will be the most seriously affected.

This funding crunch must be considered within the context of what the region has already achieved. The Washington metropolitan area can be proud of the transportation services it has historically provided to low-income people. The Metro system, along with local transit systems, is a regional "success story" providing access to opportunities for residents from all backgrounds and walks of life. Recent studies indicate that despite high housing costs in the region, public transportation remains relatively inexpensive. These gains could be lost and progress could be put on hold if regional funding problems are allowed to further deteriorate.

Concerns

As the region grapples with funding shortfalls, the AFA calls upon decision makers to be vigilant in safeguarding services for the most vulnerable members of our regional community.

Bus services are vital lifelines for low-income people. A large percentage of riders of the Metrobus system, currently the fifth largest bus system in the country, are from low-income and minority communities. These riders are not simply transit-dependent – they are bus-dependent. Many also use the local bus services.

Low-income people need access to jobs through out the region. Our regional economy is increasingly dependent upon getting low-income people to jobs in more affluent areas. Many of these people do not have traditional nine-to-five working hours. Furthermore, many of them rely upon transit to access social services, such as childcare and healthcare facilities.

Pedestrian safety concerns disproportionately affect low-income people. Low-income people are too frequently killed and injured in vehicle crashes. In transit-dependent communities, pedestrian safety is a growing concern. Bus riders inevitably become pedestrians in the course of their journeys. Immigrants are particularly at risk as they seek to find their way their unfamiliar places.

New projects and new services must be developed to serve the growing needs of the inner and eastern parts of the region. The Access for All committee observed that transit improvements in the 2003 Constrained Long-Range Plan appear to be more focused on serving more suburban areas, rather than low-income communities in the inner and eastern parts of the region.

The absence of planned transit improvements in the CLRP for eastern and inner parts of the region is also concern. The committee raised concerns about the lack of planned transit improvements in Prince George's County. Light rail is only included as a study between Silver Spring and New Carrollton. The CLRP did not even include a study for continuation of this transit line southeast from New Carrollton. The committee believes this line should extend further south into Prince George's County and include new rail service across the Woodrow Wilson Bridge.

Recommendations

The committee makes the following recommendations regarding the need to prioritize funding for transportation for low-income people:

- A. Transit service levels must be maintained for transit-dependent customers.** In light of current budget concerns and planned rail projects, the AFA stresses that the needs of the regional bus system should not "take a back seat" as the region grapples with WMATA's funding shortfall. Low income communities which are transit dependant are scattered throughout the metropolitan area with a higher concentration near the inner part of the region.
- B. Reverse Commute services should be expanded.** The committee commends the programs and services that currently exist to improve reverse commute transportation services for welfare recipients and other low-income workers. WMATA's Access to Jobs and Reverse Commute program provides important

coordination among regional providers transportation providers, human service agencies and employment and training agencies.

However, many low-income workers hold more than one job, and have jobs that do not follow traditional work hours such as 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. The region needs more transit service in the reverse commute direction and expanded levels of transit service to allow these workers access to employment opportunities.

- C. Pedestrian and bicycle safety programs should continue to pay close attention to low-income populations.** The committee commends local governments in the region that have reached out to low-income and minority groups through their programs to reduce pedestrian fatalities and injuries. At the regional level, the Street Smart pedestrian campaign has targeted immigrants through its Spanish-language advertising.

The committee encourages the continuation and expansion of this outreach and hopes to further explore methods to reduce pedestrian accidents in low-income communities.

3. Improve Transit Services for People with Disabilities

Background

Nationwide, transportation services for people with disabilities are an obstacle to people with disabilities participating in the workforce, socializing and other important quality of life activities. Thirty percent of people with disabilities report a problem with adequate transportation versus ten percent of the general population, according to the National Organization on Disability/ Harris 2000 Survey of Americans with Disabilities. Another national survey found that six million people with disabilities have difficulties getting the transportation they need, and transportation difficulties keep over half of a million people with disabilities at home (Bureau of Transportation Statistics, USDOT, 2002 Survey).

Based on the 2000 Census, 585,000 people, or fifteen percent of the Washington region's population, have a disability⁸. Also, the 2000 Census indicates that people with disabilities are fifty percent more likely to live in poverty than their non-disabled counterparts.

Transit services available for people with disabilities in the Washington Region include “fixed route” services – which are accessible bus and rail services like Metrobus and Metrorail, Fairfax Connector, Ride-On and other local bus services. The other major service is the curb-to-curb service commonly referred to as paratransit. Paratransit provides complementary service to the fixed route services for people who cannot use the rail and bus services. This service is provided in vans or taxi cabs by WMATA’s MetroAccess, and also smaller city and county systems such as Arlington’s Star program.

The committee recognizes that serving a large number of people with disabilities in a region as expansive as metropolitan Washington is a challenge. Further complicating this challenge is the geographic dispersment of people with disabilities, and the number of different types of disabilities-- physical, hidden, cognitive, hearing and visually impaired – each with different transportation challenges to address.

In May of 2003, the committee began to focus on another 2001 report recommendation “regional paratransit services for low-income and persons with disabilities should be funded at higher levels and expanded.” A subgroup was formed to work on this issue and developed a list of recommendations to improve transit services for people with

⁸ Disability status for the civilian non-institutionalized population is defined differently for three age cohorts by Census. People 5 years old and over are considered to have a disability if they have one or more of the following: (a) blindness, deafness, or severe vision or hearing impairment; (b) a substantial limitation in the ability to perform basic physical activities, such as walking, climbing stairs, reaching, lifting, or carrying; (c) difficulty learning, remembering, or concentrating; or (d) difficulty dressing, bathing, or getting around inside the home. In addition to the above criteria, people 16 years and over are considered to have a disability if they have difficulty going outside the home alone to shop or visit a doctor’s office, and people 16-64 years old are considered having a disability if they have difficulty working at a job.

disabilities. Because “disability” can be defined many ways, the AFA has narrowed the focus to people with mobility and sensory impairments.

