

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board
FY2014 UPWP State Technical Assistance Program

Regional Bus Staging, Layover, and Parking Location Study
DRAFT Scope of Work for Regional Bus Subcommittee Review -- July 22, 2013

Each weekday morning, hundreds of commuter buses carrying thousands of passengers enter the District of Columbia from Maryland and Virginia. The buses connect residents of regional outer jurisdictions and beyond with jobs in the regional core jurisdictions such as the District and Arlington. Most of the routes have multiple morning trips; after these trips are completed, the buses either return to their storage and maintenance facilities, operate mid-day service on the same routes or elsewhere in their transit systems, or operate charter service (for those private operators that serve under contract to public transit systems) until they need to position themselves at boarding locations to begin operating evening service from the District and Arlington to bring the workers back to their jurisdiction of residence. Often the positioning process consists of driving around the block or blocks near the afternoon boarding locations, which increases transit operating costs, contributes to roadway congestion (which buses are supposed to relieve), and increases the potential for crashes; however, this practice is necessary because there are no formal dedicated staging, layover, and parking locations for these buses. In addition to circling, buses may also need to temporarily park in an unauthorized location in order to position themselves for afternoon and evening revenue service, which in turn creates additional congestion on District streets; furthermore, they need to arrive well ahead of their scheduled departure times to navigate through already congested conditions to reach their boarding locations.

This study will bring together regional stakeholders to analyze the need for bus staging, layover, and parking (i.e., short-term mid-day storage) locations in the District of Columbia and Arlington County (due to large employers such as the Pentagon that are routinely served by commuter buses). The study will include a discussion of the history of regional commuter bus service, a review of existing conditions, including current transit service and ridership, where buses stage, layover, and/or park (or not) presently, an identification of problems and costs associated with current operating conditions, as well as planning-level estimates of future growth and demand for bus service from the jurisdictions currently operating commuter bus service to the central employment areas of the region.

The anticipated stakeholders in this study will be both public agencies (transit operators, planning departments, law enforcement) and private commuter operators (including those who operate service under contract to a public agency). The invited agencies will include but not be limited to the following:

Public Agencies

- Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission (PRTC)
- Loudoun County Transit
- Mass Transit Administration (MTA, Maryland)
- District of Columbia DOT
- Metropolitan Police Department (MPD)
- District of Columbia Office of Planning

Private Transit Firms

- Service Contractors (e.g., First Transit, Martz, Atlantic Coach Charters, Eyre, Dillon, Keller, Quick's)
- Other Commuter Service Operators

- Arlington County DOT
- Arlington County Police Department
- WMATA
- Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Service (for Pentagon issues)
- Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation
- Virginia DOT

The analysis will consider various metrics that impact the demand for a bus layover/parking facility, such as time of day, the locations at which routes start (first stop location), the ease of access (travel time and distance, and consistency of access / travel time variability), and the number of buses / needed capacity (total and by time of day, based on an average and maximum layover or parking duration), as well as seasonal variation. Planning-level estimates of growth in those metrics will also be developed as part of the study. Potential secondary benefits, such as the availability of parked buses during the evacuation of the regional core, will also be considered.

The second part of the study will be a preliminary (planning-level) site location and selection analysis. Sites under consideration will include on-street as well as off-street locations. Because of the dispersed location of the stops for those buses potentially using a layover and parking location, as well as potential size and use restrictions on available parcels, multiple locations may be needed rather than a single large location; however, since there are advantages to a single site (a single regulatory process for one location may make it operational sooner), both approaches will be evaluated. Some of the evaluation criteria used in the site location analysis will be developed by the stakeholder group (i.e., required attributes vs. desired attributes, public vs. private vs. non-profit ownership and operation), but others that will be considered are cost (lease vs. purchase plus improvements, operations, and maintenance), ease of access, and, environmental issues, and neighboring land uses. Co-location of bus layover and parking facilities with existing or planned major transit hubs (including those served by rail and high-frequency bus) will also be considered, as well as locations where capacity may exist during hours when the property is unutilized or underutilized (e.g., fleet locations where the fleets are away during the day). For on-street locations that would eliminate metered parking, some form of compensating for the lost parking revenue will be considered.

