

MOVING FORWARD | 2014

The Regional Bus Subcommittee

The subcommittee was formed by resolution of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) on January 17, 2007. Its mission is to provide a permanent process for the coordination of bus planning throughout the Washington region, and for incorporating regional bus plans into the long-range transportation plan.

Membership includes representatives from all transit operators in the region as well as the departments of transportation and other regional transportation agencies.

What is the TPB?

Transportation planning at the regional level is coordinated in the Washington area by the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB). The TPB is staffed by the Department of Transportation Planning of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG).

Members of the TPB include representatives of the transportation agencies of the states of Maryland and Virginia, and the District of Columbia, local governments, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, the Maryland and Virginia General Assemblies, and nonvoting members from the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority and federal agencies.

The TPB was created in 1965 by local and state governments in the Washington region to respond to a requirement of 1962 highway legislation for establishment of official Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). The TPB became associated with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments in 1966, serving as COG's transportation policy committee. In consultation with its technical committee, the TPB is responsible for directing the continuing transportation planning process carried on cooperatively by the states and local communities in the region.

Subcommittee Members

Transit Operators

Alexandria Dash
Arlington Transit (ART)
City of Fairfax CUE
DC Circulator
DC Streetcar
Fairfax Connector
Frederick County TransIT
Central Maryland Regional Transit
Loudoun Commuter Transit
Maryland Commuter Rail
Montgomery County Ride On
MTA Commuter Bus
Prince George's County TheBus
PRTC Omni Ride
Virginia Railway Express

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)

Other Agencies

District of Columbia Department of Transportation (DDOT)

Federal Transit Administration (FTA)

Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT)

Maryland Transit Administration (MTA)

Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC)

Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission (PRTC)

Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT)

Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT)

This brochure was made possible by a collaborative effort of Regional Bus Subcommittee members and TPB staff.

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Introduction

Bus services are an important component of the region's transportation system. In 20XX, about 650,000 trips by bus were taken every day – a third of them on local and commuter bus services. That's 195 million trips a year, and about 45% of all transit trips in the region.

Bus services complement the region's extensive Metrorail system by providing feeder service to stations, as well as additional capacity in highly-congested rail corridors. Bus systems have a much greater reach than Metrorail, and provide a lower-cost, flexible service that can be implemented quickly.

Like Metrorail, the region's bus operators are in need of greater investment keeping the current system in a state of good repair, providing additional capacity to meet growing demand, and taking full advantage of advanced customer service information technologies and other recent advancements. These investments are needed if the nation's capital is to have a world-class bus system.

Bus System Accomplishments

In the last five years, area bus operators have been making significant investments in:

- Newer, cleaner, more accessible bus vehicles
- Integrated SmarTrip fare card systems, now available across most local and commuter bus services
- Limited-stop, express bus services
- Customer information technology, to provide real-time arrival and schedule information by web, text message, automated voice response, electronic information displays, and smartphone apps
- Making bus stops and transfer stations safer and more inviting, especially for persons with disabilities

Why is Transit Important?

Transit gives travelers more options.

Public transportation provides access to job opportunities for millions of Americans, as well as options to get to other destinations, like school, to visit friends, or doctor's appointments. Seniors, children, and others with limited mobility or travel choices benefit especially from the availability of more options.

Transit makes better use of existing infrastructure.

Public transit provides alternatives to single-occupancy vehicles, reducing the number of vehicles on already-crowded roadways.

Transit reduces overall energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.

Fewer vehicles on area roadways leads to a reduction in overall energy use and helps lower the emissions of gases responsible for global climate change.

Transit creates healthy communities.

Public transportation promotes vibrant Activity Centers by increasing social interaction and pedestrian activity, enhancing safety, and helping to create a sense of "place" that makes communities unique and special.

Why Bus Transit?

Bus services:

- Respond to market needs
- Provide a range of services over a wide area of coverage
- Can be implemented quickly
- Have lower capital costs relative to rail projects
- Support rail services by providing feeder service or by providing alternatives to rail along congested corridors

Bus services complement as well as provide alternatives to the Metrorail system.

Bus services are a flexible and cost-effective means by which to provide public transportation.

Bus Systems of the National Capital Region

Different types of bus services can be tailored to meet the different needs of travelers.

Shuttle/Local Circulator

Provides short-distance trips to rail stations and other local destinations. Often rush-hour or weekday only.

Local bus

Provides short- and medium-distance trips to rail stations and other destinations. Often all-day service, usually seven days a week.

Express/Commuter bus

Provides longer-distance, limited-stop service, often on highways or major arterials. Typically rush-hour only.

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)

Provides medium- and long-distance trips with service approaching the speed, frequency, and reliability of rail, using bus-only lanes, off-board fare collection, signal priority, and other treatments.