Concerns

Concerns were raised over recent news articles regarding WMATA’s short-term budget problems that were credited to increasing costs in paratransit services. The AFA encourages WMATA to investigate if there are more cost-effective ways to provide and operate services without reducing service or ridership, in light of current budget issues.

The committee has also expressed concerns that the regional and local transit systems need to be reliable for people with disabilities. Improperly working wheel-chair lifts, bus drivers not announcing stops, sidewalk infrastructure around rail and bus stations, and elevator outages are barriers to people with disabilities in using transit. The committee applauds the efforts of WMATA to identify these barriers and address them while promoting the use of the fixed-route system by persons with disabilities. In addition, the committee has stressed that these WMATA efforts should be coordinated with local transit systems because many people have to access local systems before they can get on to the WMATA system. Appendix C details AFA comments and recommendations of this effort.

Committee members emphasized that improving transit services for persons with disabilities would ultimately improve the services for the public at large, which will increasingly require such services as the population ages.

Recommendations

- A. Create a professional position within the decision-making structure of MetroAccess that would be filled by a user of the service.** The committee commends and supports WMATA’s efforts to improve the existing services offered to persons with disabilities. As part of these improvements, the committee recommends that WMATA hire one or more professionals with disabilities who use transit, to help improve the overall quality of service.

The following recommendations were transmitted from the TPB to the WMATA Board on January 21, 2004 (Appendix C and D):

- B. Coordinate with Other Bus Systems and Improve Reliability of MetroBus and MetroRail Efforts**

Efforts to encourage more people with disabilities to use bus and rail need to be coordinated with county and city transit systems throughout the region. Many people access the WMATA system from the local systems, such as Ride-On and

Fairfax Connector, which need to be fully accessible and reliable for the “Metro is Accessible⁹” project to be effective.

Improve reliability of the WMATA system to attract and retain the targeted riders. The AFA fully supports ensuring that elevators work routinely, improved accessibility to bus stops and other improvements to increase the reliability of train and bus systems.

- C. **A study of Metro’s paratransit service should be conducted to identify ways to serve the greatest number of people with the available budget.** The study should examine if there are there more cost-effective ways to better serve more people with disabilities who cannot use the fixed route system.

This recommendation comes from budgetary concerns highlighted recently in the press that have serious implications for current and future users of MetroAccess, which is the only option for a significant and growing number of people with disabilities. This makes the timely completion of this study even more critical.

⁹ “Metro is Accessible” is a WMATA outreach and marketing initiative to encourage more people with disabilities to use the rail and bus systems.

4. Promote More Development around Transit Stations, But Take Care of the Community that's Already There

Background

After decades of planning, the completion of the 103-mile Metrorail system, and a booming real-estate market, the region has seen several transit station areas develop and transform, like the U Street-Cardoza and Silver Spring station areas. These transformations have taken decades to occur and have been positive for numerous neighborhoods and people. However, such changes are sometimes accompanied by negative impacts on some of the most vulnerable people in our region. Improvements in transit rail service have sometimes been coupled with decreases in neighborhood bus services. Affordable housing has sometimes been lost because of increased land values near the stations.

Experience clearly shows that transit stations alone will not spur economic development or higher densities. Prince George's County and the eastern areas of D.C., which have yet to see significant development around Metro stations, have recently established land use and economic development policies to encourage economic development concentrated near rail stations. It should be noted that these policies take many years to influence development and other factors, such as market forces, are important ingredients for success.

East-West imbalances in the Washington area were highlighted in a Brookings Institution 1999 report "A Region Divided". These long-term trends have developed over several decades and unfortunately, cannot be reversed easily or quickly. The AFA committee was briefed on a TPB staff analysis that reviewed the 2000 Census data with "A Region Divided" lens relevant to this discussion. One of the most significant findings is that between 1990 and 2000, job growth in the Western side outpaced job growth in the Eastern side by twenty to one.¹⁰ This is even more significant given that twenty percent of the African-American/Black population lived in the Western side of the region and eighty percent in the Eastern side in 2000; and forty percent of all people below the poverty line lived in the Western side compared with sixty percent in the Eastern side of the region in 2000.

Concerns

Transit-oriented development (TOD) policies – clustering higher-densities around transit stations – are already well-established in Montgomery and Arlington counties. Factors such as real-estate markets, schools and crime rates are major contributors to the success of TOD policies. The effects of TOD on low-income people may not always be

¹⁰ The Brookings Institution in "A Region Divided" defined the East-West divide in the region as I-95 in Maryland and Virginia, and 16th Street NW in the District of Columbia.

positive. In the western parts of the Washington region, Metrorail stations have been a significant factor in raising property values, which can lead to a loss of affordable housing.

The eastern parts of the region are striving to bring in all types of development, including a mix of housing, new jobs and retail opportunities. In the western parts of the region, concerns include development pressures that will squeeze out low-income people. The direct role of transportation planning in meeting these challenges is not always clear.

The AFA committee has expressed concerns about the disparity in development between the eastern and western sides of the region. It is important to promote development around underutilized rail stations. However, there is a dilemma-- when transit investments are encouraged around low-income communities, gentrification and displacement of the targeted population can occur.

Recommendations

- A. The AFA committee would like to see more development around transit stations, especially on the eastern side of the region. The committee recognizes that such development is a long-term recommendation. State and local policies should not only focus on the long-term transformation of transit station areas, but also need to focus on provisions to mitigate potentially negative impacts from such development, in the short- and long-term, such as the increased housing costs and displacement.

