

ITEM 9 - Information

December 17, 2008

Review of Priority Near-Term Bus Projects Recommended by the TPB Regional Bus Subcommittee

Staff

Recommendation: Receive briefing on the list in the attached memorandum of high priority bus projects that could have significant near-term benefits for bus operations.

Issues: None

Background: This list is recommended by the Regional Bus Subcommittee of the TPB Technical Committee, which was established by the TPB in January 2007. The TPB Technical Committee reviewed this list at its December 5 meeting.

The Subcommittee developed this list using criteria for regional significance as described in the attached memorandum.

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

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MEMORANDUM

To: Transportation Planning Board
From: Steve Yaffe, Chair, TPB Regional Bus Subcommittee
Re: Priority Near-Term Bus Projects
Date: December 17, 2008

Introduction

Since its formation by the TPB in January of 2007, the Regional Bus Subcommittee of the TPB Technical Committee has been investigating common operational issues and long-range bus planning from a regional perspective. Many transit operators remarked on the difficulty of considering long-range planning when shrinking budgets and traffic congestion were combining to cause real short-term bus operational problems. The subcommittee decided to address the near-term issues of bus operations in the region by creating a regional priority bus projects list. This short and concise list, to be presented to the TPB, would detail high priority bus projects of regional significance that could have near-term benefits for bus operations. The subcommittee was particularly interested in identifying a set of problems and potential solutions that would have great regional benefit. Some projects could be addressed by identifying funding, while others would require further study and regional focus and coordination. The list was to focus on capital projects that could eventually be programmed into a 6-year TIP.

In the spring of 2008, the subcommittee established categories of projects eligible for the priority list and developed a project submission form. The form was distributed to the region's transit operators at the June 24 subcommittee meeting. Submissions were accepted by TPB staff until September 18 in preparation for the September 23 subcommittee meeting.

At its September meeting, the Regional Bus Subcommittee reviewed 75 candidate projects submitted by 8 transit operators for the regional priority bus projects list. All of the candidate projects clearly had merit. After a brief discussion, a working group of the subcommittee was designated to determine criteria by which these projects can be evaluated and indicate which projects are of highest regional priority. Gary Erenrich from Montgomery County DOT, Circe Torruellas from the District DOT and Steve Yaffe from Arlington County volunteered to participate in the working group.

The three working group members met with TPB staff on Monday, October 20, and established the following criteria for determining whether a submitted project was regionally significant:

- For bottlenecks or running way improvements: 5,000 passengers per day or an effective headway of 10-minutes
- For stops: at least 250 passengers per day
- For park-and-ride lots: serviced by at least 4 buses per hour (15 minute frequency) and a minimum of 200 parking spaces.
- Projects should be capital projects that would provide benefit to multiple transit operators or multiple jurisdictions in the region.

The working group reviewed the submitted projects and applied the above criteria. TPB staff then organized the working group's analysis and developed the regional priority bus projects list, detailed below. This list was presented to the Regional Bus Subcommittee at its October and November meetings, and to the TPB Technical committee on December 5, 2008.

Priority Near-Term Bus Project List

The following 13 projects are recommended to be advanced as the first priority project list:

Bottlenecks/Running-way Improvements:

1. Duke Street, West of Telegraph Road
2. H Street between 18th and 14th Streets, NW
3. K Street Busway
4. Campus Drive/Paint Branch Pkwy and US 1 (Baltimore Ave)

Bus Stops:

5. Southern Towers
6. Union Station Bus Stops (Transit Center)

Transit Staging Areas:

7. Bus staging area for Washington/Arlington PM rush hour services
8. Van Dorn Metro Station Bus Staging Area
9. RFK Operators Lounge and Transit Center

Other Bus Facilities:

10. Landmark Transit Center
11. Pentagon Transfer Facility Bus Bays
12. Fort Totten Metro Bus Stops (Transit Center)
13. Lakeforest Transit Center

Project descriptions are listed below, followed by a table listing these projects and a map of the project locations.

Details for Listed Projects

1 - Duke Street, West of Telegraph Road

Description:

The Duke Street / Telegraph Road interchange is a major congestion point during the evening hours as traffic heads onto Beltway ramps in both directions, resulting in the right lane on Duke being clogged. This creates an unsafe environment for transit users and buses in a one mile section of Duke Street going eastbound between Wheeler Ave and Telegraph Road. Bus passengers attempt to get onto a bus at several stops along this section. Vehicles rarely allow buses to merge in front of them; congestion reduces the frequency of bus service; passengers sometimes walk between traffic to get onto a bus; and service at some stops has had to be discontinued between 3:00 PM and 7:00 PM as a result.

