

**Access For All Advisory Committee's  
2001 Report**

**to the**

**National Capital Region  
Transportation Planning Board**

March 20, 2002

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board  
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

## Executive Summary

The National Capital Transportation Planning Board (TPB) established the Access for All Advisory Committee in the Fall of 2000. The mission of this committee is to advise the TPB on issues and concerns of low-income and minority communities, and persons with disabilities. Committee membership includes seventeen engaged community leaders as well as ex-officio representation from the major transportation implementing agencies within the Metropolitan Washington Region.

Under the leadership of Peter Shapiro, TPB First-Vice Chairman for 2002, the committee has met four times since July 12, 2001 to discuss issues that are important to the communities represented in its membership. The committee was also briefed on a number of ongoing regional programs that serve low-income and minority people, and persons with disabilities. Based on these activities, this report was developed to provide guidance to the region's transportation decision makers on ways to address the issues and concerns of persons that are typically not represented in the transportation planning process. The recommendations identified in this report should be considered by TPB member agencies during the annual project solicitation process for the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the Constrained Long Range Plan (CLRP).

This report discusses the following three near-term recommendations to the TPB:

### 2001 NEAR-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS--

#### 1. Transit Information Available in Different Languages— (Page 11)

- ***Identify a regional methodology for transportation agencies to use when determining language barriers for non-English speaking transit users***— Transit agencies must be able to effectively communicate their services to *all* users of the service—including non-English speaking people.
- ***Provide meaningful transit information in the specified language.*** For example, a user of a service does not receive meaningful transit information if she tries to call a number advertised on a Spanish-translated schedule and the agency representative speaks only English.
- ***Use of Less Language-Dependent Methods to Communicate.*** Creating a less language-dependent environment for non-English speaking people is important. The feasibility of this approach should be researched by regional agencies.

#### 2. Funding for Regional and Local, Community-Based Bus Services— (Page 15)

- ***Regional Commitment to Prioritizing Improvements for Regional and Local, Community-Based Bus Services.*** Although the expansion and rehabilitation of the Metrorail system is very important, low-income communities and persons with disabilities rely upon the services provided by the region's Metrobus and local, community-based bus services.
- ***Focus on environmental-friendly transit improvements.*** Transit improvements on regional and local transit vehicles should significantly contribute to reducing the region's air quality concerns.

### **3. Expanding Transportation Services for Low-Income and Minority Communities, and Persons with Disabilities— (Page 17)**

- ***Regional para-transit services for low-income and persons with disabilities should be funded at higher levels and expanded.*** The report specifically discusses recommendations for programs like the Access to Jobs program (page 17), transit services for persons with disabilities (page 18), and pedestrian and bicycle safety within these communities (page 20).

It should be noted that the report recommendations primarily relate to transit related issues—a more multi-modal perspective will be addressed in future reports of this committee.

## **2002 COMMITTEE FOCUS AREAS—**

### **1. Status and Update on TPB progress towards implementing 2001 AFA Recommendations. (Page 22)**

- During 2002, this committee anticipates receiving ongoing updates of the actions taken by TPB member agencies to address the recommendations identified in this report. This will be a major focus area of the committee during 2002.

### **2. Promoting the representation of the interests of this committee in current regional policy making forums. (Page 23)**

- ***Involve the members of this committee in regional transportation forums—*** Low-income and minority people, and persons with disabilities have typically been underrepresented in the transportation planning process. It should be a regional interest to engage these communities in the decision-making process.
- ***Extend outreach activities to regional community groups—***Efforts to educate people who are typically not familiar with the transportation planning process should be considered.

### **3. Promoting Transportation Planning Analysis that better reflects the realities confronting low-income and minority communities and persons with disabilities. (Page 24)**

- ***Provide comments on a regional analysis of living and travel patterns of low-income and minority communities using 2000 Census Data—***When the 2000 Census data is available, the committee would be briefed on the updated Regional Analysis Report of the 1999 CLRP.

### **4. Coordination between Transportation, Housing, Land-use, Air-Quality and Race and Income. (Page 24)**

- ***Address transit investments being guided by employment and economic growth patterns—*** Currently there are no organizations that primarily address multi-faceted regional issues that affect low-income and minority communities and persons with disabilities. Potential committee activities related to this issue would focus on accessibility to jobs that are outside of low-income and minority communities or the displacement of these people when transit investments are encouraged in their communities.

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## - SECTION 1 - COMMITTEE OVERVIEW

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### **Mission and Activities of the Access for All Advisory Committee**

The mission of the Access for All Advisory Committee is to advise the TPB on issues and concerns of low-income and minority communities, and persons with disabilities. The committee was established by the TPB on November 15, 2000. The membership for the committee was approved by the TPB on May 16, 2001, and the group held its first meeting on July 12. The committee has met four times and has discussed a number of vital issues that will be highlighted in this report.

