

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

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MEMORANDUM

TO: National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) Technical Committee

FROM: Wendy Klancher, Senior Transportation Planner, Department of Transportation Planning

SUBJECT: Regional Bus Stop Improvement Application for FTA Livability Bus Grant Program

DATE: January 29, 2010

On January 20, the TPB endorsed the Regional Bus Stop Improvement application for the Livability Bus Grant program sponsored by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The TPB gave member jurisdictions until January 27 to submit additional projects or revisions that meet the criteria and asked that the Steering Committee approve the changes on February 5. This memorandum provides an overview of a Regional Bus Stop Improvement Program including the revisions received by January 27 for the FTA Livability Bus Grant Program application. The revisions resulted in the overall total of the Regional Bus Stop Improvement program to increase by \$760,000 to **\$16,246,900** and identifies approximately **2,777** sites for improvements; (up from 2,630). The federal grant request is for **\$12,997,520** (an increase of \$608,000).

At the December 16 TPB meeting, the TPB directed staff to develop a proposal for the FTA Livability Bus grant program. TPB and WMATA staff coordinated to develop a Regional Bus Stop Improvement Program that prioritizes accessibility improvements to bus stops. While WMATA is the eligible applicant for this grant program, implementing individual improvements to bus stops falls within the realm of each local jurisdiction. Therefore, to identify specific bus stop locations and improvements, TPB member jurisdictions were asked at the Technical Committee Meeting on January 8 to ascertain their level of interest in participating in a regional application and to determine the availability of local funds to serve as the requisite 20 percent match.

Background

On December 8, 2009, FTA released a Notice of Funding Availability and a Solicitation for Project Proposals for \$150 million in discretionary Section 5309 funding for the Bus and Bus Facilities Livability Initiative. "The Livability Bus Program" makes funds available for capital projects such as purchasing and rehabilitating buses, vans, and bus-related equipment, or constructing and rehabilitating bus-related facilities. WMATA is the eligible direct recipient of these funds for the Washington D.C. region.

There are several elements of the Livability Bus Program that signal advantages from regional cooperation in assembling a grant package, including a requirement for MPO endorsement and

an emphasis on directing improvements to areas in economic need throughout the region. As part of the Federal Livability Initiative, applications submitted for these program funds will be evaluated by FTA and coordinated with representatives from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The application deadline is February 8, 2010, and awards will be announced in early 2010. Grant applications must identify a 20% local match. Projects must be able to begin upon receipt of the grant, and should be readily scalable.

Given the elements described above, region-wide accessibility improvements to bus stops were identified as a priority that are relatively low cost and easily scalable, and also have the potential to make permanent, placemaking improvements in areas of economic need. Accessible bus stops for low-income communities and persons with disabilities have been identified as a regional need by the TPB Access for All (AFA) Advisory Committee for many years. Specifically, the AFA has made the following recommendations:

- Prioritize bus stop improvements in areas with the highest concentrations of poverty but where bus use is also high;
- Redesign existing bus stops in a way that safely accommodates the widest range of potential users, including people with disabilities and limited-English speakers; and
- Provide comprehensive information (i.e. maps and schedules) at bus stops that is easy to understand for both English and non-native English speakers.

Criteria for Submissions

Criteria for jurisdictions to use in selecting project locations and project elements were derived from FTA programmatic priorities and project evaluation criteria, and further tailored using regional sources (i.e. AFA recommendations and WMATA's Regional Bus Stop Inventory) as well as federal demographic data from the US Census and HUD to ensure that selected improvements best meet livability goals for the region. Maps (provided in Attachment 1) were developed by TPB and WMATA staff to show priority areas and corridors throughout the region where bus stop improvements could best enhance livability. Both maps identify bus stops which are not functionally accessible for persons with disabilities.¹ The shaded areas in both maps indicate the intersection of locations with high concentrations of:

- Persons with disabilities (compared with the regional average)
- Older adults (compared with the regional average)
- Limited vehicle availability (compared with the regional average)
- Middle- to low-income households (as identified by HUD income eligibility requirements for participation in the Neighborhood Stabilization Program, a component of the Community Development Block Grant.)²

¹ WMATA's Office of Access Services identified bus stops not functionally accessible in WMATA compact jurisdictions except Montgomery County, MD. The maps include all bus stops within Montgomery County, MD.

