

ITEM 9- Information

July 20, 2005

Report on the Sixteenth Annual Public Transit Forum

Staff

Recommendation: Receive briefing on the sixteenth annual public transit forum held on May 24.

Issues: None.

Background: Each year the TPB Private Providers Task Force sponsors an annual forum where public transit staff from WMATA and state and local jurisdictions meet with interested private providers to discuss plans for new or restructured transit services in the region. The TPB Private Providers Task Force was established by the TPB's Private Enterprise Participation Policy, which was adopted in 1987 and revised in 1995.

**Highlights From The****SIXTEENTH ANNUAL PUBLIC TRANSIT FORUM***District of Columbia**Bowie**College Park**Frederick County**Gaithersburg**Greenbelt**Montgomery County**Prince George's County**Rockville**Takoma Park**Alexandria**Arlington County**Fairfax**Fairfax County**Falls Church**Loudoun County**Manassas**Manassas Park**Prince William County*

Date: May 24, 2005

Time: 11:00 a.m.

Place: COG Rooms 4 & 5

Chair: Robert Werth

ATTENDEES:

Rollo Axtan, Fairfax County Department of Transportation

Jeri Brown, NOVA Group

Deborah Burns, FTA/Washington Metropolitan Office

Elaine Curl, The Convention Store

Lynn Erickson, Maryland Department of Transportation

Vince Jackson, WMATA

Christian Kent, First Transit

Nancy Kutz, Montgomery County Transit Services

Jeffrey Lehmann, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Commission

Jana Lynott, Northern Virginia Transportation Commission

Kelley MacKinnon, Arlington County Transit – ART

Peggy Maher, Connex Transit

Eric Marx, Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission

Danielle Milo, Martz Gold Line/Gray Line

Mark Mohebi, AlternaTrans

Harold Morgan, Taxicab, Limousine & Paratransit Association

Bill Morrow, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Commission

Bill Orleans

Aaron Overman, Prince George's County DPW&T

Damon Parran, Spirit Tours & Travel Corp.

Brian Rogers, Greyhound Lines

Michael Sharff, Peter Pan Bus Lines

Lynn T. Sivals, Prince George's County DPW&T

Douglas Stallworth, DDOT, Mass Transit Division

Rick Stevens, Fairfax County Department of Transportation

Alex Verzosa, City of Fairfax

Robert Werth, Diamond Transportation

COG Staff:

Andrew Austin

Wendy Klancher

Gerald Miller

Welcome and Introductions

Chairman Werth welcomed everyone to the forum and asked the participants to introduce themselves.

Increasing Private Sector Participation in Transportation Planning and Service Delivery

Mr. Werth introduced Harold Morgan of the Taxicab, Limousine & Paratransit Association (TLPA). The TLPA is a national organization that represents the owners and managers of taxicab, limousine, sedan, airport shuttle, paratransit, and non-emergency medical fleets.

Mr. Morgan distributed a hand out describing the two transportation reauthorization bills that had recently passed in the House of Representatives and the Senate. The House bill is named the Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users or TEA-LU, which allocates spending \$284 billion. The Senate bill, titled the Safe, Accountable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Equity Act (SAFETEA) allocates \$294.2 billion, about \$12.3 billion more than the threshold set by the White House. He said that both bills are going to a conference committee and that he believed that, despite the Senate budget overage, both bills were passed with overwhelming majorities and were essentially veto-proof.

Mr. Morgan described the activities of the Coalition of Private Transportation Associations, of which TLPA was a member, and explained that it had endorsed many of the provisions in the Senate bill. He commented that the Coalition considered this version to be the most pro-private sector piece of legislation ever passed by the Senate. He described the key issues that the coalition identified as important. He said the Senate bill repealed language that the coalition felt was discriminatory towards private transportation providers. However, he noted that it felt further work was needed to improve the administration and enforcement of the charter bus rules and to protect against unfair competition.

Mr. Morgan reported that the Senate bill modestly reforms labor protection provisions, changing the length of severance pay required under Section 5333(b) from six to four years. He commented that private enterprise participation in federal transit programs would be enhanced with clearer guidance and regulations on how those requirements should be met. One of the more significant changes was that the Senate bill would permit private transportation operators to be sub-recipients under the 5307 Urban formula grant, 5309 Discretionary Capital grant, 5311 Non-urbanized area (or Rural formula), and Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) programs. The Senate bill also sets aside funds to enhance intermodal terminal projects. He also commented that the Senate bill would include a provision requiring metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) to develop and adopt a plan for including public participation in the process for developing the metropolitan plan and program by citizens, affected public agencies, private providers of transportation, freight providers, representatives of users of public transit, and other groups.