The tasks of the committee, as originally established, were to 1) “identify projects, programs, services and issues that are important to low-income, minority and disabled communities”; and 2) “develop a report on the results of this effort for use in the project solicitation process for the annual CLRP and TIP update cycle.”

The committee was given six briefings on ongoing regional activities that would be of interest to low-income and minority people, and persons with disabilities. The committee used these briefings to help facilitate discussion on the recommendations identified in this report. The briefings presented to the committee include the following:

- Regional Accessibility Analysis of the 1999 Constrained Long Range Plan (CLRP)- Assesses the performance of the CLRP over the next 20 years in terms of regional accessibility to jobs. The impact the plan has on the region’s low-income and minority populations were also assessed.
- Brookings Institution Report—*A Region Divided*— Discussed how growth in the Washington Region affects low-income and minority communities.
- MetroAccess—The state of the region’s para-transit program for people with disabilities was presented.
- Access to Jobs COG Subcommittee— This program provides reverse commute/off-peak travel services to the region’s low-income population.
- Metro’s Funding Issues—Presentation of the funding shortfall that Metro is facing.
- Annual TPB Report to the Region on Transportation— The region’s elected local, state, and federal officials discussed funding options for ‘must do’ projects within the region’s transportation system on November 28, 2001.

The recommendations identified in this report were derived from these discussions and should be used by TPB member agencies during the project solicitation process for the FY03-08 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) as well as the annual amendments to the CLRP. This report can be useful to regional decision makers that are interested in addressing the concerns raised by persons typically not involved in the regional decision making process.

It should be noted that the committee’s recommendations primarily relate to transit related issues—a more multi-modal perspective will be addressed in future reports of this committee.

The report discusses three near-term recommendations to the TPB and the region's transportation implementing agencies. Additionally, brief summaries of issues that the committee intends to take up in 2002 are also included.

The work of the Access for All Advisory Committee is funded through the TPB's Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) as part of the TPB's public involvement activities. Additional funding, in the amount of \$25,000, has been provided through a Title VI and Environmental Justice challenge grant from the Federal Transit Administration.

### **Committee Perspective**

The TPB has held many community outreach activities that encourage the participation of low income and minority groups and persons with disabilities within the transportation planning process. However, those efforts have not maintained ongoing relationships with these persons.

Although this is a newly established committee, the issues and concerns of the committee members are not so new. In fact many of the issues highlighted in this report are also of concern to the region's decision makers.

For instance, the committee supports the TPB's regional policy framework, *The Vision*. The Vision focuses on transportation-related concerns such as regional mobility, improving air quality, and the need for a fiscally sustainable transportation system.

Specifically the committee hopes to draw further attention to the following points stressed in the TPB Vision:

- ✓ ***Policy Goal 1—The Washington metropolitan region's transportation system will provide reasonable access at reasonable cost to everyone in the region.***

*Transit information needs to be available in different languages.* The committee recommends that communication methods of exiting transit services to riders who are not proficient in English should be improved.

*Services for transit-dependent persons should be improved throughout the region.* Low-income people and persons with disabilities are highly dependent on services provided by regional and local, community-based transit services. The committee recommends that the TPB encourage transportation investments that improve accessibility and mobility throughout the Metropolitan Washington Region for transit-dependent persons.

- ✓ ***Policy Goal 3—The Washington metropolitan region's transportation system will give priority to management, performance, maintenance, and safety of all modes and facilities.***

*Metrorail “won’t work” without bus access.* The region is forecast to grow by 31% in population and 41% in employment. Metro’s regional transit system should be able to accommodate increased ridership. The committee hopes to play a more important role in regional dialogues on the future of the Metro transit system—especially because a large majority of low-income persons, and people with disabilities heavily depend upon transit. Although the committee fully supports investments in the region’s rail system, regional leaders must also focus on funding needs for regional and local, community-based bus services.

✓ ***Policy Goal 5—The Washington metropolitan region will plan and develop a transportation system that enhances and protects the region’s natural environmental quality.***

*Environmentally sound transit investments.* Low-income and minority people and persons with disabilities have historically been disproportionately affected by environmental problems. As the TPB continues to grapple with air-quality challenges, the committee wishes to emphasize the importance of environmental protection to the people we represent.

The committee supports the TPB’s efforts to reduce mobile source emissions in the region. Recommendations to the TPB, which are discussed in this report, support improved bus services that mirror the regional priority to reduce emissions.

✓ ***Policy Goal 6-- The Washington metropolitan region will achieve better inter-jurisdictional coordination of transportation and land-use planning.***

*Improved coordination between land-use and transportation planners.* The representatives of this committee place great importance on the notion that where there are people, there should be jobs. However in a region with such diversity and opportunity, future projections show that the fastest employment growth is expected in locations outside the region’s inner suburbs. This means that minority and low-income communities living in the region’s core must find access to the multitude of jobs that exist outside of the Beltway.