- SECTION 3 - FUTURE FOCUS AREAS

FUTURE FOCUS AREAS

The committee will focus on the following areas in 2004:

1. **Status report on 2003 AFA recommendations.** During 2004, the AFA anticipates receiving ongoing updates of the actions taken by TPB member agencies to address the recommendations identified in this report, particularly the specific recommendations on improving transit information and on transit services for people with disabilities. This will be a major focus area of the committee during 2004.
2. **Pedestrian and bicycle access and safety.** The committee will examine ways to raise awareness and improve coordination on providing safe pedestrian and bicycle access to bus stops and rail stations with a focus on people with disabilities, minority communities, and low-income communities.
3. **Explore implications from the “Region Undivided” scenario in the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study.** The TPB’s Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study¹¹ could help the AFA explore the issues raised in the 1999 Brookings Institution “A Region Divided” report which highlighted east-west disparities in the Washington Region. The AFA will receive further briefings on the analytical results from the alternative future scenarios for 2030 and discuss the implications.
4. **Provide input to the access to jobs and reverse-commute program area.** The committee will receive updates and briefings in regional access to jobs planning efforts and discuss next steps to pursue in this area. The AFA will invite members of the COG/TPB ad-hoc inter jurisdictional and inter agency committee to participate in the AFA committee. The Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) program area will likely be included in the upcoming federal reauthorization of the surface transportation programs.

¹¹ Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study was created by the TPB to evaluate future transportation scenarios and development patterns. One of the scenarios being examined is the “Region Undivided” which shifts more forecast households and jobs to the eastern side of the region.

5. **Review impacts of the long-range transportation plan on low-income and minority communities.** Provide comments on a regional analysis of living and travel patterns of low-income and minority communities using 2000 Census Data in the new accessibility analysis.

An analysis of the impact of the 2003 CLRP on low-income and minority populations in 2003 will be conducted. Accessibility in the analysis will be defined as the number of jobs reachable in 45 minutes. Traditional transportation measures, such as travel times, are considered in an accessibility analysis, together with employment and population change. 2000 Census demographic data will be used in conjunction with predicted changes in accessibility to jobs to review the plan for disproportionately high and adverse effects. The committee can review this analysis, discuss potential implications and develop comments. Potential impacts on low-income and minority communities of the 2004 CLRP will also be discussed.

Appendix A

**AFA “Report on Major Findings and Recommendations to
Improve Transit Information for Limited English Proficiency
(LEP) Customers”
June 18, 2003**

**National Capital Region
Transportation Planning Board (TPB)
Access for All Advisory Committee**

**Subcommittee on Transit Information for Limited
English Proficiency (LEP) Customers**

**Report on Major Findings and
Recommendations to Improve Transit
Information for Limited English Proficiency
(LEP) Customers**

**Endorsed by the TPB on
June 18, 2003**

Major Findings and Recommendations to Improve Transit Information for Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Customers

Background and Purpose

The National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board¹ (TPB) created the Access for All (AFA) Advisory Committee in 2001. The mission of the committee is to identify concerns of low-income and minority populations and persons with disabilities, and to determine whether and how these issues might be addressed within the TPB process. The Access for All Advisory Committee is comprised of diverse community leaders.

In its 2001 report, the Access for All Advisory (AFA) Committee identified *transit information for those with limited English proficiency as a priority* and a subcommittee was created on this topic. The subcommittee was chaired by Kim Propeack of CASA of Maryland, Inc. and met for the first time in October 2002. The subcommittee recommended that as a first step toward implementation of this priority, a focus group be conducted to engage a broader language community and to gather more information on the best ways of communicating with LEP groups. *The goal of the subcommittee was to create a prioritized list of ways to improve language access for LEP groups in both the short- and long-term.* The purpose of this document is to provide background information and present the major findings and recommendations for improving access to transit for LEP communities in the short- and long-term.

A Complex and Diverse Region

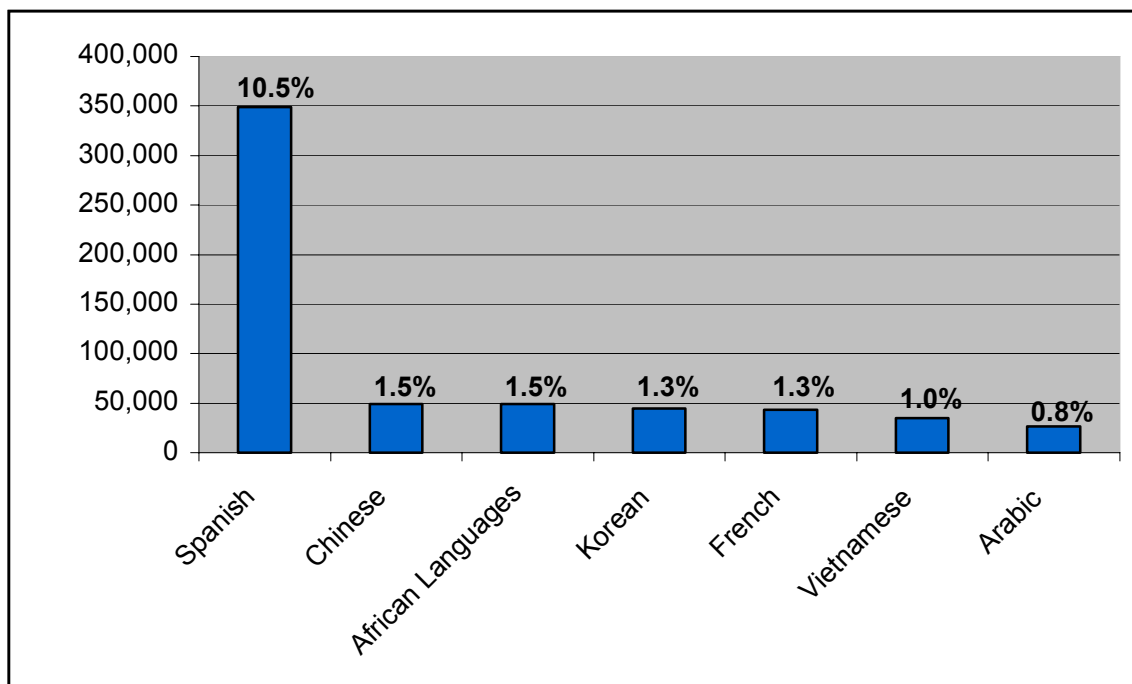
The difficulty of providing transit information for LEP customers in a complex and diverse region needs to be recognized. Several different types of transit service are owned and operated by numerous transit agencies within the region. Regional transit service is provided by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), which operates Metrorail and Metrobus in the District of Columbia, Suburban Maryland and Northern Virginia. Many jurisdictions operate local bus services in addition to the Metrobus system. These include Montgomery County's Ride-On, the Fairfax County Connection, Prince George's The Bus, Arlington Transit (ART), Alexandria's DASH and the City of Fairfax CUE systems. In addition, Virginia Rail Express (VRE) and Maryland Area Transit Authority (MARC) provide commuter rail services. Commuter bus services are also provided by several counties, such as OmniRide in Prince William County.