² The primary objective of the HUD Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program is the development of viable urban communities by providing decent housing, a suitable living environment, and economic opportunity, principally for persons of low- and moderate-income. Incorporating HUD data in the criteria for a Regional Bus Stop Improvement Plan is consistent with the Livability criteria outlined in the Livability Bus Program.

To best meet the Livability criteria outlined in the federal guidance, jurisdictions were encouraged to select projects that fall within the shaded areas identified in the maps in Attachment 1. Jurisdictions that do not have project locations within these corridors and would like to participate were provided with additional criteria for project selection (Attachment 3).

Regional Bus Stop Improvement Program

Table 1, on page 4, includes information on the projects identified, matching funds, and total project cost by jurisdiction. Revisions were submitted by Arlington County, the City of Greenbelt and Prince George's County and are shown in Table 1 with strike-out and bolded text.

As of January 29, the total project cost is **\$16,246,900** (an increase of \$760,000) and the Federal grant request is for **\$12,997,520** (an increase of \$608,000). **\$12,997,520** has been identified as a 20% local match by the six member jurisdictions participating in this regional grant application: Arlington County, Prince William County, Prince George's County, City of Greenbelt, Montgomery County, and the District of Columbia.

The Regional Bus Stop Improvement Program identifies approximately **2,777** (up from 2,630) sites for improvement. Specific improvements range, and include creating accessible pathways and sidewalks; installing bus shelters; improving lighting; providing signage, benches, and trash receptacles; and integrating automated transit information for riders.

TPB Action and Next Steps

The TPB approved Resolution R15-2010 endorsing the Regional Bus Stop Program on January 20 for submittal to the FTA by WMATA under the FTA Livability Bus program. The grant application is due on February 8, 2010. If awarded, WMATA would be responsible for administering the grant and the local jurisdictions will implement the improvements.

Attachments

Attachment 1: Maps of Focus Areas for Bus Stop Accessibility Improvements

Attachment 2: Summary of FTA Federal Register Notice on Livability Bus Grant Program

Attachment 3: Criteria for Jurisdictions to Consider in Selecting Projects

**Table 1: Summary of Improvements by Jurisdiction for the Application
January 29, 2010**

Jurisdiction	Funding		# of Stops	Project	
	Total	Match		Location	Description
Arlington County	\$250,000 \$275,000	\$50,000 \$55,000	15	TBD. Based on proximity to MetroAccess and STAR clients and other targeted criteria.	Provide accessible sidewalks, ramps, concrete pad, shelter, bench, trash receptacle, landscape improvements
D.C. - Bus Bay Improvement	\$750,000	\$150,000	3+	Anacostia (14 bus bays), Fort Totten (9), Brookland (9)	Rehabilitation of Bus Transfer Facilities at 3 Metrorail Stations
D.C. - NextBus	\$1,500,000	\$300,000	375	Citywide.	Installation of realtime bus arrival signs in District-owned bus shelters.
City of Greenbelt	\$96,400	\$19,280	28 25	Greenbelt West. City of Greenbelt, including Historic Greenbelt, Greenbelt East and Greenbelt West.	Installation of bus shelters, concrete pads, and ramps, improvements to existing shelters/pads to improve wheelchair accessibility.
Montgomery County - Automated Transit Information System (ATIS)	\$1,450,000	\$290,000	50	TBD. Priority areas that include transit-dependent and limited-English proficiency populations).	Real time bus arrival information will become available to the Ride-On passengers on signs, the web, and cell phones.
Montgomery County - Bus Stop Lighting	\$4,125,000	\$825,000	550	Areas with high concentration of low income, crime, and bus use.	Provide lighting to improve pedestrian safety.
Prince George's County	\$7,212,500 \$7,947,500	\$1,442,500 \$1,589,500	1600 1750	Urban higher density areas east of the District and Montgomery County border and west of the circumferential Beltway I-495.	Bus stop signage, shelters, trash can placement, benches, improved lighting and sidewalk and curb access improvements.
Prince William County (PRTC)	\$103,000	\$20,600	9	Woodbridge (Route 1 Corridor), Manassas, and Dale City.	Provide bus shelters to 7 stops; extend sidewalks to 2 stops.
Total	\$15,486,900 \$16,246,900	\$3,097,380 \$3,249,380	2,630 2,777		
Total Federal Request	\$12,389,520 \$12,997,520				

