



NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD

Item #5

MEMORANDUM

April 16, 2014

To: Transportation Planning Board

From: Gerald Miller
Acting Co-Director,
Department of Transportation Planning

Re: Additional Letters Sent/Received

The attached additional letter sent/received will be reviewed along with other letters sent/received under item 5 of today's TPB agenda.

Attachments



NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD

April 14, 2014

Mr. Tom Downs, Chairman
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Board of Directors
600 Fifth Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20001

Subject: Regional Collaboration on Specialized Transportation Services

Dear Chairman Downs:

Mr. Chuck Bean, the Executive Director of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOCG), asked that the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) respond to your March 10 letter regarding regional coordination of specialized transportation. MWCOCG and TPB welcome additional opportunities to partner with WMATA on expanding mobility options for people with disabilities across the region. We appreciate the WMATA Board of Director's efforts to raise awareness about the critical role that transportation plays in the quality of life for people with disabilities.

We look forward to building upon the successes achieved over the last ten years through collaboration with WMATA, state and local governments, and non-profit agencies. This collaboration has resulted in the identification of cost-effective contracting opportunities and customer service improvements for MetroAccess. In addition, the TPB has funded a number of projects with Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grants to promote alternatives to MetroAccess, including the regional Reach-a-Ride website that provides information on specialized transportation for consumers, travel training, bus stop improvements, and wheelchair accessible taxis. WMATA provides the match funding for the Reach-a-Ride website, and has received a \$1.2 million grant for bus stop improvements and a \$1.2 million grant for travel training from the TPB.

The TPB's Human Service Transportation Coordination Task Force reviewed your letter at its March 27 meeting. The Task Force is chaired by Timothy Lovain who also serves as TPB's Second Vice Chair. Task Force members share the concerns raised in the letter about bus stop accessibility and the need for alternatives to MetroAccess. The Task Force discussed, and embraced, the proposal for a TPB regional forum at COG on specialized transportation that would highlight innovative practices. The Task Force will also explore the possibility of a workshop on bus stop accessibility that would provide an opportunity for local governments to share challenges and successes in funding and making bus stop improvements for people with disabilities.

METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

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The TPB will leverage its implementation of FTA's new Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility program to help expand coordination of specialized services and provide alternatives to MetroAccess. These are central themes in the update to the Federally-required Coordinated Human Service Transportation Plan. The Task Force is currently updating the Coordinated Plan, which will guide funding decisions for the Enhanced Mobility program. This program provides approximately \$2.8 million per year in matching grants for specialized transportation to the Washington DC-VA-MD Urbanized Area. The Task Force identified bus stop accessibility and mobility management services as priorities for the funding to incorporate into the Coordinated Plan.

We understand the challenges that MetroAccess will face in the future as the demand for this service continues to grow, and we appreciate WMATA's collaborative approach toward addressing these challenges and finding innovative ways to reduce the cost while increasing the effectiveness and quality of the service provided. We look forward to working with WMATA in bringing elected officials, decision-makers at local and state transportation and human service agencies, and non-profit human service agencies to the table to raise awareness about the importance of coordination at a regional forum. We also invite WMATA's help to identify specific ways to increase and prioritize funding for more human service transportation options and to help identify matching funds for TPB's Enhanced Mobility grant program. As a next step, I propose that WMATA and TPB staff meet within the next two weeks to begin planning for such a forum.

Thank you for the on-going dialogue and proven partnership on our shared goal of increasing mobility options for of people with disabilities in the region.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or Wendy Klancher on the TPB staff at (202) 962-3321 or wklancher@mwkog.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Patrick S. Wojahn", is written over a horizontal line.

Patrick Wojahn
Chairman
National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

cc: Chuck Bean, MWCOG Executive Director
Richard Sarles, General Manager and Chief Executive Officer



March 10, 2014

Chuck Bean, Executive Director
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
777 North Capitol Street, NE, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Mr. Bean:

On February 27, 2014, Metro's Board of Directors discussed the need for regional collaboration for much-needed improvements in the coordination of specialized transportation services. I am writing on behalf of the Metro Board to request that the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOCG) facilitate that collaboration, in partnership with Metro, with the goal of providing service to the greatest number of customers through the most effective use of available resources.

As you know, accessible transportation is key to the quality of life of people with disabilities. Social service transportation, MetroAccess and Medicaid paratransit provide rides for people with disabilities unable to use the region's accessible fixed-route services. However, MetroAccess, which provided two million trips last year, is the most expensive option and is becoming unsustainable as we anticipate the future growth of customers.

Over the last 20 years, Metro has funded the many improvements to make Metrobus and Metrorail fully accessible to people with disabilities. Last year, over 16 million rides were taken by seniors and people with disabilities on Metro's accessible fixed-route services, many of whom were travel trained by Metro staff. Also, over one million rides were taken on fixed-route by conditionally eligible MetroAccess customers.

Despite Metro's successful efforts in accommodating the ever-increasing demand for service by our customers with disabilities, this year alone, the demand for MetroAccess has increased by seven percent. Growth at this rate is unsustainable and costly, and it draws upon financial resources that are greatly needed for safety and system improvements.

The region, working together, could address this important issue in a number of ways. One immediate action would be to focus on improving 10,000 of the region's 19,000 bus stops that today are inaccessible. Metro is working with local jurisdictions to prioritize accessibility improvements for bus stops. While it is not practical to repair all 10,000 stops in the short term, it is practical to direct resources to a prioritized subset. This can be accomplished through

**Washington
Metropolitan Area
Transit Authority**

600 Fifth Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001
202/962-1234

By Metrorail:
Judiciary Square—Red Line
Gallery Place-Chinatown—
Red, Green and
Yellow Lines
By Metrobus:
Routes D1, D3, D6, P6,
70, 71, 80, X2


Mr. Chuck Bean
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local, state, and federal funds, and it is our understanding that bus stop improvements are among the priorities for this year's selection of projects for all grants administered by MWCOG.

Another is to work together to identify the most cost effective way to provide this much needed service. Metro is moving ahead with two such pilot projects. Maryland's Department of Transportation and Metro have implemented a pilot that funds social service agency paratransit trips previously operated by MetroAccess. The District of Columbia and Metro are developing a taxi service for residents traveling to and from dialysis centers in lieu of MetroAccess. The Maryland pilot has already produced favorable results, but more is needed throughout the region.

Therefore, we are asking that MWCOG facilitate a discussion of these important issues. Metro staff is capable and available to co-lead this effort with MWCOG, and the Metro Board believes that this type of proven partnership can lead to more effective specialized transportation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Downs". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "T" and "D".

Tom Downs
Chairman

C: Metro Board of Directors
Richard Sarles, General Manager and Chief Executive Officer