Furthermore, a diverse set of languages is spoken in the region. The 2000 U.S. Census shows that the Washington region includes more than 800,000 people who

¹ The TPB is responsible for coordinating the long-range transportation plan in the Washington region, which includes Suburban Maryland, Northern Virginia and the District of Columbia. The membership is comprised of local elected officials, state transportation agencies, and WMATA. For more information, go to <http://www.mwcog.org/trans.html>.

are foreign born. The 2000 Census also indicates that twenty-three percent of the region's population speaks a language other than English at home, ten percent of which speak English less than "very well". The languages other than English most often spoken at home are Spanish, Chinese, African languages (including Amharic, the language spoken in Ethiopia), Korean, French, Vietnamese and Arabic, as shown in Figure 1 below. Non-English speaking groups in the region are not only diverse; they are also geographically dispersed throughout the region. Therefore, regional information about LEP language access may not be as useful as information from a smaller geographic area. For example, on a regional scale, the most commonly spoken LEP languages are different than the most commonly spoken languages on a local scale. Attachment C provides information on the most commonly spoken languages other than English identified by the District of Columbia, Fairfax County, Montgomery County and Prince George's County. This information is similar to the 2000 Census data provided here, but differences do exist. Spanish, Vietnamese and Chinese were all listed by the local jurisdictions as the most commonly spoken languages by LEP individuals.

Figure 1: Languages Other Than English Most Often Spoken at Home in Jurisdictions Currently Served by Metrorail



Source: 2000 Census. Jurisdictions include Arlington County, the City of Alexandria, the District of Columbia, the City of Fairfax, the City of Falls Church, Fairfax County, Montgomery County and Prince George's County.

Moreover, the Washington region experiences a constant stream of international tourists who may not speak English proficiently. The Washington region has become one of the top immigrant destinations in the country. Illiteracy, even among English

speakers, is a barrier to transit information and needs to be considered when transit materials are developed.

Existing Transit Information Services for LEP Customers

A short description of existing transit language information services is provided here to create a context for recommendations to improve those services. At an AFA Committee meeting held in the spring of 2001, WMATA reported that it provides a live translation service capable of translating 140 languages which receives approximately 80 calls a month. Of these requests, 96 percent are for Spanish. The Metro Pocket Guide is available in eight languages and is available on the WMATA website. WMATA recently worked with an organization involved in the AFA Committee, the Boat People, SOS, Inc., and published a Metro Pocket Guide in Vietnamese. The Metro system map instructions are provided in English and Spanish. Three bus schedules are printed in Spanish. WMATA has 12 bilingual customer service employees. Local bus systems, such as Ride-On in Montgomery County, Fairfax Connector, and Arlington Transit, all have some bilingual customer service agents, and a few have recorded bilingual messages; Ride-On provides some translated written materials.

The Focus Group

A focus group was held in January 2003 with non-profit agencies from various language communities to have a broad conversation reflecting the geographic and national origin diversity of the region's LEP communities to further understand how LEP communities obtain information on services and which methods of communication are the most effective. Over 30 non-profit agencies that work with LEP populations participated in the focus group – including representatives from community/advocacy organizations and social service agencies in the District of Columbia, Suburban Maryland and Northern Virginia. A list of the participants is provided in Attachment A. Gustavo Torres, Executive Director of CASA of Maryland, Inc, facilitated the focus group.

A summary of findings of the focus group and a complete list of ideas and recommendations generated at the meeting are provided in Attachment B. The next section will review the major findings and recommendations for improving access to transit for LEP communities based on the input received. All of the recommendations are scalable; a recommendation could be tested in a small community or with one language first, and if it is successful, implemented on a larger scale. The first two sets of recommendations focus on short-range and relatively low cost priorities that would improve language access to regional transit services. The last set of recommendations focus on long-range priorities for expanding language access programs.

Major Findings and Recommendations

Promote and Improve Existing Language Assistance Services

The focus group identified several barriers for LEP populations in using transit in the region. One barrier is a lack of awareness of the existing language assistance services provided by transit agencies. Ineffectiveness of the existing language assistance services was also reported as a barrier. Given the suburban location of many LEP groups, the lack of frequent or convenient transit service also is a barrier. The first two barriers are addressed in this set of recommendations.

Transit information can be difficult for people who speak English to understand, and for those with limited English skills comprehending the materials is all the more challenging. Improving transit information with clear, concise language and the use of symbols helps not only those with limited English skills, but people who are illiterate and the general public as well.

Furthermore, the availability of translated transit information is not widely known among LEP communities. Written materials, such as schedules and guides, are not broadly distributed. Awareness of phone translation services, such as WMATA's language assistance line, is low. Few people were aware that WMATA's language assistance line can also provide information on local bus systems, such as Ride-On and Fairfax Connector. Participants reported that their clients have been frustrated with using transit information translation services. For instance, some clients have had difficulty trying to obtain translated information with an agency representative who spoke only English. Sometimes people had to wait long periods to obtain translated information which made transit trip planning hard to do on the same day.