Mr. Morgan went on to discuss a challenge currently facing the industry – that of providing more accessible taxicab services. He noted that most taxi service is operated in automobiles, which are exempted from ADA accessibility guidelines. However, ADA also requires that anyone in the business of providing taxi service shall not discriminate on the basis of disability in the delivery of service. He described how the Long Beach California transit agency manager and the Yellow Cab owner about six years ago developed a new approach to address a number of problems with the

provision of ADA services, including punctuality issues, circuitous and long routes to carry multiple passengers, and a steep cost per trip with a low passenger volume per vehicle service hour. He described the evolution to the current system where ramp-equipped, ADA-approved vans painted and marked with the Yellow Cab color and logo are utilized to provide paratransit service. Scheduling is by regular taxi dispatchers. Ridesharing is encouraged but travel routes are shorter and passengers report that the service is quick and as punctual as regular taxi service. Most importantly, he said that the cost of the service is about half that of the previous arrangement. He concluded by encouraging more communities to consider the use of good accessible taxicab services in their ADA paratransit services.

The group then discussed some of the paratransit services in this region. It was pointed out that a regional paratransit committee at WMATA in 2004 recommended increasing the number of accessible cabs in this region to relieve some of the demand on Metro Access service.

Chairman Werth thanked Mr. Morgan for his excellent and comprehensive presentation.

Transit Plans and Prospects

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

Vince Jackson reported that WMATA was working to improve customer information. A contract had been established with CHK America, Inc. to install street and route maps at all bus shelters. He said that current bus route numbers had been posted at all stops and shelters. The agency expects to roll out a pilot project for real-time bus information by the end of 2005. He reported that the current MetroAccess contract with Logisticare was due to expire and bids were being accepted by WMATA until the middle of June 2005 for a new provider to operate the service beginning in January 2006.

TPB Study on Demand Responsive Services

Wendy Klancher, COG/TPB staff, provided an overview of a study on demand responsive services in the Washington region initiated by the TPB's Access for All (AFA) Advisory Committee and WMATA. The study will examine:

- The demand for and benefits of paratransit services;
- Customer needs and concerns for these services;
- Innovative practices and cost-effective ways to provide services; and
- Potential service and funding coordination.

The study began in March 2005 and is expected to be complete in December 2005.

A study Steering Committee has been formed, is chaired by Kathy Porter, and includes approximately 25 participants from a variety of backgrounds from Northern Virginia, Suburban Maryland and the District of Columbia. Ms. Klancher noted that participation from private providers was welcomed and that the Task Force would be provided with a draft of the study to comment on. The study will build upon previous efforts, such as WMATA's recent Regional Paratransit Task Force and the 2004 report from KFH on specialized transportation services.

District of Columbia

Doug Stallworth reported that the District of Columbia was establishing two new Downtown Circulator routes. The first would run between Georgetown and Union Station and the second would run between the South West/Waterfront Metro station and the Convention Center. The service would be operated by First Transit and managed by WMATA. Funds were being provided by a new corporation formed by several Business Improvement Districts. A possible second phase would establish another route around the National Mall, monuments, Capitol building and White House. There are potential conflicts with a National Park Service contract with Tour Mobile that may need to be resolved.

City of Fairfax

Alex Verzosa reported that there were no major changes in Fairfax County's Cue Bus service. He noted that there will likely be some route changes due to new government employment centers opening up and from requests to serve George Mason University.

Arlington County

Kelley MacKinnon reported that Arlington Transit (ART) has not added many new routes but has been making a number of changes to existing routes. She reported that 25 of their 30 bus fleet were CNG vehicles. Ms. MacKinnon also talked about several customer outreach efforts. ART was working closely with WMATA to provide information to customers at their Commuter Stores and through their Commuter Assistance Program. She also introduced a campaign called "Way to go Arlington" that promotes non-car modes of transportation.

