

## **ITEM 8 – Information**

June 21, 2023

### Intercity Bus and Rail Travel Overview

**Background:**

The board will be briefed on information and staff activities regarding intercity travel, specifically persons traveling by rail or bus, which federal regulations added to metropolitan transportation planning requirements in 2016.



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Transportation Planning Board  
**FROM:** Eric Randall, TPB Transportation Engineer  
**SUBJECT:** Intercity Bus and Rail Travel Presentation Background  
**DATE:** June 15, 2023

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This memorandum provides background material for the presentation on intercity bus and rail travel being given to the Transportation Planning Board at its June 21, 2023 meeting. The presentation provides an overview of current information on intercity bus and rail travel as collected through online research. This information builds on previous intercity bus travel study efforts by the TPB in 2016 and provides initial information for work planned for FY 2024.

### Federal Metropolitan Transportation Planning Regulations

Federal planning regulations related to the FAST Act and published in May 2016 (*Statewide and Nonmetropolitan Transportation Planning; Metropolitan Transportation Planning; Final Rule*) require MPO consideration of intercity travel in regional planning:

“... the MPO designated for each urbanized area is to carry out a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive performance-based multimodal transportation planning process, including the development of a metropolitan transportation plan and a TIP, that encourages and promotes the safe and efficient development, management, and operation of surface transportation systems to serve the mobility needs of people and freight (including accessible pedestrian walkways, bicycle transportation facilities, and **intermodal facilities that support intercity transportation, including intercity buses and intercity bus facilities** and commuter vanpool providers) ... § 450.300(a)

Other federal language defines:

- *Intercity Bus* “**Regularly scheduled bus service** for the general public that operates **with limited stops over fixed routes connecting two or more urban areas not in close proximity**, that has the capacity for transporting baggage carried by passengers, and that makes meaningful connections with scheduled intercity bus service to more distant points, if such service is available.” (FTA C 9040.1G, Federal Transit Administration, 2014)
- *Intercity Rail*: “...**means rail passenger transportation**, except commuter rail passenger transportation.” (49 U.S. Code § 24102)

### 2016 Study and Count of Intercity Bus Traffic

In response to the new federal regulations, in the fall of 2016 the TPB conducted a count of intercity bus travel to and from the metropolitan Washington region. The report on the study collected information on bus stations and stops in the region, bus providers, trips and ridership, and rider origins and destinations.

Final Report (January 2017)

[Intercity Bus Traffic and Patronage in the Metropolitan Washington Region](#)

Presentation to the April 2017 meeting of the TPB Technical Committee

[2016 Count of Intercity Bus Traffic](#)

### **Work Planned for FY 2024**

With the advent of the coronavirus pandemic in March 2020, discussion on conducting subsequent intercity bus studies was deferred. With the official conclusion of the pandemic in May 2023, TPB staff has begun planning for further research on intercity travel, expanding the scope to include rail services as well.

The [FY 2024 Unified Planning Work Program \(UPWP\)](#) has the following work item within Section 3.7 Regional Public Transportation Planning and Section 7.1 Transportation Research and Analysis.

“... conduct a regional survey gathering usage information on intercity buses, commuter buses, rail transit, and commuter rail, updating the survey last completed in 2016, to advise regional planning and coordination.” (pp. 50, 64)

Later this calendar year, planning will advance for the conduct of this work, including schedule, methodology, scope, and other aspects. The TPB Technical Committee and the TPB Regional Public Transportation Subcommittee will be involved as this work progresses.