Recommendations

- ✓ Improve the existing phone transit information services for LEP populations by making the service more attentive to customer demand.
- ✓ Advertise phone information services more widely.
 - Advertise the services available from the WMATA transit information line, such as translation services and information on local transit systems, in English and other languages.
 - It would be beneficial if both WMATA and the local transit systems advertised the phone services provided by WMATA.
- ✓ Add multilingual greetings and options on WMATA's general information line.
- ✓ Improve existing transit information provided in English by using clear, concise language with pictures, graphics and symbols.

- ✓ Provide written translated materials in Metro stations and bus stops in heavily LEP-populated transit areas.
- ✓ Establish a community or citizen advisory group to help transit agencies reach language access goals.
- ✓ Ensure that LEP individuals can understand and follow instructions and procedures within a transit system in the event of an emergency.

Provide Additional Language Assistance Services and Materials

The focus group discussed the best methods of communicating with people who have limited English skills. Verbal communications were found to be much more effective than written communications. Social networks and word of mouth are the primary sources of information used by LEP groups. The Internet was not felt to be as helpful as other sources of information, such as verbal information provided via the phone assistance services or written information using simple and clear language provided in transit areas, social service agencies and community organizations. Effective written materials use simple language and lots of visuals, and rely more on universal symbols and images rather than words. Grants and other resources to augment transit agency funding could be explored to assist in implementing the following recommendations.

Recommendations

- ✓ Provide education, training, and tools for social service providers, churches and other organizations that work with LEP and English as Second Language (ESL) communities.
- ✓ Produce a video on how to use transit, which should be distributed widely to community organizations, social service agencies and employment centers. Produce the video in English and Spanish first, and then translate to other languages when more resources are available.
- ✓ Improve multilingual information at bus stops incrementally. Experiment with adding information in Spanish at a few bus stops in a heavily Hispanic area, for example. Post large maps at bus stops displaying routes, Metro stations and instructions on how to use the bus system in a language other than English in one specific language community. Use landmarks and universally understood symbols on the map. If these services are successful, provide them in more transit areas.
- ✓ Transit agencies should use a survey of riders to determine which language translations need to be provided, and the Census data should be used until surveys can be completed.

- The regional 2000 Census data indicates that Spanish, African languages, Chinese, Korean, French and Vietnamese are most often spoken at home in the region. However, local surveys, local 2000 Census data and other sources should be used to determine appropriate languages for a smaller geographic area, like for certain Metro stations and bus routes.
- ✓ Given the complex set of languages spoken, the frequent international visitors in the metropolitan Washington region, and to assist illiterate individuals, universal symbols and pictures should be used to communicate with transit customers more often than written language.
 - A standard set of symbols could be developed to communicate emergency procedures, how to use rail and bus systems, and for navigation within a transit system.

Long-Range Recommendations for Expanding Language Assistance Services

Recognizing that limited resources are available for language assistance services, the preceding recommendations were short-range and relatively low-cost priorities that could greatly improve language access to vital transit services in the region. Below are recommendations for expanding services available to ensure greater access and more meaningful transit information to LEP customers.

Recommendations

- ✓ Recruit bilingual transit agency employees for positions with frequent customer contact with the public. Ensure that they are compensated fairly for their skills and job responsibilities.
- ✓ Provide cultural sensitivity training for bus drivers, transit police and other transit agency employees who have customer contact.
- ✓ Implement “Try Transit Week” focusing on LEP with language-appropriate tours.
- ✓ Improve language assistance for people with physical and cognitive disabilities. People that do not speak English and have a visual or hearing impairment, face an even more difficult challenge in understanding and using transit services.

Attachment A
Focus Group Participants

Name	Affiliation
Jocelyn Barbour	Fairfax County Department of Family Services
Elizabeth Binckes	Aging and Disability Services Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services
Greg Chen	DC Mayor's Office on Asian & Pacific Islander Affairs
Zoie Cheng	Greater Washington Urban League
Nora Eidelman	The Law Foundation of Prince George's County
Tammy Fenton	Latin American Youth Center
Rosa Garcia	Councilmember Tom Perez Montgomery County Council
Marlnon Grande	Independence Now
Joe Heiney-Gonzalez	Hispanic Customer Service Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services
Angela Hsu	Chinese Culture and Community Service Center
Luis Hurtado	Montgomery County Police Department, Community Relations
Gie Kim	Korean American Coalition- Washington DC
Dawn Le	Aging and Disability Services Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services
Carlos Loureiro	Carlos Rosario School
Heather McClure	Council of Latino Agencies
Lillian Perdomo	Multicultural Community Service
Kim Propeack	CASA of Maryland, Inc.
Wanda Ramos	Langley Park Community Center
Harriet Shapiro	Connect-A-Ride Jewish Council for the Aging
Nguyen Dinh Thang	Boat People S.O.S., Inc.
Gustavo Torres	CASA of Maryland, Inc.
Enrique Torrico	Calvary Multicultural Learning Center
Myriam Torrico	Montgomery County Government Hispanic/Latino Initiative
Scott Wang	Chinese Culture and Community Service Center
Susan Worton Eroraha	(none)

WMATA Participants

Patricia Tomczyszyn WMATA
Angela Martin WMATA
David Erion WMATA

COG Staff and Other Observers

Tracey France Federal Highway Administration
Wendy Klancher COG Staff
Jerry Miller COG Staff
John Swanson COG Staff

Attachment B

Focus Group Summary on Transit Information for Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Communities January 7, 2003

What are the Current Barriers and Needs for LEP communities to Use the Transit System?

Barriers

The purpose of this question was to identify barriers specific to LEP communities that can be addressed in part with better information, services and marketing. The focus group participants identified a range of barriers, including geographic, cultural, language, transit service limitations and limitations certain individuals face—physical limitations for disabled and elderly persons, literacy challenges and unique challenges for immigrants and refugees. Below is a condensed list of the major barriers for LEP individuals to use the transit system as identified by the focus group.