The committee supports more efficient long-term planning between transportation and land-use officials. It also supports ongoing TPB activities that improve regional accessibility to employment and other services by transit.

*Transit station gentrification.* In the committee’s 2002 activities, members hope to provide ongoing advice to the TPB regarding non-traditional transportation concerns. For example, we are concerned with the relationship of transit investments and land-use planning to communities that are predominately low-income and/or minority.

The committee plans to bring topics like these to 2002 TPB Chairman, Phil Mendelson.

## Committee Membership

TPB's 2001 Second Vice Chairman Peter Shapiro chairs the advisory committee. Seventeen, non-profit and community agency representatives serve on the committee, along with ex-officio representation from the major transportation implementing agencies in the Washington metropolitan region. The members are listed below:

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Invited Representative</b>
Anacostia Economic Development Corporation (AEDC)	A non-profit community development corporation (CDC) Addresses economic development needs of Anacostia/Far S.E.	DC	Albert Hopkins
Women Like Us	Works on economic development and environmental projects in Anacostia.	DC	Brenda Richardson (TPB Citizens Advisory Committee)
DC Latino Task Force	Seeks government services for the Latino community in DC.	DC	Daniel Jones
Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN)	DC chapter of a national grassroots organization representing the interests of moderate and low-income people.	DC	Will Ward
The Américas Institute	A community-based research and policy organization working on transportation planning and policy options for the District of Columbia	DC	Harold Foster
Local Initiatives Support Corp. (LISC)	Provides grants, loans and equity investments to Community Development Corporations (CDCs) for neighborhood redevelopment.	DC	Roseann Abdu
Ibero American Chamber of Commerce	To promote the success for business enterprise through Access, Network and Advocacy to business opportunities.	DC	Juan Albert
Able Labor	Assists Hispanic workers in the Virginia suburbs.	VA	Paul Leach (COG's Access to Jobs committee)
Boat People S.O.S., Inc.	Assists Vietnamese immigrants and refugees establish community-based organizations locally and nationally.	VA	Dr. Nguyen Dinh Thang,
Arlington County Disability Advisory Commission	Provides input to state agencies on persons with disabilities. Designated as Virginia's Local Disability Services Board (LDSB)	VA	Raymond Keith
Korean Central Presbyterian Church	Community based religious organization.	VA	Pastor Won Sang Lee
Business Development Assistance Group, Inc.	Promotes growth of small and minority businesses.	VA	Toa Do



<b>Organization</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Invited Representative</b>
Prince George's County Redevelopment Authority	Quasi-independent county agency working on economic revitalization.	MD	David Harrington
Prince George's County Black Chamber of Commerce	Represents the interests of the African-American business community. (TPB Citizens Advisory Committee)	MD	Mike Little
Casa De Maryland	Non-profit chapter in Montgomery County committed to reduce poverty, discrimination, and improve life opportunities, in the Hispanic community.	MD	Kim Propeack
Wider Opportunities for Women	Specializes in literacy, welfare-to-work transition, and career development programs. (Access to Jobs COG committee)	Regional	Shea Shackelford
The Brookings Institution	Produced the 1999 report, <i>A Region Divided</i> , which highlighted east-west imbalances in the Washington Metropolitan Region	National	Amy Liu

**Implementing Agency**

**Invited Representative**

District of Columbia Division of Transportation

Michelle Pourciau, Chief,  
Transportation & Public Space Policy

Maryland Department of Transportation

Paul Oberle/ Fatimah Hasan Planning  
and Capital Programming

Virginia Department of Transportation

Kanti Srikanth, Senior Transportation  
Engineer

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

Gail Charles, Assistant General  
Manager for Administration

Federal Highway Administration

Tracey France/ Sandra Jackson

Federal Transit Administration

Deborah Burns

## - SECTION 2 - 2001 RECOMMENDATIONS

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### 1. Transit Information Available in Different Languages

#### Background:

The Washington region has become one of the top immigrant destinations in the country. According to a study from the Brookings Institution more than 800,000 immigrants live in the region— this means that one in every six persons in the region is foreign born<sup>1</sup>. Although this regional melting pot has provided a culturally diverse atmosphere, local officials are facing quite a few challenges in meeting the needs of persons not proficient in English.

Local schools, communities, and many employers must face the challenge of providing services for non-English speaking people. Unlike other areas in the country that have a high foreign-born population, immigrants here are highly diverse— coming from as many as 193 countries and territories. Languages spoken include Spanish, Korean, Vietnamese, Farsi, Urdu and others.

Non-English speaking groups in this region are not only diverse; they are also quite dispersed throughout the region. Immigrant groups are not clustered into ethnically homogeneous enclaves but are truly spread throughout the region.