BRT is currently being built on Route 1 in Alexandria and is being evaluated for several corridors in the region

Thirteen bus transit operators form a coordinated network of bus transit services in the region. Customers benefit from services tailored to their needs.

[MAP: Update; agencies verify logos; ensure Charles County included]

Buses are a major part of the region's transit system.

[GRAPH: Regional Transit Ridership by Transit Mode (% of Annual Trips, 20XX)]

In 2009, about 650,000 trips by bus were taken every day. That's 195 million trips a year, and about 45% of all transit trips in the region.

Bus ridership has grown significantly in the last ten years.

[GRAPH: Growth in Ridership on Region's Bus Services]

Bus trips now account for X% of all daily trips in the region, and X% of all commute trips.

Bus operating costs are growing, too.

[GRAPH: Annual Operating Cost of Metrorail, Metrobus, and All Bus Systems]

Ridership and operating costs will continue to rise due to:

Increasing traffic congestion

Heavy traffic congestion slows buses and means that more buses are required to maintain published schedules.

Metrorail crowding

As the Metrorail system becomes increasingly crowded, especially in the regional core, more and more commuters will turn to buses as a more convenient and more comfortable alternative.

More development in Activity Centers

Growing interest in focusing urban development around walkable and transit-friendly Activity centers will increase the number of travelers for whom bus transit is a viable travel choice.

The region's bus systems have immediate funding needs

Maintaining existing bus fleets

Buses are heavily used and require specialized, ongoing maintenance. Eventually bus vehicles must be refurbished or replaced in order to keep the bus fleet safe and in good working order.

Investing in new technologies

Real-time customer information systems and clean-fuel and hybrid buses offer numerous benefits to customers, bus operators, and the region.

Expanding service offerings

New services, such as limited-stop routes on heavily-travelled corridors, are being introduced to increase the number of high-quality transit options in the region.

Expanding maintenance and storage facilities

The expansion of bus fleets requires larger bus garages and shops.

Expansion to meet demand

Growing customer demand for bus service leads to a need for more money to operate the region's bus transit systems.

The region's bus operators also must consider other needs

Providing quality bus stops and transfer centers

Upgrading bus stops in the region to provide amenities, including intermodal transit centers where bus and rail connect.

Implementation of bus priority treatments

Bus-only lanes, traffic signal priority for buses, and off-board fare collection will increase the speed and reliability of bus services.

Compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Ensure bus stops are accessible to persons with disabilities, in accordance with Federal law.

Adapt to expansion of managed highway lanes

High-Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes and express toll lanes offer faster, more reliable travel. Toll revenues can also fund additional bus services.

Integrate bus transit into land-use decisions

Bus transit must be considered in urban development and during the planning and zoning process to ensure transit-friendly neighborhoods.

Bus transit is receiving increasing regional attention.

TPB's Regional Transportation Priorities Plan

The TPB's Regional Transportation Priorities Plan is designed to advance regional goals by identifying key transportation strategies that are recognized throughout the region as offering the greatest potential contributions to addressing continuing regional challenges.

The Priorities Plan includes a number of strategies related to bus transit. One near-term strategy is to improve access to transit stops and stations to increase transit ridership and support walkable urban development. One ongoing strategy is to apply more priority bus treatments, such as bus-only lanes and traffic signal priority, to make bus transit faster, more reliable, and more convenient.

WMATA's Momentum Strategic Plan

In 2013, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority unveiled *Momentum*, a strategic plan to guide future planning and investment in the Metrorail and Metrobus system through 2040.

One key focus of *Momentum* is on improving the existing Priority Corridor Network – 24 key bus routes that carry half of all daily Metrobus trips. Improvements to the Network include an expanded bus fleet to provide more frequent service, additional garage capacity to store and maintain added buses, and greater use of priority bus treatments to improve travel speeds and on-time reliability.

What you can do

Learn

Learn what bus services are available to you in your neighborhood and familiarize yourself with new customer information tools that can make bus travel easier and more convenient.

Give it a try

Consider taking the bus for work trips, shopping trips, or for other parts of your daily travel routine. Experience the improvements being made to the region's bus services.

Participate

Get involved in your community planning process and advocate for high-quality transit options in your neighborhood or community.

Next Steps

The TPB, through its Regional Bus Subcommittee, is the regional organization planning to address the short- and long-term challenges for continued improvements to the region's bus services. These planning efforts include:

- Coordinating a regional conversation on the role and importance of bus services
- Addressing existing and future funding needs
- Supporting efforts to improve bus service in the region
- Raising awareness of the needs of the region's transit operators

Summary

- Bus services are an important part of the region's transportation system, providing 650,000 trips a day, or 45% of all transit trips
- Bus systems require sustained investment to meet current demand and make the infrastructure improvements necessary to meet future needs
- Bus services are one of the key solutions to the future growth challenges of the region

Learn more

www.mwcog.org/TPB/RBS