- Lack of translated transit information, usefulness of current translated information and lack of awareness of existing translation services and materials
- Complex transit information is hard to understand even in English, and the multiple transit systems in the region adds another layer of complexity
- Unfamiliarity with the transit system
- Safety concerns—at bus stops, in the rail system and fear of not being able to communicate with police and others if problem does occur
- Varying levels of literacy in English and all other languages

Needs

The needs identified by the focus group fall into four broad categories. The specific needs raised by the focus group are listed here. The categories are used to frame the priorities in the last section of this summary.

- ***Promote existing language assistance services***
 - Provide practical training and produce orientation materials for social service agencies to assist clients
 - Advertise the language line translation service more widely
 - Make hard copies of translated materials more readily available
 - Improve access to translated materials on the website

- ***Improve the existing language assistance services and materials***

Translation services that are currently available do not convey openness to language access—little things, like not having automated menus with different language options, can minimize the effectiveness of providing any language access services.

- More user-friendly translation service
- Information provided needs to be uniform, clear and simple with visual and verbal components
- Transit service limitations, such as bus frequency, need to be conveyed to LEP people
- Provide more bus maps and distribute more thoroughly
- Metrorail train delay and other messages in Spanish (verbal and on electronic message boards in stations)

- ***Expand the language assistance program***

- Cultural competency and diversity sensitivity training for transit agency employees with customer contact
- Develop additional materials and services for LEP customers

- ***Improve and expand transit service***

- Reverse commute transit service
- More suburban service

How do people in our communities obtain information about services, including transit information?

- Social Network
- Word of mouth
- Social service agencies
- Bilingual people at transit stations and bus stops
- Bilingual employees
- Community-based and ethnic organizations
- Employment centers
- Place of work
- Church
- Local TV stations and radio
- Ethnic/Foreign Language media: radio, television, and newspapers
- Family members—children of LEP people play an important role
- Public Parks
- Community based events such as fairs and festivals
- Hotlines Advertised and Answered in that language

- Internet
- Kiosks
- Golden Triangle street information
- Libraries
- Schools

What are the main communication sources?

- Social network
- Word of mouth
- Bilingual people at transit stations and bus stops
- Ethnic/Foreign Language media: radio, television, and newspapers
- Employment centers
- Place of work
- Community-based and ethnic organizations
- Church
- Social service agencies

What are the most effective methods of communicating transit information to LEP customers?

- Images and symbols that are universally understood
- Interpersonal interaction through social networks, employers and bilingual employees
- Ethnic radio and cable stations
- Spoken word rather than written communication
- Simple messages that use lots of visuals

What are the priorities?

Promote existing language assistance services and use of transit

- Use verbal communication methods to promote transit use and transit information to LEP communities
- Simplify information to use basic language and more visuals
- Provide education, training, and tools for social service providers, churches and other organizations that work with LEP and ESL communities

- Conduct surveys of riders, LEP related community based organizations and social service agencies to find out more about the needs
- Promote transit services in educational settings, K-12 and adult ESL and literacy classes schools
- Advertise transit information in various languages with visuals, in places such as:
 - Interior space in buses and subways;
 - Churches, ethnic grocery stores, check-cashing stores, phone card stores and beauty shops; and
 - Community events and festivals.
- Advertise and answer help lines in languages other than English
- In the event of an emergency, limited English proficiency (LEP) customers need to understand transit related evacuation plans and procedures
- Use bi-lingual volunteers (like students needing to volunteer) to hand out translated information and greet customers at high-volume Metrorail stations and bus stops

Improve the existing language assistance services and materials

- Produce more materials to assist LEP customers, such as:
 - A basic newsletter or pamphlet in simple English on using the transit system (“How to Catch a Bus”), then translate to other languages and widely publish and distribute
 - A simple resource guide in several languages describing metropolitan transit resources for LEP communities
 - Make WMATA’s website more user friendly and put posters in all regional libraries on how to access information
- Improve phone translation services
 - Transit information greeting on phone line needs to be in more than one language
 - Invest in a phone system in which customers can push # for English, # for Spanish, # for Vietnamese, etc...
- Develop buddy systems to introduce the transit system to new LEP users
- Make bus stops language accessible

- Produce a video in several languages on how to use the transit system and distribute widely to community organizations, social service agencies and community organizations
- Create a community or citizen advisory board to help transit agencies reach language access goals

Expand the language assistance program

- Create large metropolitan bus maps and post at bus shelters and other spaces (Paris Transit is good example)
- Hire more bilingual transit agency employees who work with the public and assure that they are compensated fairly for their skills and job responsibilities
- Provide cultural sensitivity training for bus drivers, transit police and other transit agency employees who have customer contact
- Implement “Try Transit Week” focusing on LEP with language appropriate tours

Attachment C

Information from Local Jurisdictions on Languages Commonly Spoken by Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Individuals

February 2003

Fairfax County

1. Spanish
2. Vietnamese
3. Korean
4. Farsi
5. Arabic
6. Urdu
7. Chinese and American Sign language

Source: Jocelyn Barbour and Angie Carrera. Based on surveys done by the Fairfax County Government and included in information for government agency publications and language access services.

Montgomery County

1. Spanish
2. Vietnamese
3. Korean
4. Chinese

Source: Montgomery County library system. Based U.S. Census information for Montgomery County residents.

Note: Montgomery County Ride-On found from a triennial survey of riders that the most common languages other than English that riders spoke were Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese and French.

District of Columbia

1. Spanish
2. Amharic
3. Korean
4. Vietnamese
5. Mandarin Chinese

Source: From Councilmember Jim Graham's office and based on community testimony at a public hearing on language access. Not an official list.

Prince George's County

1. Spanish
2. French
3. Krio
4. Amharic
5. Vietnamese
6. Liberian English
7. Yoruba
8. Mandarin Chinese
9. Urdu
10. Jamaican English

Source: Top 10 languages spoken by students enrolled in the ESOL program in the Prince George's County Public Schools.