Attachment 1:

**Maps of Focus Areas for Bus Stop
Accessibility Improvements**

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ATTACHMENT 1

Map 1: Focus Areas for Bus Stop Accessibility Improvements to Enhance Livability (WMATA Compact Area)

Data was analyzed at the census tract level to identify areas of concentration of economically disadvantaged populations, non-drivers, older adults and persons with disabilities. Census tracts were determined to meet the criteria if they exceeded the regional average. HUD income eligibility requirements for the Neighborhood Stabilization Program were utilized to determine the middle- to low-income populations. More specifically, census tracts met the criteria under the following conditions:




- a. No Vehicle Availability (>12%)
- b. Older Adult Population (>9%)
- c. Persons with Disabilities (>15%)
- d. More than 50% Middle-Low Income Households (<120% area median income)

Census tracts that met either any three (3) or all four (4) of the above criteria are highlighted on the map to the left.

Census Tracts Meeting 3 or 4 of the Criteria

-  4
-  3

Bus Stops Falling within Census Tracts Meeting 3 or 4 of the Criteria

-  4
-  3
-  fewer than 3

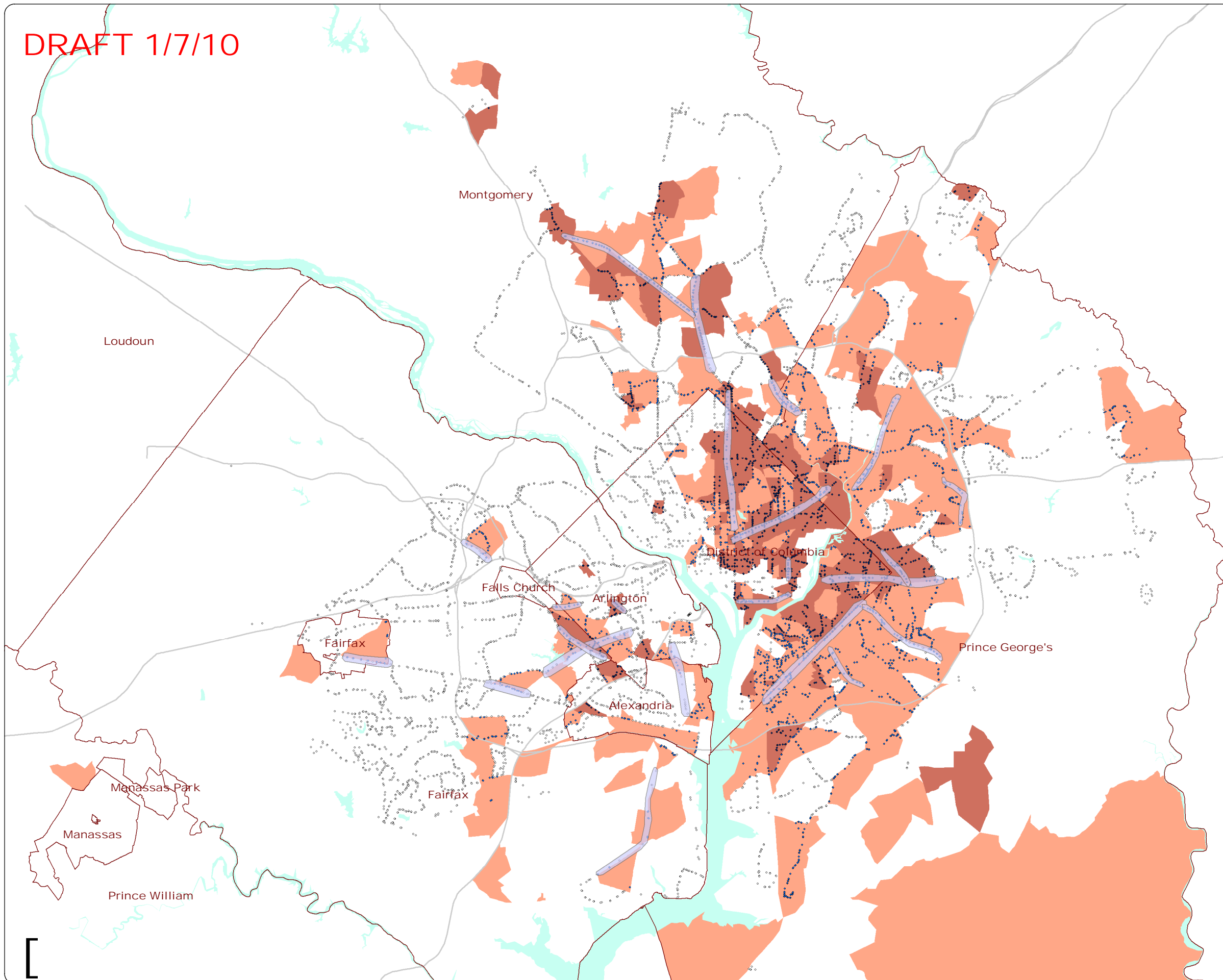
Clusters of Bus Stops Along Routes with More Frequent Service