Fairfax County

Richard Stevens stated that overall ridership on the Fairfax Connector had increased more than 5% since the previous year. Contracts with Connex would continue in Huntington through March 2007 and in Herndon through mid-2008. He said that since the county had implemented its South County Bus Plan, revenue had increased by 62.5%. Mr. Stevens also reported that a transit store would open in Reston in 2006 and a West Ox operations center would begin operating in 2007. Rollo Axtan added that a new bus service had been established between Huntington and Fort Belvoir.

Montgomery County

Nancy Kutz announced that a new four-year contract with First Transit had begun in March 2005. She said that the county's Smart Card program would be online by the end of the year and that this would replace coupons for senior transportation programs. The "Go Montgomery" plan had added seven buses already and would add four more next year. Service had been expanded on both evenings and weekends.

Ms. Kutz talked about the issue of accessible taxi cabs. She noted that Montgomery County is the only Department of Public Works and Transportation in the state to provide Medicaid transit service. She reported that there were 66 accessible cabs in the county but added that many of them go unused because drivers don't want to operate them. She said the county provided over 40,000 Medicaid trips per year, some of which were provided by Logisitcare. Metro Access customers were eligible to buy one coupon book per month and could call in for same-day service. Ms. Kutz was asked if the county was satisfied with administering Medicaid transit. She replied that the taxi service was not problematic but that it was difficult to find contractors for non-emergency ambulance service. She said the county would prefer that the state provide this service.

Prince George's County

Aaron Overman reported that the county's five-year transit service plan should be finished by early 2006. He said the county was examining the potential to increase service during evenings and weekends. Since the opening of the Blue Line extension to Largo Town Center last year, changes had been made to 15 bus routes. Mr. Overman also announced that the county was rolling out its "Next Bus" technology. He said users could visit nextbus.com on the Web to track any Prince George's County bus and see when it would arrive at the next stop. He said LED displays would also be implemented at select shelters, with as many as 25 installed by 2006. Mr. Overman said that the county was also working with WMATA to get bust stop and routing information posted on all shelters in the county by 2006.

Maryland Transit Administration

A representative from MTA was unable to attend the forum.

Northern Virginia Transportation Commission

Jana Lynott described the Commission's Senior Transportation Study. She said that a grant had been awarded from the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation to examine the changing demographics of Northern Virginia and how best to serve seniors in the coming decades. The study would begin with a demographic analysis and telephone survey and would end with a set of near term and longer term recommendations. Ms. Lynott added that FTA had awarded an additional \$100,000 follow-on grant to develop recommendations through a pilot study.

Ms. Lynott also reported that NVTC, a co-owner of Virginia Rail Express, had reached an agreement with Amtrak to allow VRE service into Washington's Union Station.

Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission

Eric Marx said that PRTC has completed two years of their contract with First Transit. He congratulated Tim Collins of First Transit on winning the president's award for management. After finishing their first 12-month evaluation, the company had earned many of its potential incentives. The contract would continue through mid-2009 with an option for four additional years.

Mr. Marx stated that their fleet now exceeded 100 vehicles and that the Flex Route OmniLink service had just passed 10 years of service. Service has been expanded to include Saturdays. A new route would be added in the fall of 2005 along Route 1 and service to Rosslyn was planned to begin in 2006. Mr. Marx also commented that Fauquier and Spotsylvania counties were interested in participating in PRTC.

Representatives from the City of Alexandria, Loudoun County and the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation were unable to attend the forum. Written comments from those agencies were distributed at the meeting and are attached to these highlights.

Private Enterprise Transportation in Alexandria

- ✓ The provision of public transportation through the use of private contractors is a long established practice in Alexandria. Alexandria has two parts of its transit program, which have important private components.
 - DASH is the City's fixed route transit operation. A management company, First Transit, provides management for the company. Their contract was recently renewed.
 - DOT Paratransit- The City provides ADA compatible paratransit service to City residents wishing to travel within Alexandria, and from Alexandria to Fairfax County, Arlington County, Fairfax City and Falls Church City to people with ambulatory disabilities (40,471 trips/year) and people with non-ambulatory disabilities (13,978 trips/year). In order to do this the City has contracted with three private entities.
 - The City contracts with a private not-for-profit firm, Senior Citizens of Alexandria, to provide call taking services for the DOT Paratransit program.
 - The City contracts with a private company, Diamond Transportation Services, to provide transportation services for people with non-ambulatory disabilities.
 - The City contracts with another private company, Yellow Cab to provide transportation services for people with ambulatory disabilities.
 - The City has decided to add to the number of transit providers for people with ambulatory disabilities by placing a RFP on the street very soon which will provide additional transit services for people with ambulatory disabilities. This RFP will be available within a very short time. If anyone is interested in this RFP, they can call or write the City's Purchasing Department to obtain a copy of the RFP.
 - Jack Pitzer, Purchasing Agent or
Eleonor Foddrell, Senior Contract Administrator
City of Alexandria
Purchasing
100 N. Pitt Street, Suite 301
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 838-4944
 - When the RFP is finalized, it will be posted on the Purchasing Division's Solicitation Board at http://ci.alexandria.va.us/cgi-bin/sol_board.