According to data from the Census 2000 Supplementary Survey<sup>2</sup>, the following chart shows the percentages of the population in the District, Maryland and Virginia that speak a foreign language at home. The survey also showed percentages of people who speak English less than “very well”<sup>3</sup>:

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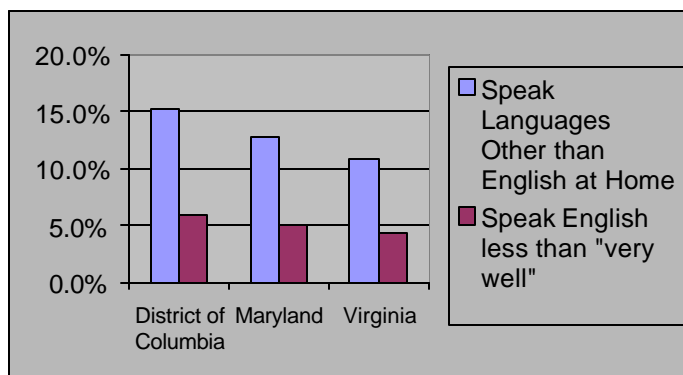
<sup>1</sup> The Brookings Institution’s analysis used administrative data from the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) from FY 1990 to 1998 for its report.

<sup>2</sup> The Census 2000 Supplementary Survey used a questionnaire to collect demographic, social, economic and housing data from a national sample of 700,000.

<sup>3</sup> Survey participants were asked to indicate their ability to speak English based on one of the following categories: “Very Well”, “Well”, “Not Well”, or “Not at All”

*U.S. Census Bureau Census 2000 Supplementary Survey  
Percent of the Population that Speak Languages other than English at home.*

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\* Population of Five years or older

The share of people who speak little English is highest among those in their working years, ages 18-64.

*What this means for the Region*

Such dispersal of people not proficient in English throughout the region raises fundamental questions about local services. How will non-English speaking people be able to read transit information to get to work, or benefit from social service programs? How do courts, hospitals, and other public facilities respond to such a dispersed variety of languages and cultures? Questions like these must be addressed by agencies that provide these services.

Attempting to address these issues have proven to be quite difficult for transportation decision-makers. In fact, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Department of Justice (DOJ) established federal guidance for implementing agencies. The guidance helps agencies to establish services that provide meaningful access to activities and programs for people who are Limited English Proficient (LEP)<sup>4</sup>.

DOJ's LEP Guidance was enforced in an executive order<sup>5</sup> signed by President Clinton on August 11, 2000. It requires Federal agencies receiving financial assistance to use the Guidance to better address the needs of non-English speaking people seeking access to transportation-related programs and activities. This guidance sets forth compliance standards that transportation agencies must follow to ensure that the programs and activities they normally provide in English are accessible to LEP people.

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<sup>4</sup> An LEP person is defined as an individual with a primary or home language other than English who must, due to limited fluency in English, communicate in that language.

<sup>5</sup> LEP Executive Order 13166: Title VI of the Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of national origin, among other things.

Committee Concerns:

Committee members emphasized that a need for transportation agencies to translate transit information into other languages does exist. Although the region's primary transit provider, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) and other local, community-based transit agencies<sup>6</sup> have existing activities that support improved transit services for LEP persons, the committee's experience and knowledge of these services is quite limited. As many of these regional programs are in preliminary stages, the members of this committee hope to receive briefings on the progress of these activities throughout 2002. The committee also proposes that improved advertising and marketing of these services should be a major focus in providing a successful and meaningful service to LEP markets.

Identifying which languages should be translated also proved to be a concern. Although Spanish-speakers are the largest recent immigrant group in the region, the committee was apprehensive to suggest that all transit information be translated into only Spanish. Therefore, in determining which languages to translate information into, the committee believes it should be incumbent upon transportation agencies to continue to use federal guidance and survey research to translate transit information into a meaningful vehicle for people not proficient in English.

This report emphasizes the transit needs of non-English speaking persons. The committee will address other transportation modes in future activities.

It is also evident that dedicated funding resources must be available to implement such programs.

Recommendations:

- a) ***The region must identify a regional methodology for transportation agencies to use when determining language-barriers for non-English speaking transit riders***—Transit agencies must be able to effectively communicate their services to all users of the service—including non-English speaking people. Ways to do this include:
- ***Continue to use existing Federal regulations for guidance.*** The LEP Guidance specifically discusses the process for transportation agencies to use when considering the language needs of its users. The guidance suggests transportation agencies should create plans for improving access to federal activities and programs. It is understood that the region's transit providers are aware of such guidance and that existing activities are in preliminary stages. This recommendation further emphasizes that successful activities to improve transit services for LEP persons should include at least one of the following four factors<sup>7</sup>:
    - Assessment-- Identify the number of LEP persons in the eligible service population or likely to be encountered in the transportation agencies activities and programs;

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<sup>6</sup> In addition to WMATA's regional bus service, there are many other public and private transit services offered in the Washington Region.