Regional Significance:

Duke Street is the major artery for DASH AT8 and WMATA 29K and 29N bus service. The AT8 and 29K and 29N have experienced a significant increase in ridership over the past few years and are major routes and connections for customers traveling between Fairfax City / George Mason University, Northern Virginia Community College / Annandale, Lincolnia, Landmark Mall, the King Street Metro, and Old Town Alexandria.

2 - H Street between 18th and 14th Streets, NW

Description:

Congestion at H Street bus stops (at Madison and Jackson) approaching 14th Street occurs due to frequent service by multiple carriers and tour buses visiting Lafayette Park, to a dual-exit parking lot just before 14th, pedestrian crosswalk timing, and heavy slug activity at 14th & NY extending northward one-half block to H Street. Not only is traffic slowed, but buses often have difficulty serving these stops in a safe and timely manner. Solutions may include moving tour buses to a location south of the White House; revising signal light timing and other intersection improvements at 14th & H/New York; stationing traffic control personnel at this intersection; creating a single lane for traffic exiting the parking garage on H Street just before 14th; and enforcing a prohibited left turn from H Street onto northbound 14th Street for traffic leaving the parking garage.

Regional Significance:

This bottleneck has a high impact on service reliability for multiple carriers in Washington.

3 - K Street Busway (22nd Street-Massachusetts)

Description:

K Street, NW, between Mt. Vernon Triangle and Washington Circle is one of the most congested corridors in the District during the AM and PM peak periods. Several transit services traverse K Street including the DC Circulator and the longest District Line, the 30 series, which runs from Southeast to Upper Northwest, DC. Several other regional

Metrobus routes operate on K Street and also are impacted by the high volume of single occupancy vehicles maneuvering off and onto K Street to access parking garages and metered parking spaces on the service road. All of these vehicles and their confluence on K Street during the AM and PM peak periods cause a serious bottleneck within the District of Columbia. Implementation of the planned K St. Busway would help protect buses using this corridor from the impacts of congestion.

Regional Significance:

Over 40,000 vehicles are carried on K Street on a typical weekday. K Street is a major regional employment and activity center. In addition to these vehicles, over 15 transit bus routes and other commuter bus routes utilize K Street to access the major law offices, government agencies and businesses. All of these traffic generators result in a considerable bottleneck at the core of the District.

4 - Campus Drive/Paint Branch Pkwy and US 1 (Baltimore Ave)

Description:

This signalized intersection has considerable accumulation of traffic extending north to US 1 and Cherry Hill Road. The level of service at this intersection is D during peak periods of transit service.

Regional Significance:

Four transit operators provide service to and through this congested intersection: Metrobus, Prince George's County The Bus, Laurel Connect-a-Ride and the UMD Shuttle.

5 - Southern Towers

Description:

Southern Towers is a large scale mixed-use development in the City of Alexandria. The current bus stops within Southern Towers are unsafe as bus passengers must board and alight in the middle of a busy parking lot. Amenities such as shelters and safe boarding and landing areas are greatly needed.

Regional Significance:

Home to thousands of residents and hundreds of offices, Southern Towers generates the highest bus ridership among DASH and WMATA services. WMATA offers four routes through Southern Towers while DASH offers one route. Routes serving Southern Towers provide a link between the City of Alexandria, Arlington County, and Fairfax County. Southern Towers also hosts several offices with tenants offering a wide array of services. Bus stop improvements in Southern Towers would complement the BRAC-funded Mark Center Transit Center planned to be constructed across the street.

6 - Union Station Bus Stops (Transit Center)

Description:

The District Department of Transportation (DDOT) is conducting a study on the Union Station facility to investigate the development, design and construction of a new Intermodal Transportation Center at Union Station in Northeast, Washington, DC. As part of this project, improvement and rehabilitation of bus passenger amenities in this area are needed and will require funding. These improvements would include new bus shelters with easy and safe connection to the facility, improved sidewalks and signage identifying stop locations for both Metrobuses and DC Circulators.

Regional Significance:

Union Station services a vast number of communities in the District, especially Wards 5 and 6 as well as approximately 32 million visitors a year including many commuters from Maryland and Virginia. Any enhancement in connectivity to all modes, including bus, will not only be a regional, but of national benefit to the many visitors to our region. Approximately 9 bus routes serve the station directly, and 3 more provide service within a one-block radius; these include routes: 97, D4, D8, X8, 96, D6, N22, 80, DC Circulator, D3, D1 and X1.

