

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

777 North Capitol Street, N.E., Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20002-4290 (202) 962-3315 Fax: (202) 962-3202

DRAFT Meeting Summary

Regional Bus Subcommittee
CHAIR: Aaron Overman, District of Columbia DOT

Tuesday October 26, 2010
Noon – 2 PM

Meeting Attendees:

| | |
|--|---|
| Carrie Anderson-Watters, Frederick Transit | Valerie Pardo, VDOT/NOVA |
| Howard Benn, Mont Co. RideOn | Kevin Thornton, Prince George's The Bus |
| Pierre Holloman, City of Alexandria | Al Himes, Alexandria Transit |
| Aaron Overman, DDOT | Steve Yaffe, Arlington County |
| Alex Verzosa, City of Fairfax | Greg McFarland, NVTC |
| Harold Foster, MNCPPC | Melissa Barlow, FTA |
| James Vogelsinger, GSA | Randy White, Fairfax County |
| Karl Wolfe, GSA | Julie Hershorn, WMATA |

TPB Staff in Attendance:

| | |
|--------------|------------|
| Eric Randall | Andy Meese |
| Jerry Miller | Jian Yin |
| | |

Agenda Items:

Welcome and Introductions

Aaron Overman, DDOT

The chair welcomed the meeting participants and called the meeting to order. He asked the members in attendance to introduce themselves, and thanked everyone for their promptness to facilitate getting the meeting started on time.

DDOT Circulator Expansion Plan

Aaron Overman, DDOT

Mr. Overman continued with a presentation of the DDOT Circulator Expansion Plan. He described current service, Mr. Overman emphasized that DDOT works closely with DC Surface Transit, which includes public and private partners including the Business Improvement Districts and the convention and tourist bureau. The Circulator is intended to connect visitors to DC to the Mall, however only 6% of ridership is from out of town, so more marketing is needed. DDOT is working to develop criteria for future expansion plans, which will be based on corridor and activity center needs/potential. Attendee questions included:

- Do the activity centers DDOT is looking at match those of COG's analyses? No. All COG centers are in the DDOT plan, but DDOT also looks at smaller and or detailed activity centers
- Is there a farebox recovery goal? No, which is one reason recovery is only about 10%, much lower than that of Metrobus. Objective is to connect and stimulate

vibrant day-round activity centers. It is as much a social service as a transit service.

- Is there a marketing component to expand tourist use? DDOT already coordinated with tourist and visitor bureaus to advertize.
- Why are not more visitors using the service then? Seasonal service is offered on weekends to the Mall, but this goes to the back of the museums (Constitution and Independence), which may explain low usage.
- Why not offer more tourist-focused service; this works well in Chicago? Part of it is due to historical development of the service. Also, there is a size threshold – if Circulator gets too large, there will be confusion.
- As a tourist, the service is confusing. Agreed, maps need to be better and more information included at stops. A single system map covers all service, as opposed to route maps, and the map is displayed at shelters and available on buses and at commuter stores.
- Are there any bus priority treatments? Not to date, but this is a key objective of the study, looking at runningway and TSP. DDOT owns the roadway, so should be able to improve infrastructure over time to improve service.
- Does Circulator allow customers to load on SmarTrip? Yes, but has not been an issue.
- Has requiring offboard fare payment been considered, as SmarTrip loads have so many issues? Not really. However, one issue is that marketing literature informs customers they can load at MSMs on the street. But, though there are hundreds of these on the street, only 5 can actually carry out this function, so will likely terminate this feature.
- What is the arrangement of vehicle ownership? Vehicles include 26 WMATA – leased buses, 19 DDOT-owned buses, and six buses owned by the contractor. The ability to contract the latter is what enabled the service to recently add the Georgetown – Union station line within a short time period.
- Are the VanHool buses acquired under Buy America rules? No, they do not qualify, but DDOT uses no Federal funds for the Circulator, so this has not been an issue to date. However, if service is expanded on the National Mall, it may become a concern.

GSA Federal Shuttle Service Report
James Vogelsinger, GSA

Mr. Vogelsinger gave a presentation on the General Services Administration review of Federal agency shuttle service in the greater Washington, DC area (which included Baltimore). The report was submitted at the beginning of April in response to the six-month time limit of the Executive Order issued in October of last year. The study built on previous studies, especially one by the NCPC. These studies collected data and made recommendations, but no actions followed. Going forward, GSA will propose standards on when shuttle service is acceptable and when it does not meet criteria. In addition, Federal agencies will be requested to share information; often information is not publicized or made available to other agencies, even though any Federal employee is permitted to use services. There will also be initiatives to adopt more alternative-fueled vehicles and to consolidate service, particularly in downtown DC. Agencies will also have address complementary environmental-mobility goals, including more provisions for bicycle use.