<sup>7</sup> Federal Register/Vol. 66, No. 14, Framework for Language Assistance Pg. 6738 and 6739

- Development of Comprehensive Written Policy on Language Access— Develop and implement a comprehensive written policy that will ensure meaningful communication to the targeted LEP users.
  - Training of Staff—Ensure that staff understands the policy and is capable of carrying it out.
  - Provision of Special Language Assistance—Any services offered should actually be provided to LEP persons using an effective communication method
  - Vigilant Monitoring—Conducting regular oversight of the language assistance program to ensure that LEP persons can meaningfully access the programs offered by the transit agency.
- ***Use surveys to collect data on LEP people.*** Although demographic data on non-English speaking populations is provided through the Census, a detailed breakdown of the data is needed to determine the language needs of users of the service. Specific data on the region’s non-English speaking populations could be collected through yearly surveys. These surveys should be incorporated into the agencies plan for improving services for LEP users.

According to a law enacted by the Maryland General Assembly<sup>8</sup>, a state department “shall create a survey to determine the need for interpretation and translation services based on existing demands of the transit service.” This law could be referred to by other regional agencies, as a model for implementing surveys on needs assessments.

**b) *Provide meaningful transit information in the specified language.***

According to federal regulations of Executive Order 13166, transit information is to be available in other languages—it’s the law. However, implementing agencies must provide *meaningful* transit information in a language understood by the persons using the service. For example, a user of a service does not receive meaningful transit information if she tries to call a number advertised on a Spanish-translated schedule and the agency representative speaks only English.

The information translated must be meaningful to the user of the service. Further guidance on defining meaningful information is specified in DOJ LEP Guidance<sup>9</sup>.

Additional suggestions in providing meaningful transit information could be but not limited to:

- *Bilingual Bus Drivers*- Training could be provided for bus drivers to learn the language of the users of the service.
- *Improved Transit Information using Technology* - Voice annunciation technology could be used in buses to translate stop and schedule information in languages

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<sup>8</sup> Maryland General Assembly enacted Senate Bill 542—*State Government- Survey of State Departments, Agencies, and Programs- Persons with Limited English Proficiency*. September 1, 2001.

<sup>9</sup> Federal Register/Vol. 65. No. 159, Page 50124

specific to people that are using services. This method could also be useful for visually/hearing-impaired people.

- c) *Use of Less Language-Dependent Methods to Communicate.* As evident in many foreign countries, communication through symbols can be quite a benefit for travelers that are not familiar with the native tongue. Here in the Washington region, transit providers could utilize this method to improve the use of transit services. Creating a less language-dependent environment for non-English speaking people is important. Implementing agencies should research the feasibility of this approach.

## **2. Funding for Regional and Local, Community-Based Bus Services**

### Background:

The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) is facing a financial shortfall of \$5.2 billion that has received extensive attention in recent years. During the TPB's 2000 update of the region's Constrained Long-Range Plan (CLRP), adequate revenues could not be identified to fully fund the system's rehabilitation and maintenance needs. In addition, no revenues were identified to fund the expenses—including cars, buses, parking and other facility improvements—needed to accommodate anticipated ridership growth over the next 25 years.

Some actions are being planned to address this shortfall. In April 2001, the TPB approved a resolution declaring Metrorail's preservation, rehabilitation and expansion to be a regional priority. On November 28, a TPB special meeting at Union Station, called the "Annual Report to the Region," further highlighted WMATA's needs and pushed for the identification of solutions.

### Committee Concerns:

The needs of the regional bus services must not take a "back seat" as the region grapples with WMATA's funding shortfall. This point applies to both the regional Metrobus system and to local, community-based bus systems throughout the region.

The Committee appreciates that regional leaders have been discussing bus services in conjunction with overall system needs. In particular, the committee is encouraged by the ongoing regional bus study conducted by WMATA. However, it often appears that within most decision-making arenas and in the media, the needs of Metrorail have received far more attention than the needs of the region's bus services.

The Metrobus system is currently the fifth largest bus system in the nation, carrying approximately 550,000 passengers a day. A large percentage of these passengers are from low-income and minority communities. These are people who are not simply transit-dependent—but bus-dependent. It should be further noted that these bus-dependent people do not only use Metrobus. They also are the core riders of the region's numerous local, community-based bus systems.

According to recent growth trends in the region, employment is forecast to increase 41 percent from 2.7 to 3.8 million jobs. The most dramatic growth is expected in the outer jurisdictions. However, the largest concentrations of transit-dependent people remain in the regional core and inner suburbs. People who are dependent upon transit services to get to work, social services and other necessary activities, need an effective and efficient system. If the region's existing services are not sufficiently funded and expanded to meet projected demands, persons that use transit as a primary means for transportation will be particularly affected.