-  Potential Focus Areas

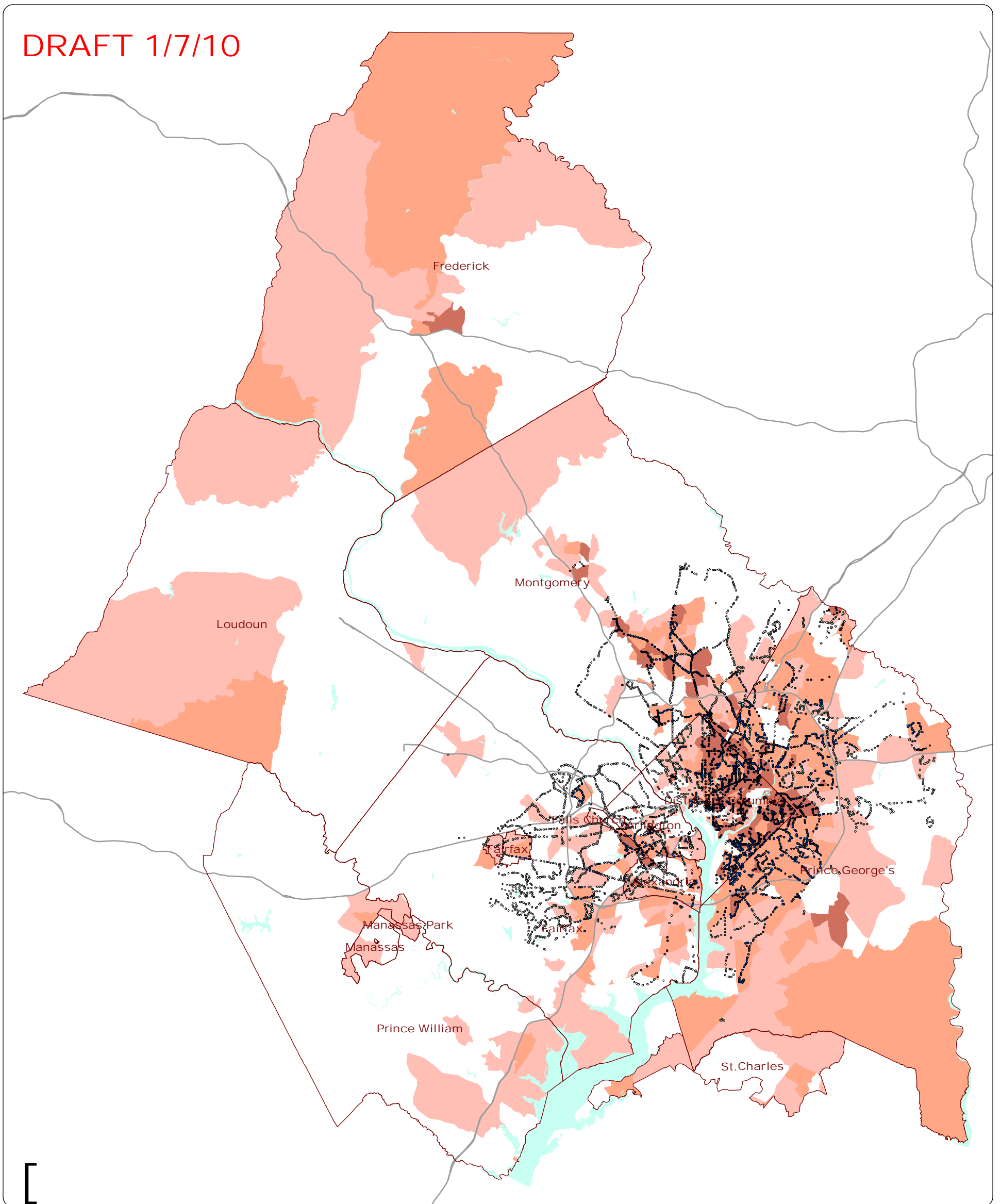
Not Functionally Accessible Bus Stops in the WMATA Compact Jurisdictions