7 - Bus staging area for Washington/Arlington PM rush hour services

Description:

PTRC's current bus staging area for many afternoon trips (Old Jefferson Davis Highway in Crystal City) will soon not be available due to construction. A suitable replacement site has not yet been found.

Regional Significance:

This staging site is used by several carriers that provide commuter service in Washington and Arlington. Bus staging is a major concern for all carriers, but especially for those with long "deadhead" routes along congested roadways between the parking area and the first afternoon pickup stop. On-time performance is critical to attracting and keeping people out of single-occupancy vehicles. To help ensure on-time pickups at the first stop, the deadhead routes are often padded to allow time to travel through frequently-congested areas. Sometimes, buses must park again or contribute to congestion by circulating in attempts to find a parking spot before reaching the first stop on those days when traffic is relatively free-flowing. Establishing permanent staging areas close-in would assist all commuter services.

8 - Van Dorn Metro Station

Description:

Although buses have sufficient room to load and alight passengers at the Van Dorn Metro Station; space is lacking to stage buses for their next trip. This has created confusion among bus operators and increase in headways for several routes that begin at the station.

Regional Significance:

The Van Dorn Metro Station serves as a major terminal point for many DASH and Fairfax County Connector routes. DASH and Fairfax County Connector buses use the station to provide a link between southern Fairfax County including Springfield, Lorton, and Fort Belvoir, and the City of Alexandria.

9 - RFK Operators Lounge and Transit CenterDescription:

DDOT is working with the DC Sports Commission, in charge of the RFK stadium facility, to construct a Motorcoach Operator's Lounge and Transit Center. This facility would provide motor coach parking to serve tour and commuter buses. Over 250 buses come to the District daily from MD and VA and other states. The region is in need of amenities including restrooms, rest areas, and bus parking to enhance the charter coach and mass transit (private/public) experience in the region and promote tourism.

Regional Significance:

Enhance the regional motor coach experience and provide the MD and VA jurisdictions with additional possible savings in travel and deadhead costs for commuter buses.

10 – Landmark Transit CenterDescription:

The location and function of the current bus facility at Landmark Mall provide a logistical challenge for bus operators. Buses must travel through a large parking lot and through a parking garage to access the bus facility, located near the back entrance of the mall. To exit the facility, buses must loop through the parking garage and parking lot to access the roadway. Future plans call for a large mixed-use development at Landmark with transit and a transit center being a main focus.

Regional Significance:

Landmark mall is a major transit and transfer center for DASH, WMATA, and the Fairfax County Connector customers. Improving access for buses and the construction of a transit center near the entrance of the new mixed-use development will improve travel times and frequency of service on many routes operated by DASH, WMATA, and the Fairfax County Connector; provide a better transfer link between the three transit operators; and enhance customer's experience.

11 - Pentagon Transfer Facility Bus BaysDescription:

PRTC is currently restricted to two bus bays at the Pentagon facility. Burgeoning ridership demand and our resulting improvement in the frequency of service increase our need for platform space at the Pentagon.

Regional Significance:

Congestion at this facility caused by waiting buses results in operational and safety concerns for all carriers. Rising ridership demand increases the need for space at the Pentagon facility -- a common concern for all carriers who serve this major transfer center.

12 - Fort Totten Metro Bus Stops (Transit Center)

Description:

The joint District/Wmata Fort Totten Rail Station Access Study has cited the need for sidewalk rehabilitation, new shelters with easy and safe connection to the rail facility, improved lighting, and signage identifying stop locations for Metro buses as well as the rail facility.

Regional Significance:

This bus stop/transit center location at Fort Totten Metro Rail Station serves over fifty thousand bus riders every day from Prince Georges County, Montgomery County and the District. Improvements to the bus stops and additional amenities will benefit many of the daily bus riders in the region. Approximately 12 Metrobus routes serve the station, specifically Maryland and District residents. The bus routes include: 60, 64, 80, E2, E3, E4, K2, K6, R1, R2, R3, R5.

13 - Lakeforest Transit Center

Description:

The Lakeforest Transit Center is located in the Gaithersburg area of Montgomery County, and has the highest daily bus ridership of any transit center in the county not connected to a Metrorail Station. This center requires more space, driver amenities, and better circulation.