The funding shortfall WMATA faces during the next 25 years includes money needed for maintenance of the system as well as new rail cars, parking lots and buses to keep up with expected growth in ridership. Plans for future expansions, including new Blue and Purple Lines, would cause WMATA's deficit to exponentially increase. Meanwhile, funding priorities for Metrorail services greatly outweigh existing maintenance and operation services for Metrobus and local, community-based bus systems.

The Access for All Advisory Committee appreciates that many regional leaders are committed to serving the most transit-dependent people. We would further note that most low-income and minority people are also dependent upon rail transit, and we strongly support full investment in Metrorail.

However, the Committee would hope that regional leaders remain vigilant that funding for regional and local, community-based bus services should not be ignored. Our concerns in this regard are not unfounded. History shows that during past funding shortfalls, funding for regional and local community-based bus services were significantly curtailed while funding for rail services was not. As a matter of specific concern, we wish to mention that the TPB's resolution in April 2001 noted that Metrorail is a regional priority, but failed to mention the Metrobus system.

*Recommendations:*

The committee recommends that the TPB should:

***a) Commit to Prioritizing Improvements for Regional and Local, Community-Based Bus Services***

The Access for All Advisory Committee recommends that the TPB identify funding mechanisms to fully fund and expand the region's bus system, including both the Metrobus system and the bus systems operated by local jurisdictions. Although the expansion and rehabilitation of the Metrorail system is very important, low-income people and persons with disabilities rely upon the services provided by the region's Metrobus and local, community-based bus services.

***b) Focus on environmental-friendly transit improvements.***

Low-income, LEP persons and some minorities have historically been disproportionately affected by environmental problems. Therefore, the committee recommends that any transit improvements on regional and local transit vehicles should significantly contribute to reducing the region's air quality concerns. For example, investments in environmental-friendly transit vehicles such as Clean Natural Gas (CNG) buses should be considered and included in future TIP and CLRP updates.

**3. Expanding Transportation Services for Low-Income and Minority People and Persons with Disabilities**

The committee has looked at three topics related to transportation services for low-income and minority people and persons with disabilities and has discussed how these programs might be expanded or improved.

**A. Access to Jobs and Services**

**Background:**

Existing regional services do not correspond to the variety of travel needs of transit-dependent people—transit is needed not just to get to work, but to go to day care and other social services. Regional reverse commute programs should better reflect this reality.

WMATA's Access to Jobs and Reverse Commute program provides transportation services to welfare recipients and other low-income people by improving coordination among regional transportation providers, human service agencies, and employment and training agencies. The program involves partnerships with WMATA, Maryland MTA, COG and other regional stakeholders. The Access to Jobs Subcommittee at COG is responsible for coordinating transportation and human services planning among the various regional stakeholders.

**Committee Concerns:**

Although members of the committee agreed that the Access to Jobs program addressed gaps in the region's employment-related transportation services, concerns were raised that the services offered were inadequate during off-peak hours and that the quality of service was inconsistent.

While appreciating the importance of job access programs, the committee is also concerned that such programs should not be considered a solution to underlying economic problems, namely the lack of jobs that are geographically close to low-income and minority communities.

Also, the committee recognizes that there are a number of existing regional reverse-commute programs. More collaboration and connectivity should be required at the regional level. This would ultimately improve efficient services for the region's persons that are dependent upon this type of service.



Recommendations:

The committee recommends that:

- a) ***Regional reverse-commute travel programs and services should be funded at higher levels and expanded*** — Increased funding should be provided for reverse commute travel programs. The programs should be expanded to reflect the growing needs of the people they serve, including increased off-peak service and service between suburban locations.
- b) ***Need to promote better linkages with existing regional programs***—Although this report highlighted the regional Access to Jobs program, the committee recognizes that there are a number of existing regional programs that are similar. The committee recommends that:
  - o An inventory of existing programs that provide access to jobs and other social services should be done. This inventory could serve as a marketing tool that could attract more users of this service to get to more employment opportunities. It could also promote better linkages with existing regional programs that otherwise may not have been known.

**B. Transit for Persons with Disabilities**

Background:

The committee was briefed on the MetroAccess program operated by WMATA for persons with disabilities. The committee also more broadly has discussed transit services for persons with disabilities but will focus primarily on the regional provider of the service for this report.

MetroAccess provides curb-to-curb transportation service for riders eligible under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Recently, the program has received negative media attention due to problems with inadequate service and dissatisfied customers. WMATA's presentation to the committee, described efforts to establish new and improved services for its users. An Improvement Plan for FY2002 has been established and will address high complaint rates by users of the service, which stem from high percentages of "no-shows" or late trips. WMATA proposes that by enacting new policies, customer satisfaction and the overall service of the system will improve. The plan will also include establishing new service goals, which promise better and improved services for the customer and an improved fleet management plan. The plan will be implemented in the summer of 2002.

