

# National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

777 North Capitol Street, N.E., Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20002-4290 (202) 962-3315 Fax: (202) 962-3202

## *DRAFT Meeting Summary*

Regional Bus Subcommittee  
CHAIR: Howard Benn, Montgomery County

Tuesday April 28, 2009  
Noon – 2 PM

### ***Meeting Attendees:***

Carrie Anderson-Watters, Frederick County TRANSIT	Valerie Pardo, VDOT
David Awbrey, Virginia DRPT	Robin Phillips, American Bus Association
Howard Benn, Montgomery County	Chuck Steigerwald, PRTC
Harold Foster, MNCPPC	Kevin Thornton, Prince George's County Government
Scott Gross, Loudoun County	Circe Torruellas, DDOT
James Hamre, WMATA	Alexis Verzosa, City of Fairfax
Al Himes, Alexandria Transit Company	Randall White, Fairfax County Dept. of Transportation
Pierre Holloman, City of Alexandria	Steve Yaffe, Arlington County Transit
Jim Maslanka, City of Alexandria	Bill Orleans
Aaron Overman, DDOT	

### ***TPB Staff in Attendance:***

Monica Bansal	Gerald Miller
Joe Davis	Mark Moran
Michael Eichler	Wenjing Pu
Wanda Hamlin	

### ***Agenda Items:***

#### Welcome and Introductions

*Chair Howard Benn, Montgomery County*

Mr. Benn called the meeting to order. Subcommittee attendees then introduced themselves.

#### Presentation on the DC Circulator service, overview and expansion plans

*Aaron Overman, DC MTA*

Mr. Overman gave a presentation on the history and current status of the DC Circulator bus transit system, which has recently grown from 3 to 5 lines.

Several members inquired about the transit vehicles used, which are Van Hool low-floor buses, either in 40-foot configuration with 3 doors, or 30-foot with 2 doors. Mr. Overman stated that the 30-foot buses have about 25 seats and mid-bus engines, and the larger ones have 35 seats and engines in the rear. He stated that they have had very few maintenance issues, but expressed concern that the initial fleet of 28 buses were all procured at the same time, meaning that they will all require significant overhaul at the same time. Additionally, since they are all foreign-built buses paid for by local funds, they cannot be easily replaced by like buses with federal funding. The buses are stored at a First Transit facility in Landover, MD, across the street from WMATA's Carmen Turner facility, with the fareboxes "vaulted" by WMATA. Mr. Overman stated that the Circulator service has a fleet of 43 buses, with 38 on the road at any given time.

Several members inquired about the management structure and operations of the Circulator, involving the District Office of Mass Transit, WMATA, First Transit and DC Surface Transit Incorporation (DCST). Because DC MTA has limited experience operating and procuring buses, this type of complicated arrangement was that which would get the bus service on the road most quickly. Mr. Hamre added that DC MTA should be taking the contract in-house in the future. Mr. Overman stated that working with a headway-based schedule is proving challenging and not immune to bus bunching so common with schedule-based bus operations. Mr. Overman stated that they did not coordinate schedules with Metrobus on the 14<sup>th</sup> street corridor, and they replaced the WMATA N22 with their ballpark route. Mr. Eichler inquired about the identity and branding of the buses, which depict a stylized route map including several destinations. Mr. Overman stated that the decal on the side of the bus includes the major business improvement districts (BIDs) that help fund the service, and isn't intended to function as a route map, and agreed that the new destinations now served by the recently initiated routes are not included. Ms. Bansal inquired as to the seeming dual nature of the circulator, which attempts to be both a neighborhood circulator bus on some routes, and an express service on others. Mr. Overman stated that they did not hold a public meeting to discuss the new services, and therefore are only now receiving public feedback about the new routes.