Appendix B

**AFA Comments on the Draft 2003 Financially Constrained
Long-Range Transportation Plan (CLRP)
Presented to the TPB on October 15, 2003**

TPB Access for All Advisory Committee
Comments on the Draft 2003 Financially Constrained Long-Range
Transportation Plan (CLRP)
October 15, 2003

More Transit is Needed in the Inner Parts of the Region

Committee members observed that transit improvements in the 2003 CLRP appear to be serving more suburban areas, rather than low-income communities that may be more transit dependant near the inner part of the region.

Concerns were raised about the lack of planned transit improvements or studies in Southern Prince George's County. The light rail transit study between Silver Spring and New Carrollton should extend further south into Prince George's County and include new rail service across the Woodrow Wilson Bridge.

Current Transit Services Need to be Maintained and Improved *in the Short-Term*

Although the expansion of the Metrorail system is very important, low-income communities and persons with disabilities rely upon the services provided by MetroAccess, Metrobus, and local, community-based bus services.

The AFA committee is concerned about proposed discontinuation in six Metrobus lines due to funding shortfalls. The AFA stressed that the impacts on low-income communities from reductions in Metrobus service need to be considered. The possible reduction in service between the Branch Avenue Metro station and King Street in Alexandria, lines N11 and N13, was of particular concern.

Many low-income workers hold more than one job, and have jobs that do not follow traditional work hours such as 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. The region needs more transit service in the reverse commute direction and expanded levels of transit service to allow these workers access to employment opportunities.

Transit information for people who have limited English proficiency (LEP) needs to be improved and widely available for a significant part of the population dependent on transit. The AFA subcommittee looks forward to hearing from the transit agencies regarding progress on implementing the recommendations from the LEP report presented to the Board in July.

Transit Services for People with Disabilities

Concerns were raised over recent news articles regarding WMATA's short-term budget problems that were credited to increasing costs in paratransit services. Paratransit services for low-income and persons with disabilities should be funded at higher levels and expanded.

The AFA committee will be formally recommending that WMATA study the current door-to-door paratransit system. A six-month study should review how improvements could help more people use paratransit services, and in light of current budget issues, investigate if there are more cost-effective ways to provide and operate paratransit services.

Promote More Development Around Transit Stations, But Take Care Of The Community That's Already There

The AFA committee would like to see more development around transit stations, especially on the eastern side of the region. However, states and localities should make provisions to mitigate potentially negative impacts from such development, in the short- and long-term, such as the increased housing costs and displacement.

Appendix C

**Presentation to the TPB on December 17, 2003 on
AFA Recommendations for Transit Services for People with
Disabilities**

TPB Access for All Committee's Recommendations on Transit Services for People with Disabilities

John Hudson
TPB Access for All Advisory Committee
Presentation to the TPB
December 17, 2003

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Background

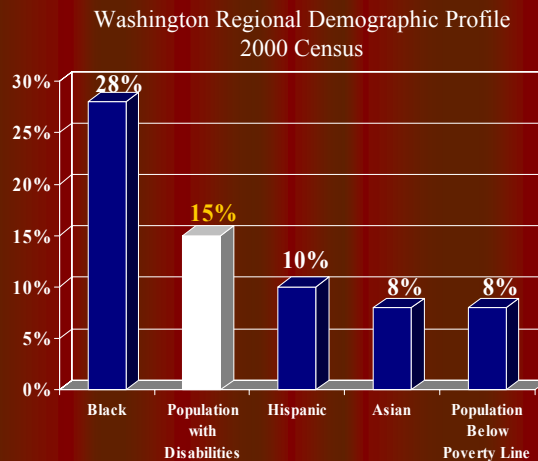
4

Nationwide Trends in Transportation for People with Disabilities

- 30% of people with disabilities report a problem with adequate transportation versus 10% of the general population (NOD Harris 2000 Survey)
- Transportation difficulties keep over a half of million people with disabilities at home (BTS 2002 Survey)

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585,000 People with Disabilities in the Region *One of Largest Minority Groups*



In addition, the poverty rate for people with disabilities is 50% higher than the general population

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Transit Services for People with Disabilities

- Fixed Route: Accessible bus and rail transit services provided by local systems and WMATA
- Paratransit: Curb-to-curb service with vans or taxi cabs provided by WMATA (MetroAccess) and other local providers (Star, DOT, City Wheels)

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AFA Recent Activities and Recommendations

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AFA Activities

- In-depth discussions about these issues over the last six months
- Reviewed WMATA study that looked at how to encourage more people with disabilities to use bus and rail transit
- Developed comments and recommendations
- Invited to participate in WMATA's newly created Regional Paratransit Task Force

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"Metro is Accessible" Initiative AFA Comments

- The WMATA study recommended an outreach and marketing initiative ("Metro is Accessible")
- The AFA commends WMATA's efforts to outreach and train people with disabilities to use the fixed route system

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"Metro is Accessible" Initiative AFA Recommendations

- Coordinate with county and city transit systems
- Improve the reliability of Metrorail and all bus systems for people with disabilities
- Conduct a study on the curb-to-curb service -- MetroAccess

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MetroAccess Study

- Focus on how to maximize ridership with current budget: Are there more cost-effective ways to better serve more people with disabilities?
- Conduct in same time frame and budget as the "Metro is Accessible" study

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Conclusion

- Improve dependability of the bus and rail systems to attract and retain the targeted riders
- Coordinate efforts with regional and local transit providers
- Conduct a comprehensive study of the curb-to-curb service for the best and most cost-effective ways to serve the greatest number of people

Appendix D

**TPB Letter of January 21, 2004 transmitting
AFA Recommendations for
Transit Services for People with Disabilities
to the WMATA Board of Directors**

**TPB Access for All Advisory Committee
Comments and Recommendations
on WMATA's Efforts to Mainstream People with Disabilities
on the Bus and Rail System**