Committee Concerns:

Committee members said that in the process of determining how services for this market should be provided, it is important to have actual users of the service represented in the decision-making structure. This does not mean simply having volunteer advisors, but hiring paid professionals who are also disabled.

The committee also discussed capacity constraints of the service—MetroAccess should have the capacity to handle the transportation demands of 17,500 persons with disabilities—the number of people eligible to ride the service who are unable to use regular buses or subway trains. This would ensure better, more efficient performance of the service. Although it should be noted that MetroAccess services haven't denied trips due to capacity constraints, it is evident that existing services have had problems maintaining competent services to present users of the service.

Committee members emphasized that improving transit services for persons with disabilities would ultimately improve the services for the public at large, which will increasingly require such services as the population ages.

Recommendations:

The committee recommends that:

- a) ***Regional para-transit services for persons with disabilities should be funded at higher levels and expanded*** — Increased funding should be provided for services for persons with disabilities. The programs should be expanded to address the current capacity constraints of existing services. Further regional attention must face this long-existing problem. Ways in which the regional and local community-based transit programs can improve services when additional funding is available include but are not limited to:
  - o *Same Day and Weekend Service*— Currently, it is very difficult to get same-day or weekend services from Metro Access. Patrons must call days in advance to schedule a pick up-- weekend and same day services are not available. At times, changes in work or entertainment schedules may require Metro Access services during off-peak hours. The committee suggests that that these types of extended services should be further investigated by regional providers.
- b) ***Create a professional position within the decision-making structure of MetroAccess that would be filled by a user of the service***—The committee commends and supports WMATA's efforts to improve the existing services offered to persons with disabilities. As part of these improvements, the committee recommends that WMATA hire one or more professionals with disabilities who use transit, to help improve the overall quality of service and to help attain the goals identified in FY 2002 Improvement Plan.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> In an effort to improve existing services, Metro Access is expected to establish a 2002 Improvement Plan. The plan is expected to address current day problems of the service.

### C. Pedestrian and Bicycle Access and Safety

#### Background:

Although the committee has not extensively discussed ways in which pedestrian and bicycle facilities might be improved for low-income and minority people or persons with disabilities, it is evident that these issues are clearly important for the representatives of this committee. The *Washington Post*, for example, highlighted last year the high pedestrian accident rates among immigrant communities in suburban Maryland. Several local jurisdictions have initiated focused programs to address these concerns.

In Montgomery County, for example, a countywide public education campaign to reduce traffic fatalities and injuries throughout the county and the region was launched in 2000. Aimed at both drivers and walkers, the outreach effort is designed to raise awareness of the dangers pedestrians face every day. The campaign has received widespread media coverage and public education materials are being used extensively.

Arlington County also has an extensive pedestrian safety program. Overall, Metrorail stations in Arlington generate an average of 190,000 pedestrian trips per weekday at the 10 stations located throughout the County. The five highest ridership pedestrian-oriented stations are Rosslyn (28,296 with 76.7% walk access), Crystal City (24,731 with 86.2% walk access), Ballston (21,628 with 64.5% walk access), Pentagon City (20,834 with 71.3% walk access), and Courthouse (14,608 with 91.1% walk access). Also, Metrobus serves approximately 35,000 customers per day in Arlington, more than 67% of whom are pedestrians accessing or egressing from their bus.

Numerous projects in Arlington County have been implemented and planned to address the pedestrian aspect of designing and operating public transit services. The County has also initiated a series of studies to review performance and develop solutions for improving pedestrian and traffic safety.

#### Committee Concerns:

Traffic and pedestrian safety is of extreme importance in improving the general quality of life in the region. However, in transit-dependent communities, pedestrian and traffic safety is particularly vital. Bus riders inevitably become pedestrians in the course of their journeys, and face the daily hazards of crossing poorly lit roads at night and waiting at unsafe bus stops. Immigrant groups, in particular, are especially at risk as they seek to find their way through unfamiliar places and are often unsure of general safety guidelines in this country.

While the committee is pleased that pedestrian and bicycle safety programs are being established throughout the region, we would like to ensure that these programs address the dangers that are particularly confronting low-income and minority communities and persons with disabilities.

Recommendations:

The committee recommends that:

- a) ***Pedestrian and bicycle safety programs should be funded at higher levels and expanded*** —The committee would like to see existing programs in places like Arlington and Montgomery counties expanded throughout the region. The committee in particular would like to ensure that the special needs of low-income and minority communities and disabled persons are addressed through these programs.

**- SECTION 3 -  
2002 FOCUS AREAS**

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**1. Status and update on TPB progress towards implementing 2001 AFA  
Report Recommendations**

Background:

As many TPB outreach activities in the past have been unsuccessful in maintaining contact with underrepresented communities, the members of this committee look forward to forming a long-standing relationship with the members the TPB.

