

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

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DRAFT Meeting Summary

Regional Bus Subcommittee
CHAIR: Aaron Overman, District of Columbia DOT

Tuesday September 28, 2010
Noon – 2 PM

Meeting Attendees:

Carrie Anderson-Watters, Frederick Translt	Valerie Pardo, VDOT/NOVA
Mike Harris, VA DRPT	Kevin Thornton, Prince George's The Bus
Pierre Holloman, City of Alexandria	Al Himes, Alexandria Transit
Aaron Overman, DDOT	Steve Yaffe, Arlington County
Alex Verzosa, City of Fairfax	Eulois Cleckley, DDOT
David Awbry, VA DRPT	Amber Carran-Fletcher, DDOT
Eric Marx, PRTC	Randy White, Fairfax County

TPB Staff in Attendance:

Eric Randall	Andy Meese
Jerry Miller	Jian Yin
Rex Hodgson	

Agenda Items:

Welcome and Introductions

Aaron Overman, DDOT

The chair welcomed the meeting participants and called the meeting to order. He asked the members in attendance to introduce themselves, and thanked everyone for their promptness to facilitate getting the meeting started on time.

Update on Implementation of the TPB Regional Priority Bus Project Grant under the TIGER Program

Eric Randall, TPB Staff

Mr. Randall reviewed the current status of the pending grant agreement for the TIGER Priority Bus project. The template for grant agreements was received from FTA mid-July, and COG has been reviewing with counsel and staff how to meet and implement the grant requirements, which include considerable additional certifications and reporting requirements for the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (aka the stimulus bill). COG plans to hire a consulting firm to meet these requirements; firms recently responded to an RFQ and submittals are now being reviewed by a selection committee of the project owners.

New Transit Data Tables

As a new item to the agenda, Mr. Randall passed out copies of the new transit data tables for regional and local systems. In response to questions at the September 15,

2010 meeting of the TPB, figures have been revised and a new table of fare revenues has been added. The tables will be presented to the Technical Committee on Friday, October 1 and then go the TPB in response to their request. Members were asked to closely review the data and either affirm their correctness or inform COG of any needed amendments.

Update on the DDOT Commuter Bus Management Plan

Eulois Cleckley, DDOT

Mr. Cleckley and Ms. Amber Carran-Fletcher gave a presentation on DDOT's plan for rationalization of commuter bus stops. There are many downtown stops, both AM and PM, which have concerns and the presentation reviewed these and the proposed changes. Members were also referred to maps available on the Subcommittee website for more detailed information.

Questions about the plan included:

- Commuter bus ridership continues to grow rapidly. What is DDOT's long-term plan? Mr. Cleckley responded that the commuter bus plan started out as a simple inventory of stops, and now has evolved into a planning overview. It will be used to inform further planning discussions.
- Will all buses going downtown have to get permits to use bus stops? No, but they must use signed bus stops and the permit is required for installation of a sign. This is a legal requirement for any regularly scheduled public transportation service operating on public streets. For instance, this includes Federal shuttle service, but excludes tour buses.
- Will DDOT be hosting a regular commuter bus committee? DDOT would like to be able to coordinate with a commuter bus committee, but under the facilitation of another group. If the Regional Bus Subcommittee is willing to host commuter bus agency meetings as an adjunct, this would be very useful.
- Is DDOT also looking at bus staging sites? These are very limited in the downtown area, and DDOT is examining the need. PRTC, for instance, brings all its AM buses back out into Virginia, but would like a place for buses showing up early for the PM rush (in order to make sure they are ready) to stay.
- When will the final report be ready? DDOT plans to issue the final report by February.

Finally, Mr. Cleckley mentioned that DDOT is also conducting a study of slug-lines. In addition, beginning October 6th all of the slug-line PM pick-up points on 14th Street NW. will be relocated to 15th Street (between H St to New York Ave), along with signage, enforcement, etc., for a two week test. Note that DDOT does not encourage slugging, due to the potential for security incidents. He also stated that DDOT estimates there are 13,000-14,000 slug-line users in the DC area.

Update of "Moving Forward: Status of the Bus Systems of the National Capital Region"

Eric Randall, TPB Staff

Due to time constraints, Mr. Randall spoke only briefly to this item, stating that the plan is to prepare a new brochure on transit systems in the region for public consumption.

Roundtable Discussion on Regional Issues:

Mr. Overman then announced the opening of the roundtable discussion, the purpose of which is to discuss the purpose and next steps of the RBS. Topics such as future bus

and garage needs, and of regional real-time information sharing, were current interests, but what should the committee do with these and what other topics should be examined. Mr. Randall elaborated on the 10 goals of the RBS, most of which are to inform long-range planning and to coordinate activities with other regional committees.

Members were then asked to comment:

- Mr. Marx suggested that a forum on real-time information would be useful. There are three aspects which members are likely to have in common: 1) getting expert technical assistance, 2) procurement of systems and displays, and 3) sources of funding.
- Mr. Yaffe suggested that long-term planning should consider the likely needs of the population as more people become transit dependent. He also suggested that there must be a way to identify and fund cost-effective services. Arlington recently had to cancel the “shuttle bug”, which provided good service for occasional / demand-response riders. Getting this type of population into using main transit by providing these types of links is key.
- Mr. Overman said the RBS is a force for sharing information on regional transit needs and advocating the joint needs of the operators.
- Mr. White agreed that bus services are critical to the future transportation needs of the region, especially as Metro gets overcrowded, and that the case needs to be made for bus investments.
- Mr. Harris suggested that regional bus planning is needed, such as for the I-95 and I-66 corridors, that will identify mutual needs.
- Mr. Marx said that improving the road network for bus operations does not receive enough consideration, and that he sees the role of the TPB in this (i.e., TIGER grant, Guidelines study) as useful in bringing attention to this need.
- Mr. Verzosa added that the RBS should be the place for discussing all regional bus needs to help coordinate advocacy for regional bus projects and investments.
- Ms. Anderson-Watters suggested that the sharing of ideas and information among members is the most useful work of the RBS, and suggested that a listserv among members to promote quick sharing of questions and answers would be useful.
- Ms. Pardo suggested forming a technical library that would be a single-site repository of all the studies and other transit reports completed for the area.
- Mr. Harris referred to the work of TPB’s MOITS committee which completed a detailed strategic plan, and suggested that the RBS consider the same.
- Mr. Meese offered that based on MOITS, having a list of regional projects and proposals would be a useful reference. There was discussion that having a list of “top 10” transit projects might be a useful goal.
- It was suggested that better sharing of information on what the TPB is considering and on other regional activities and studies would be useful. General agreement was that this should become a standing item on the agenda.
- There was discussion of whether webinars or teleconferences would promote participation. The value of the group meeting face-to-face is considerable, but it is also very important to have everyone involved. It was decided that a short survey be conducted of members.
- The role of the RBS versus other committees, such as the JCC at WMATA and the Regional Transit Operators’ Group, was discussed. Documenting the roles and responsibilities of each group versus local transit needs and concerns would aid in clarifying appropriate activities for the RBS.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:00 PM.

The next meeting of the TPB's Regional Bus Subcommittee will be held on October 26, 2010.

All meeting materials are available for download from the subcommittee's website:

<http://www.mwcog.org/TPB/RBS/docs/>