Regional Significance:

An expansion of this center is needed for current and future expansion. This is a key location for bus transfers not connected to a Metrorail Station. This center is served by seven (7) Ride On routes and two (2) Metrobus routes.

Priority Project List Map Locations and Operators/Jurisdictions Benefited

Bottlenecks and Running-way Improvements

Number	Name	Operators/Jurisdictions	Routes
1	Duke Street, West of Telegraph Road	Dash, Metrobus	3
2	H Street between 18th and 14th Streets, NW	PRTC, LC Transit, MTA, Metrobus	10+
3	K Street (22nd Street-Massachusetts)	PRTC, LC Transit, MTA, Metrobus, Circulator	10+
4	Campus Drive/Paint Branch Pkwy and US 1 (Baltimore Ave)	TheBus, Connect-a-Ride, Metrobus, UMD Shuttle	10+

Bus Stops

Number	Name	Operators/Jurisdictions	Routes
5	Southern Towers	Dash, Metrobus	5
6	Union Station Bus Stops (Transit Center)	Metrobus, Circulator, Private Shuttles	9

Bus Staging Areas

Number	Name	Operators/Jurisdictions	Routes
7	Bus staging area for Washington/Arlington PM rush hour services	PRTC, other commuter services	many
8	Van Dorn Metro Station	Metrobus, Dash, Fairfax Connector	11
9	RFK Operators Lounge and Transit Center	LC Transit, MTA, PRTC, others	many

Other Bus Facilities

Number	Name	Operators/Jurisdictions	Routes
10	Landmark Transit Center	Metrobus, Dash, Fairfax Connector	14
11	Pentagon Transfer Facility Bus Bays	Metrobus, DASH, Fairfax Connector, LC Transit	82
12	Fort Totten Metro Bus Stops (Transit Center)	Metrobus: DC, Prince Georges and Montgomery	6
13	Lakeforest Transit Center	Metrobus, RideOn	9