Concerns of the Committee:

Members of this committee are engaged and actively willing to play a larger role in further advising the TPB on the issues and concerns of low-income and minority people and persons with disabilities—issues that have typically not been addressed in existing regional committee's but are inherently important to the region.

The members of this committee encourage the TPB to continue to dedicate resources that promote the input of this committee and other regional groups like it in the regional planning process.

As an ongoing activity of this committee, frequent briefings on the actions taken by the TPB to address the recommendations of this report will be anticipated.

Actions for 2002:

- a) ***Receive ongoing briefings during 2002 on the actions taken by the TPB to address the concerns raised by this committee.*** This committee anticipates receiving ongoing updates of the actions taken by TPB member agencies to address the recommendations identified in this report. This will be a major focus area of the committee during 2002. It is also an effort to maintain the momentum between the committee and the TPB to encourage the participation and input of persons not typically involved in the transportation planning process.

The committee also anticipates reporting to the TPB on the progress and actions taken by its member agencies to address the concerns raised in this report at the end of 2002.

## **2. Promoting the Representation of the Interests of this Committee in Current Regional Policy Making Forums**

### Background:

Interest groups representing environmental and business groups make themselves well represented in the regional transportation decision-making process. However, the interests of low-income, minority or disabled persons typically are not represented in this process. The committee has been set up precisely because of the need for wider representation. The question is how to best make the concerns of its constituents known to decision-makers.

### Committee Concerns:

The committee recognizes that some of the region's most engaged and active community leaders are members of this committee. It is incumbent upon the committee to become more involved in the transportation decision-making process and take the information learned in this forum back to their respective communities. Representatives of low-income, minority and disabled communities should find ways to make their concerns heard in forums where decisions are made. When future meetings are planned in which various groups are called upon to represent their interests regarding transportation, we would hope it would become an automatic assumption that representation from our communities will be included.

### Actions for 2002

- a) ***Involve the members of this committee in regional transportation forums*** — It is imperative that the voices of low-income, minority, and disabled communities be heard in the decision making process.
- b) ***Extend outreach activities to regional community groups***—To involve these communities in regional discussions, the transportation planning process must be understood. Efforts to educate the communities represented on this committee should include region-wide outreach initiatives that focus on providing clear, understandable information about how decisions made in the transportation planning process affect low-income, minority, and disabled groups.

### **3. Promoting Transportation Planning Analysis that Better Reflects the Realities Confronting Low-Income, Minority, and Persons with Disabilities**

#### Background:

The traditional transportation planning process uses census and other data collection to forecast travel patterns in future years. As the world we live in becomes more complex, it becomes more difficult to make assumptions about the future. Ten- or twenty-year forecasts about issues such as gentrification around rail transit stations or identification of where specific types of jobs will be located are nearly impossible using current methodologies.

#### Committee Concerns:

The committee has raised concerns about how the traditional land-use and transportation planning and data collection process incorporates the needs of low-income, minority and disabled groups. In order to address the needs of specific groups, a more micro-level, near-term type of process will need to be considered. The committee suggested looking at non-traditional methodologies that could address these concerns.

#### Actions for 2002:

- a) *Provide comments on a regional analysis of living and travel patterns of low-income and minority communities using 2000 Census data.*

The committee was briefed on the TPB's *Regional Accessibility Analysis Report of the 1999 CLRP*. The committee would hope to receive a briefing on an update to this analysis using 2000 Census data. The committee would provide comments on the analysis to the TPB.

### **4. Coordination between Transportation, Housing, Land-use, Air Quality and Race and Income**

#### Background:

In the decision making process, many elected officials wear a multitude of hats-- for example, being responsible for land-use decisions at the local level as well as serving on the TPB or other regional boards. This presents an opportunity for improving coordination between transportation and land-use, as well as an opportunity for indirect influence on land-use decisions through the transportation planning process.

Committee Concerns:

Currently, there are no organizational structures or responsibilities that exist primarily for addressing these multi-faceted issues in the region as they affect low-income and minority communities and persons with disabilities.

Actions for 2002:

- a) ***Address transit investments being guided by employment and economic growth patterns--*** It is important to maximize existing land where transit investments are located. However, there is a dilemma—If transit investments follow employment growth patterns, it becomes difficult for transit-dependant communities to get to the jobs. Yet, when transit investments are encouraged around low-income communities, gentrification and displacement of the targeted population can occur.

The committee could potentially address the following issues related to this problem:

- Provide recommendations regarding development around current and future rail stations as it relates to low-income, minority and disabled communities.
- Identify “lessons-learned” regarding transit-oriented development as it relates to the communities represented on the committee to the TPB.
- Identify potential ways in which affordable housing could be secured around transit station development.
- Develop forums that could include policy makers and citizens to discuss potential ways in which the effects of gentrification around transit development could be mitigated.