*Presentation on the Development of Transit-Friendly Design Guidelines*  
*Carrie Anderson-Watters, Frederick TransIT*

Ms. Anderson-Watters gave a presentation on the development of Frederick County's Transit-Friendly Design Guidelines which were only recently finalized. The guidelines can be downloaded from the Frederick County website:  
<http://www.co.frederick.md.us/DocumentView.asp?DID=1610>

Mr. White inquired about compliance with adequate public facilities ordinances, citing examples where developers construct bus facilities that are for some reason not usable by the transit agency. He suggested that the transit provider be active in the development review process.

Mr. Hamre inquired as to where the idea for this initiative originated: with staff or management. Ms. Anderson-Watters replied that staff initiated this program. She stated that this process has taken some time, but now transit agency staff members are on the design review distribution lists. She noted that these guidelines are just that – guidelines – and as such are not legally binding. Mr. Gross noted that many design plans are approved years before development begins, resulting in new construction that may not meet the guidelines. Ms. Anderson-Watters also confirmed that Frederick County staff referenced the Maryland Transit Administration's 2001 Transit Guidelines.

Mr. Eichler asked about the process of these guidelines being enforced by zoning laws. Ms. Anderson-Watters replied that their staff attends all the meetings behind the new city and county planning and zoning efforts, advocating for the adoption of regulations that would require developers to meet these guidelines. She noted that, as part of the review committee, transit planners make requests of developers for increased pedestrian and/or transit accessibility that are often accommodated voluntarily.

Update on the TPB Regional Bus Survey  
*Bob Griffiths, TPB Staff*

Mr. Griffiths presented an update on the analysis results of the TPB Regional Bus Survey, conducted in May and June of 2008.

Ms. Torruellas inquired why the DC Circulator service was not included in the survey, stating that the Circulator has conducted annual ridership surveys. Mr. Griffiths stated that the Circulator routes were not included in the WMATA "sample frame" and that he would be glad to fold any Circulator ridership data into the regional results.

Several members inquired about whether the analysis results can be disaggregated and resummarized. Mr. Griffiths stated that the data is available down to the bus line level, and can be re-aggregated at any level requested.

Other members inquired about qualitative and gender questions on the survey, to which Mr. Griffiths responded that no qualitative or gender questions were asked. He stated, however, that the relationship between gender and bus ridership can be determined by the TPB Regional Household Travel Survey.

Update on the Federal Stimulus Package and Regional Efforts to Assemble a BRT Demonstration Project  
*Monica Bansal, Michael Eichler, TPB Staff*

Ms. Bansal and Mr. Eichler presented a memo, a map and two data tables to the subcommittee, explaining that recent efforts to select a package of bus routes for potential stimulus funding raised concerns throughout the region that particular routes or corridors may not have been properly considered. As a reaction to this concern, staff has assembled a map listing all priority transit routes in the region, and all planned transit centers, providing subcommittee members with the opportunity to determine whether any priority bus routes or corridors were not included.

Mr. Hamre had questions about nomenclature, inquiring about the word “unconstrained” and the word “priority”. He stated that WMATA has a series of bus routes that could be added to an unconstrained bus plan. Mr. Eichler replied that candidates should include some running-way improvements to be considered for the priority list. Mr. Miller suggested the map presented be titled “Candidates for Priority Bus Projects”. Mr. Hamre stated that WMATA has developed their Priority Corridor Network (PCN) and that TPB’s bus planning efforts using the term “priority” has proven confusing to some.

Mr. Benn asked whether the draft Montgomery County “Elrich” bus rapid transit plan has been incorporated into the map, to which Mr. Eichler replied that it has not.

#### New Business

There was no new business.

#### Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:00 PM.

The next meeting of the TPB’s Regional Bus Subcommittee will be held on June 23, 2009. In lieu of the May subcommittee meeting, TPB is holding its 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Public Transit Forum. Public and private transit providers are encouraged to attend.

All meeting materials are available for download from the subcommittee’s website: <http://www.mwcoq.org/TPB/RBS/docs/>