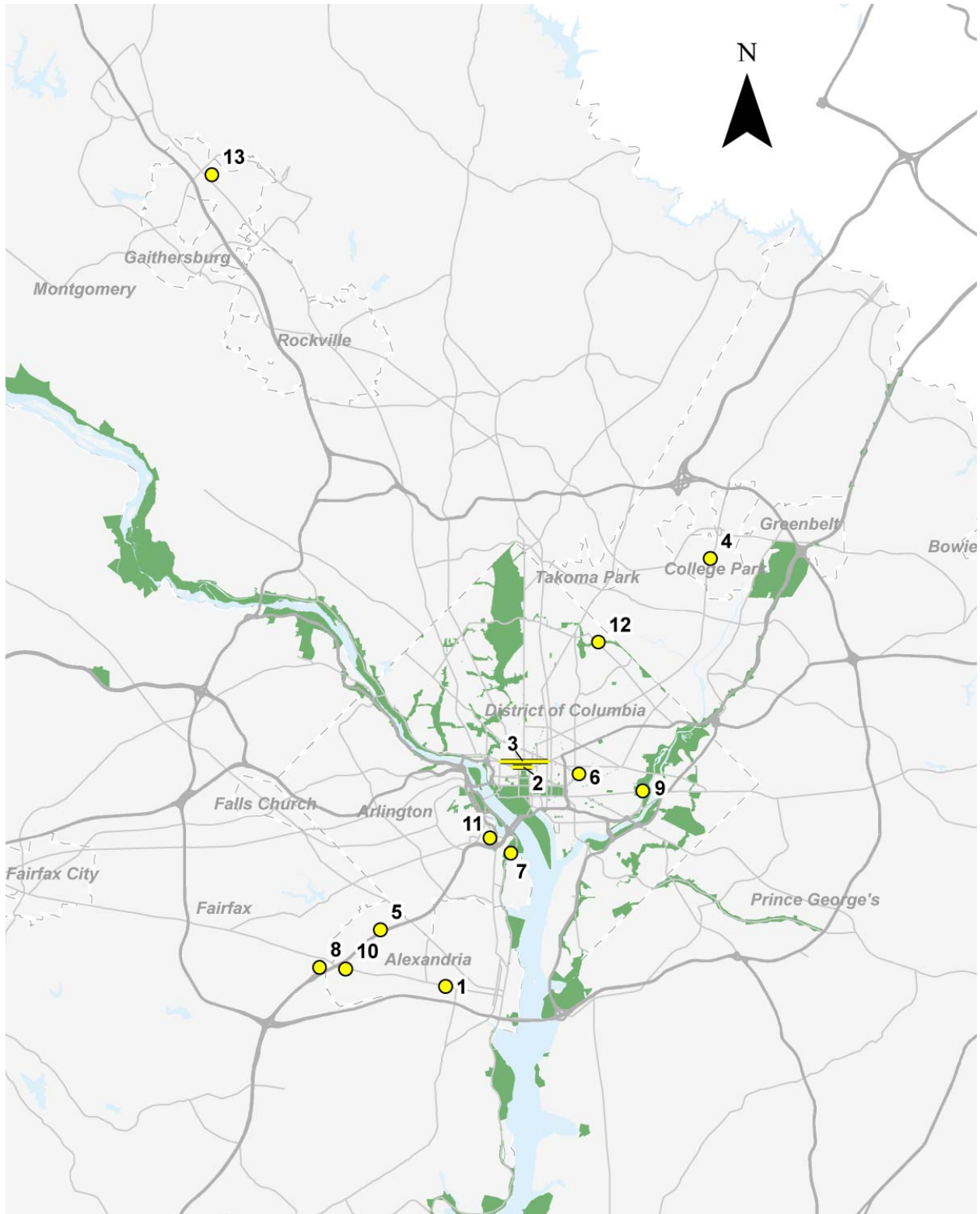


Figure 1: Map of selected Priority Projects.

Other Sets of Endorsed Projects

The subcommittee also recommended creating sets of projects that receive the strong endorsement. These sets are Emerging Corridors, Bus Storage and Maintenance Facilities, Regional Marketing and Customer Information, Hot Lane Transit Ramps and WMATA Priority Corridor Network.

Emerging Corridors

The subcommittee identified several projects that did not meet the regional criteria described above, but that are important to provide increased service to emerging residential and employment corridors in the region.

- Increased service between Frederick and the Washington D.C. Area
- Loudoun County Tyson's Express Bus as part of Dulles Rail
- Haymarket OmniRide – Metro Direct
- Service between Frederick Train Stations and the Urbana Park-N-Ride
- Bus seating capacity
- Gainesville OmniRide
- I-270 through Frederick and Montgomery Counties
- U.S. 15 through Frederick City
- Frederick Town Mall Bus Stop
- Park-N-Ride lot north of Frederick
- Haymarket/Dominion Valley Commuter Lot
- MD 214 (Central Ave)
- MD 210 (Indian Head Highway)
- MD 4 (Pennsylvania)

Bus Storage and Maintenance Facilities

The Washington region's transit operators have an urgent need for additional bus storage and maintenance facilities. Often considered undesirable land uses, it is very difficult to find suitable locations for these facilities. Operators expressed in the project submissions a short-term need for storage and maintenance facilities for at least 338 new buses. It is very important that these needs be met to enable future growth of the bus transit system.

- SE Bus Garage (Capital Improvements)
- Bus Storage (Rocky Springs Road)
- Bus storage and maintenance facilities
- Additional Bus Maintenance and Storage Facilities
- PRTC Transit Center Bus Storage – Additional Western Facility

Regional Marketing and Customer Information

The subcommittee recommends that all operators/jurisdictions pledge to spend 1% of their operating budget on marketing and customer information.

HOT Lane Transit Ramps

The subcommittee acknowledges the inclusion of the transit-only express lane ramp to Seminary Road, but also encourages the inclusion of two additional transit-only ramps in the I-95/395 HOT Lanes project. Projects that increase capacity for private vehicles and raise revenue should also financially support bus transit and ensure optimal transit circulation.

- Shirley Hwy Express Lane Ramp to the Pentagon Transit Center
- Shirley Hwy Express Lane Ramp to the Shirlington Transit Center

WMATA Priority Corridor Network

Many projects submitted by the region's transit operators fall under the WMATA Priority Corridor Network service area. The subcommittee fully supports this short-term and fast-paced effort to drastically increase bus service in the region, and acknowledges that the local jurisdictions will need to do their part to improve transit running ways and bus stops along these corridors. Projects submitted along these corridors include:

- Crystal City – Potomac Yard Transit way
- 16th Street Metro Extra Bus Service.
- Veirs Mill BRT/University Boulevard BRT
- US 1 (Hyattsville) to Laurel Corridor Improvements
- Georgia Avenue Busway
- Georgia @ Colesville to Wheaton through Silver Spring
- East West Highway from Silver Spring to Bethesda