Questions about the study included:

- Why only DC? The study built on existing information, while outside DC there is relatively little service or duplication of service among agencies. However study guidance and recommendations will apply to all.
- What is the utilization rate of the service provided? Many agencies do not collect sufficient or consistent enough data to answer this question.
- Does this study only look at service between work sites, or does it also include parking shuttles? It was intended to cover all service. If there are gaps, such as for NIH, these will have to be addressed.
- Prior to 2007, shuttles were not allowed to connect to public transportation stations. This has been amended, but are there any plans to actually encourage such service? Initiatives to encourage that type of service are likely to influence options from this study: consider public transportation availability, consider alternative-fuelled vehicles, and make sure vehicles are ADA-compliant.
- Are there any regulations on when shuttle service cannot be operated? Why won't they Army serve BRAC at Mark Center? No. If any agency has money, they can provide service. DOD is looking to restructure current services throughout the area, including BRAC in Virginia and in Maryland, and away from Crystal City and areas they are leaving.
- Mark Center is proposing shuttles every 10 minutes to Ballston Metrorail station, but there is simply no room for them. And pending regulations may require local governments to give precedence to Federal needs. Can this be changed? Unfortunately, that is outside the scope of the study
- Why is the GSA issuing only guidance and not directives? Or have the authority to consolidate services in downtown DC? Despite Council of Environmental Quality, GSA does not have this authority.

Finally, GSA said they intend to reach out to local private and public operators at future events to help improve opportunities between federal agency mobility managers and transportation providers.

COG Transit Data Needs

Jim Yin, TPB Staff

Mr. Yin gave a quick presentation on COG's needs for better transit schedule and stop location data, to support data model networks. While WMATA's data is available in GTFS format, other services, especially smaller ones, only have paper schedules available. He requested input on how to get this information in database-useable formats. In general, participants responded that TRAPEZE is the most common scheduling software used, and that this data could likely be used. A mass e-mail will be sent out to clarify data needs and ask for availability.

Role of the RBS and Future Work Plan

Eric Randall, TPB Staff

Mr. Randall presented an overview of the current organization of the Regional Bus Subcommittee with the TPB committee structure, speaking to the various roles and responsibilities of the RBS in providing transit information for use in regional planning efforts. He then proposed three work items for the Regional Bus Subcommittee, including: 1) updating the Moving Forward Brochure, 2) producing a new Regional Bus Priority Projects list (to inform the TPB Priorities Plan Scoping Task Force), and 3) hosting a technical session on Real-Time Passenger Information (RTPI).

- Mr. Gross stated that for passenger information, he would also like to see a process whereby jurisdictional planners can get information from the SmarTrip database on transfers between modes.
- He added that for RTPI, there are several ITS groups coordinated by VDRPT that are attempting to standardize the technology, data models, and recommendations for stakeholders. He recommended getting best practice info from Mike Harris.
- Mr. White asked whether the RBS should become a central source for Transit Development Plans. It is now a Virginia requirement that all transit operators prepare 6-year TDPs by November of next year. VDRPT will collect these for Virginia.
- Mr. Verzosa asked that a work plan and schedule be circulated for the proposed future work activities of the RBS.
- Ms. Hershorn asked if jurisdictions were sharing information on Transit Signal Priority (TSP)? Mr. Gross replied that TSP is usually a matter of political will, and the VDOT has been acting as roadblock for Northern Virginia implementation. Emergency vehicles must also receive priority, and they are not keen on losing that to buses. Finally, currently there is no funding for implementation of TSP. Mr. Randall noted that TPB has an ongoing study on the subject that will hopefully provide support for ongoing activities in this field.
- Mr. Benn noted that the Regional Transit Operators Group (RTOG) has a role in emergency detour planning. And that this is a role for operations staff, not the planners who make up the RBS.
- Mr. Been also noted that technological improvements in TSP may resolve some of the current issues. A new manufacturer has a product that can talk to any controller, but it requires a WiFi antenna. This is a concern for WMATA, whose buses already have six antennas. Montgomery County is looking at a combination CAD/AVL package what would also provide TSP coordination. But regional operators need to cooperate on this field, especially when it comes to presenting information to customers. For instance, RideOn provides schedule information to customers, while WMATA does not.
- Ms. Hershorn stated that the RTOG has a great deal of overlap with the RBS. She would like to see more event coordination and emergency planning, and mentioned a November 12 meeting to prepare for snow emergencies. Mr. White stated that he misses NVTC's previous efforts at formulating plans for emergencies at each Metrorail station. Though never formally approved, he keeps copies ready as a playbook to follow in an emergency does occur. Some group in the region, however, should take up this activity.
- Mr. Meese noted that MOITS is looking at how to combine future data, including automated passenger counts, automated vehicle location data, and congestion/GIS data. An intermodal data analysis picture to identify the most significant problems would be very useful. This is a goal of RITIS and activities in Northern Virginia and in Montgomery County.
- Mr. Overman closed the meeting by noting that Mr. Randall is already looking at the various roles and responsibilities of the various regional entities, and that this would be presented at the next meeting.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:00 PM. The next meeting of the TPB's Regional Bus Subcommittee will be held on November 23, 2010.

All meeting materials are available for download from the subcommittee's website:

<http://www.mwcog.org/TPB/RBS/docs/>