Talking Points for COG Public Transit Forum Session

Loudoun County (LC) Transit

- Currently Loudoun County (LC) Transit operates 19 buses on three commuter routes with 29 AM scheduled runs and 30 PM scheduled runs. Over the last eleven years total annual ridership has grown from 45,000 passenger trips in 1995 to over 392,000 trips in fiscal year 2004.
- The first of the commuter routes originates from four park and ride lots in the County: Purcellville, Hamilton, Leesburg and Dulles North, to points east including Rosslyn, the Pentagon, and stops in Washington, DC.
- The second route LC Transit operates is service from Cascades and Lowes Island in Eastern Loudoun County to the West Falls Church Metro Station. This metro link provides riders access to the options of WMATA's rail and bus system and other local transit systems.
- The third LC Transit route is the Reverse Commute Service. The buses pick up passengers at West Falls Church Metro and travel to the campuses of AOL and MCI, as well as Beaumeade Circle and the Dulles North Transit Center. This service connects to County fixed routes. Since its introduction, this service has grown from 298 passenger trips the first month to over 3,800 monthly passenger trips in September 2004.
- In February 2004 the first of the 22 LC Transit MCI D4500 commuter coaches arrived in Loudoun County. In July 2004 a contract was issued to Yellow Bus Service to operate and maintain these new buses for LC Transit. The contract is for three years with the option of seven one-year renewals. The buses are 45 feet long and accommodate 55 passengers with amenities such as reclining seats, restrooms, reading lights and LED destination signage.
- The County placed an order for two more MCI D4500 commuter coaches to be delivered in June 2005.
- Depending on the amount of State Capital Funding received, the County intends to purchase up to 5 more MCI D4500 commuter coaches in fiscal year 2006.



Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation
The Smartest Distance Between Two Points

To: Sixteenth Annual Public Transit Forum

From: Sharmila Samarasinghe
Project Manager, Northern Virginia Office

Date: May 23, 2005

Subject: Recent projects and activities undertaken by the Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT)

Due to a conflicting appointment in Richmond, VA, regrettably, I will not be present at the Sixteenth Annual Public Transit Forum, May 24, 2005.

The following pages contain a concise report on DRPT activities during the past year.

Overview

The Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) is the state agency for Rail, Public Transportation and Ridesharing in the Commonwealth of Virginia. (www.drpt.virginia.gov)

Congestion relief, enhanced mobility for our citizens and economic development are the overriding goals of the agency.

DRPT assists Virginia's rail systems, public transit providers, telecommuting activities and carpool and vanpool operators with funding needs, major corridor studies, technical support and advice. Furthermore, DRPT administers federal and state funding for public transportation systems in the Commonwealth.

Dulles Corridor Rapid Transit Project

The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation, in partnership with federal agencies and local governments, has undertaken the phased expansion of Metrorail in Virginia, from East Falls Church to Route 772 in Loudoun County. Phase 1 of the project will extend from the Orange line for 11 miles, from near East Falls Church

station through Tyson's Corner to Wiehle Avenue in Reston. Phase 2 will further extend the line for 12 more miles through Dulles International Airport into Loudoun County. The total estimated project cost is \$3.5 billion. The first phase is expected to be completed by 2011.

Both the FTA and the FAA issued respective Records of Decisions (ROD) confirming that the Dulles Corridor Metrorail Project has met all of the requirements necessary to close out the environmental phase of the project. The next step is to complete preliminary engineering by end of 2005.

In February 2005 the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) approved a 25 cent toll increase on the Dulles Toll Road. The revenue from the increase will be dedicated to help fund Virginia's 25% share of the Dulles Corridor Metrorail Project.

