

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

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MEMORANDUM

TO: TPB Technical Committee

FROM: Monica Bansal
Department of Transportation Planning

SUBJECT: Criteria for Route Inclusion in Stimulus-funded BRT Demonstration Project

DATE: March 6, 2009

The recently passed American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 provides a possible source of discretionary transportation grant funding for which the National Capital Region could apply. The grant program provides \$1.5 billion for a variety of multimodal transportation uses, including roads, bridges, transit, and freight, and is intended to fund transportation projects with national or regional significance.

Therefore, this legislation provides the region with an opportunity to plan and fund a project, or set of projects, that are truly regional in scope and impact. There are various local and regional efforts to expand bus transit in response to increasing capacity constraints on the region's Metrorail system, congestion on the roads and highways, and continued population and employment growth pressures on all transportation modes, such as the TPB Scenario Study and the WMATA Priority Corridor Network (PCN). Bus service also currently suffers from similar capacity issues as other modes in our regional transportation system: crowding and congested speeds, which negatively affect route and schedule adherence and service reliability. However, bus transit provides a flexible compliment and supplement to the Metrorail system and, with improved service and running-way improvements, an opportunity to shift SOV traffic from the congested highway system to transit. These improvements also provide an opportunity to simultaneously make road improvements and transit improvements quickly and efficiently.

Recognizing this opportunity, the TPB Scenario Study Task Force has charged TPB staff to work with the various TPB technical committees, such as the Regional Bus Subcommittee and the TPB Technical Committee, to create a regional package of bus corridors based on current initiatives that remove obstacles to high quality bus transit. These projects should focus on providing priority to buses through running-way improvements, such as dedicated bus lanes and queue-jump lanes, and intelligent transportation technologies, such as transit signal priority. This package of projects can serve as the first phase of an extensive regional BRT network running mostly on a network of variably priced highway lanes, as proposed under the TPB Scenario Study, CLRP Aspirations scenario. These projects will make the running-way

improvements on arterials necessary to provide connections to and through the regional core and to serve as a first step in providing BRT service on other arterials running through the region.

As previously stated, several local and regional initiatives are available to inform this package of projects:

1. WMATA Priority Corridor Network (PCN)
2. TPB Regional Bus Subcommittee Priority Bus Project List
 - a. Local Bus Priority Corridors
 - b. Emerging Corridors
3. TPB Scenario Study, CLRP Aspirations Scenario

This memorandum outlines criteria to be used in developing this regional project that will pull from these inputs to address regional transportation concerns within the constraints of the stimulus funding and compete well in a national pool of applicants.

Within the federal legislation are listed a number of overarching criteria with which to frame this regional project:

1. Regionally significant: “Significant impact on the Nation, a metropolitan area, or a region”
2. Multimodal
3. Ability to be completed quickly: Priority will be given to projects expected to be completed within 3 years from now (2 years of funding award)
4. Already planned or underway: Priority will be given to projects where federal funds are needed to fill a gap in an overall financing package
5. Grants are between \$20 million and \$300 million
6. Projects that maximize job creation and economic benefit

Therefore, the specific project criteria below have been determined to achieve these broad requirements:

1. Regionally significant:
 - a. Capital projects should provide (direct or indirect) benefit to multiple jurisdictions and/or multiple transit operators in the region
 - b. Enhance existing service and provide operational benefits
 - i. For bottlenecks or running way improvements: 5,000 passengers per day or an effective headway of 10-minutes
 - c. Create new service or expand currently small-scale service in emerging corridors
 - i. Highly congested corridors with few multi-modal transportation options and high SOV-use
 - ii. Areas with sharp increases in transit demand, leading to congestion on existing transit service
 - iii. Underserved areas where direct connections to existing high quality transit (such as Metrorail) would relieve pressure on Metro park and ride lots and/or provide a transit option where there was none before

- d. Increase access to and between regional activity centers
 - e. Connectivity between network elements (e.g., Crystal City Potomac Yard with K Street) in order to connect regional centers
 - f. Projects that provide complimentary, but not duplicative transit service (% duplication with regional rail network)
2. Multimodal
 - a. Provide synergistic highway and transit improvements
 - i. For example, TPB staff have looked areas where the priority corridors overlap with planned roadway improvements in the TIP and with system preservation projects in state implementation plans for Maryland, Virginia and DC.
 3. Ability to be completed quickly/Planned or already underway
 - a. A primary constraining factor in the ability to compete for this funding is the ability for projects to be completed in the three-year timeframe. Therefore, examining roadway projects that are currently underway or are already in regional or state implementation plans offer a possible opportunity to incorporate smaller-scale transit improvements within the relatively short timeframe.
 - i. TIP projects that overlap the WMATA PCN
 - ii. VDOT, DDOT, and MDOT-SHA system preservation projects that overlap the WMATA PCN
 4. Total project cost of under \$300 million
 - a. Route-specific strategies across a wide range of costs, from re-striping, transit signal priority, queue jumpers, and reversible bus lanes, to fully dedicated bus lanes, will be assigned to the routes on the recommended network with the grant maximum as a project cost limit.
 5. Job creation and economic benefit
 - a. Project should demonstrate operational savings rather than costs: allows public transit systems to not only maintain current levels of service, but improve transit service, thus not having to make cuts to a service that connects many people to even more jobs
 - b. Project should also demonstrate construction-related job creation