December 2003

Overall Comments

- The TPB Access for All (AFA) Advisory Committee has reviewed WMATA's *Mainstreaming Individuals with Disabilities Onto MetroBus and MetroRail* report and commends WMATA's efforts to inform and train people with disabilities to use the fixed-route system, MetroBus and MetroRail.
- The report is very thorough, provides an excellent summary of the importance of mainstreaming options, and includes many good recommendations for increasing the MetroBus and MetroRail ridership by individuals with disabilities.
- The AFA supports the mainstreaming effort and the use of travel training to help more people with disabilities use the fixed route system.
- The committee recognizes that serving a large number of people with disabilities in a region as expansive as metropolitan Washington is a challenge. Further complicating this challenge is the geographic dispersment of people with disabilities, and the number of different types of disabilities-- physical, hidden, cognitive, hearing and visually impaired – each with different transportation challenges to address.
- AFA would like to assist WMATA in the mainstreaming efforts – particularly the mainstreaming option “Customer Support Services”. Recommendations under this option include improved print information that “use pictures, symbols and simple text...”. Tactile and auditory maps, improved website accessibility, fare incentives, and service enhancements are also recommendations the AFA strongly endorses as important for mainstreaming.
- Many of these recommendations would help attract and retain the general public and people with limited English skills as well as people with disabilities.
- The report does not reference the issue of how complaints from persons with disabilities will be administered. These persons may believe they have been discriminated against or believe WMATA is not adhering to ADA requirements in terms of fixed route service. The AFA recommends that WMATA clearly delineate who in the agency administers and resolves ADA discrimination complaints—for both fixed route service and Metro Access--and the manner in which this information will be disseminated to the public.

Concerns

- The AFA would like to emphasize the feedback from community-based and governmental organizations that were interviewed for the “Mainstreaming” study. These organizations have commented that critical improvements to the fixed-route system are needed if WMATA intends to attract and retain customers with disabilities.
- In particular, the AFA is concerned about the reliability of the fixed-route system for people with disabilities. Suggested improvements that would increase the reliability and accessibility of the system cited by these groups in the report include:
 - The elevators and escalators should work routinely in the MetroRail system;
 - Increased lighting and additional signage at MetroBus and MetroRail stations is important;
 - Enhanced awareness and sensitivity towards people with disabilities from transit employees is needed;
 - Improved location, access and maintenance of bus stops are important;
 - The bus stops and train stops need to be consistently and clearly announced;
 - Transit information needs to be improved and easier to access; and
 - Focus groups with disability partners were recommended as a way to collect information on needed system improvements.
- The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has indicated that a recurring complaint FTA gets is that riders with disabilities waiting at a bus stop are told lifts are not working and such riders have to catch the next bus. The AFA asks that WMATA operators be reminded that it is their responsibility that buses are in working order (with a properly operating lift), and that operators must offer lifts at bus stops and assist persons with disabilities.
- The AFA committee stresses the importance of coordinating with the other transit systems in the region on travel training and additional mainstreaming efforts. Many people access the Metro system from local transit systems such as the Fairfax Connector, Ride-On, the Bus and ART. Regional coordination on travel training could ensure that more customers with disabilities are reached. Customers should be knowledgeable on the full range of transit options available and each system should be accessible and uniform for people with disabilities. Fairfax County is reaching out to people with disabilities with a bus that has been designed to train people with disabilities on how to use the Fairfax Connector system.

- Feeder bus services are particularly important for assisting disabled customers in accessing the Metro system. Feeder bus services should be expanded, and coordinated with the local jurisdictions.
- There is growing evidence that deficiencies in the pedestrian environment, particularly at street crossings, render some fixed routes inaccessible. Crossing streets can be a real barrier to using transit.
- Local jurisdictions and transportation agencies need to assist with the mainstreaming effort—especially in helping to ensure that bus stops are accessible and accommodating to people with disabilities.
- The results from the bus stop studies that several local jurisdictions have conducted could be useful to WMATA in assessing the accessibility of bus stops for people with disabilities. The AFA also encourages all the large counties to conduct such studies.
- WMATA should measure the outcome of the mainstreaming efforts. The measures to be used to test for success need to be carefully defined to reflect the different types of disabilities.
- WMATA’s travel training program should describe the full range of transit options available to people with disabilities – MetroAccess, Metrobus and other bus systems, and Metrorail. As stated earlier, the travel training should be coordinated with the local jurisdictions and other transit systems.
- Travel training should be prioritized for those who need it the most.
- Travel training efforts also need to educate non-disabled transit riders who play a major role in making the fixed-route system easier to use for disabled riders. Customers need to be reminded that priority seating and elevators are for people with disabilities and they need to allow space and time for people with disabilities to board and exit trains and buses.

AFA Recommendations

I. Coordinate with Other Bus Systems and Improve Reliability of MetroBus and MetroRail

- **Coordinate with other systems.** Mainstreaming efforts should be coordinated with county and city transit systems throughout the region. Many people access the WMATA system from the local systems, such as Ride-On and Fairfax Connector, which need to be fully accessible and reliable for the “Metro is Accessible” project to be effective.

- **Improve reliability** of the WMATA system to attract and retain the targeted riders. The AFA fully supports recommendations in the mainstreaming report to increase the reliability of train and bus systems. These specific recommendations include:
 - Ensure that elevators and escalators work routinely;
 - Increase lighting and signage;
 - Improve accessibility to bus stops;
 - Ensure that bus drivers call out stops and have working wheelchair lifts; and
 - Improve transit information.

In addition to helping people with disabilities, these improvements are also important for people with limited English skills, those traveling with small children, bicyclists and the general public.

II. Conduct a Study of MetroAccess

- Given the success of the WMATA “Mainstreaming” study, a study of Metro’s paratransit service should now be conducted to identify ways to serve the greatest number of people with the current budget. The study should examine if there are there more cost-effective ways to better serve more people with disabilities who cannot use the fixed route system.
- The study should be conducted in the same time frame and budget as the “Mainstreaming” study.

This recommendation comes from budgetary concerns highlighted recently in the press that have serious implications for current and future users of MetroAccess, which is the only option for a significant and growing number of people with disabilities. This makes the timely completion of this study even more critical.