Rail to Dulles is expected to provide capacity equal to four lanes of traffic, and will alleviate the mobility choices of residents in this rapidly growing corridor where population is expected to grow by 45% and employment is anticipated to grow by 63% in the next 20 years.

DRPT's project partners on this Metrorail extension include the Federal Aviation Administration, the Federal Transit Administration, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (Project Technical Manager), the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority, Fairfax County, Loudoun County, Town of Herndon, Virginia Department of Transportation and the Dulles Transit Partners LLC. www.dullestransit.com

Public Transportation

Currently, there are 40 public transportation providers in Virginia, which receive capital, technical, demonstration, intern and operating assistance from DRPT. The systems range from 2 bus operations to large systems such as WMATA's Metrobus. Modes vary from conventional bus systems to unconventional systems, such as the ferry boat service that operates in the Hampton Roads area.

In Northern Virginia, there are six public transit operators, which are all grant recipients of DRPT. Fairfax Connector, Alexandria DASH, Arlington ART, City of Fairfax CUE, Loudoun County Transit, and PRTC's OmniRide and OmniLink. In 2004 these transit providers carried 122 million transit passengers. Northern Virginia jurisdictions' subsidy payments to WMATA are also partly funded through DRPT. For FY 2005 the N. VA jurisdictions received in excess of \$51 million in operating assistance, and \$12.8 million in capital assistance, from DRPT. These funds are used to supplement part of the local subsidy payments to WMATA.

Local transit agencies in N.VA receive state capital assistance from DRPT for various capital improvements including fleet expansion, garage rehabilitation, safety and security improvements to transit facilities, on-board passenger information systems etc.

I would like to highlight the demonstration program which is among the portfolio of funding programs that DRPT administers. This program is designed to assist local transit agencies develop and test new or existing procedures and technologies which, raise the productivity of public transportation providers, improve public transit services to the disabled, offer creative approaches to marketing public transit, and, which strive to increase private sector involvement in public transit. One of the notable projects being currently funded through this program is the Senior Mobility Study being conducted by the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC). The study expects to identify the special transportation needs of seniors in N. VA, by jurisdiction and land use type, in order to identify gaps in coverage of existing and future services, as well as to better equip public transit operators and social service providers with detailed knowledge of this important and growing market.

Interim Transit Improvements for Crystal City and Potomac Yard

Following the completion of the Crystal City Potomac Yard Transit Alternatives Analysis in 2003, DRPT is conducting a study along with Arlington County, and the City of Alexandria to develop interim transit improvements in the Crystal City/Potomac Yard Route 1 corridor. The overall goal of this study is to design an interim transit plan which would provide greater mobility in the Crystal City/Potomac Yard Corridor. Between now and mid-2006, new development will bring 2,000 new jobs and 1,000 new residents to the corridor, creating increased travel demand. While long term transit solutions, such as light rail, Bus Rapid Transit, or new Metrorail stations are still being considered for the future, the County and City are planning to provide enhanced bus service in the corridor over the next two to five years in order to meet the new interim demand for transit in the corridor. Arlington and Alexandria are looking for input on alignment, stop design, amenities and operational characteristics at several public workshops to be held in June 2005.

Rail

There are a dozen privately owned railroads that operate in VA – Norfolk Southern, CSXT, Amtrak and 9 shortline railroads. DRPT is involved in aspects such as rail improvement, industrial access, and grade crossing projects. Some areas of focus during the recent past have been the Virginia Railway Express, Richmond to South Hamptons Road Rail Feasibility Study, the Washington to Richmond Passenger Rail Study, and the Bristol Rail Passenger Study.

VRE continues to experience rapid growth in its ridership with over 3.6 million annual passenger trips in 2004, which is a 10% growth from the previous year. DRPT is working with VRE on 7 rail infrastructure improvement projects which when complete will increase capacity and allow VRE to run 5 additional roundtrip trains daily.

Rideshare

DRPT manages, administers and participates directly or indirectly in programs which focus on providing commuter information and assistance in finding and using alternative modes of transportation, such as the Commuter Connections program. DRPT accomplishes this through fifteen local rideshare/TDM agencies, through grant programs, and by conducting research, providing training, and providing communications and marketing assistance. These services to commuters and businesses are provided locally as a free public service.