Finally, the study will consider possible mechanisms for use of potential bus staging, layover, and parking sites, such as purchase or lease, as well as memoranda of understanding or other agreements for site improvements as well as operations and maintenance of the physical sites and ancillary facilities such as bathrooms.¹ Planning-level cost estimates of all of the above items will be prepared, as well as how that cost could be allocated among the various users of any bus staging, layover, and parking facility or facilities. Both short-term (interim) and long-term solutions / sites may be developed as part of the study.

The specific tasks that will be performed for this project are:

1. Establish Stakeholders Group / Study Steering Committee

¹ This should not be confused with operations and maintenance of transit vehicles, which will not be performed at any of the proposed bus staging, layover, and parking locations. These locations are not long-term bus repair and storage facilities.

The steering committee will be composed of invited representatives from the agencies listed above, many of whom are already members of the TPB Regional Bus Subcommittee (RBS) or other TPB committees. The group will meet monthly to review study deliverables and provide overall guidance to the project, including reviewing staff reports to the RBS, TPB Technical Committee, and the TPB (as needed).

2. Problem Definition and Assessment of Existing Conditions

Review existing regional commuter bus operations (operators, routes, stop locations, number of trips by time period, ridership, etc.) and other bus operations that might potentially utilize a bus layover and parking facility (long-distance, tour buses, charters, etc.). Describe existing traffic and parking conditions on roadways used by the above buses and nearby streets, including any known traffic and parking enforcement issues. Provide a planning-level estimate of the costs incurred by regional bus operators due to the lack of a bus staging / parking / layover facility.

3. Planning-Level Assessment of Future Conditions (Growth / Demand)

Review regional cooperative forecasts of employment and population for those jurisdictions served by the buses described in Task 2. Through the application of growth factors, using outputs from the TPB regional travel demand model, existing transit development plans and/or area long-range plans, or other methods approved by the study steering committee, develop planning level estimates of future demand for the bus routes described in Task 2. Evaluate the transportation network (supply) used by the bus routes using the demand analysis.

4. Site Location, Suitability Analysis, and Selection

Based on the information from Task 2 and Task 3, conduct a planning-level site location and suitability analysis for a maximum of XX potential locations for bus staging, parking, and layover facilities (both on-street and off-street). Some of the evaluation criteria used in the site location analysis will be developed by the stakeholder group (i.e., required attributes vs. desired attributes, public vs. private vs. non-profit ownership and operation), but others that will be considered are cost (lease vs. purchase plus improvements, operations, and maintenance), ease of access, security issues, environmental issues, and neighboring land uses. Co-location of bus layover and parking facilities with existing or planned major transit hubs (including those served by rail and high-frequency bus) will also be considered and may be preferred.

5. Description of Potential Site Use and Funding Mechanisms

This task will explore the various options for creating a bus layover and parking facilities on the selected site or sites resulting from the Task 4 analysis, including options for funding construction, operations, and maintenance, as well as structuring agreements between the facility operator and transit providers using the lot. Other issues will be considered depending on the selected site(s) and the current owner(s); for example, if the site is currently owned by a public or private entity. This task will include both short-term (interim) and long-term options based on the site selection process in Task 4.

6. Matrix of Options

In parallel with Task 4 and Task 5, a set of weighting criteria will be developed and applied to create a rank-ordered matrix of options for bus staging, parking, and layover locations (both off-street and on-street). The weighting criteria may be both quantitative and qualitative in nature.

7. Draft Report

The draft report will be a maximum of fifty (50) pages, plus technical appendices such as site location maps and detailed maps of bus service (commuter bus routes and stops). The report will be reviewed by the study steering committee, the RBS, and the TPB Technical Committee.

8. Final Report

The final report will incorporate all changes from the review of the draft report and will be presented to the TPB upon completion.

In addition to the draft and final report, each task will result in a technical memorandum that will be reviewed by the project steering committee.

Budget: TBD
Completion: June 2014