# Criteria	Total	DC	MD	VA
2+	5,232	1,455	2,817	960
3+	3,677	1,262	2,018	397
4	1,366	772	501	93

Note: MD figures include all Montgomery County bus stops within census tracts meeting the specified criteria.



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ATTACHMENT 1

Map 2: Focus Areas for Bus Stop Accessibility Improvements to Enhance Livability (TPB Planning Area)

Data was analyzed at the census tract level to identify areas of concentration of economically disadvantaged populations, non-drivers, older adults and persons with disabilities. Census tracts were determined to meet the criteria if they exceeded the regional average. HUD income eligibility requirements for the Neighborhood Stabilization Program were utilized to determine the middle- to low-income populations. More specifically, census tracts met the criteria under the following conditions:

- a. No Vehicle Availability (>12%)
- b. Older Adult Population (>9%)
- c. Persons with Disabilities (>15%)
- d. More than 50% Middle-Low Income Households (<120% area median income)

Census tracts that met two or more of the specified criteria are highlighted on the map above.

Census Tracts Meeting 2 or more of the Criteria

- 4
- 3
- 2

Not Functionally Accessible Bus Stops Falling within Census Tracts Meeting 2 or more of the Criteria

- 4
- 3
- 2
- fewer than 2

Attachment 2: Summary of FTA Federal Register Notice on Livability Bus Grant Program

NEW FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION LIVABILITY PROGRAMS

In June 2009, the US Department of Transportation (DOT) joined with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and created an interagency partnership, known as “The Livability Initiative,” to coordinate federal transportation, housing, and environmental protection investments.

On December 8, 2009, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) announced a grant program under this Livability Initiative: The Livability Bus Program. Through this and other programs, FTA will invest in projects that fulfill 6 principles of The Livability Initiative: provide more transportation choices; promote equitable, affordable housing; enhance economic competitiveness; support existing communities; coordinate policies and leverage investment; value communities and neighborhoods. Applications submitted for each of these program funds will be evaluated by FTA in coordination with HUD and EPA. The deadline for applications under both programs is February 8, 2010, and awards will be announced in early 2010.

FTA LIVABILITY BUS PROGRAM

Highlights

- \$150 million in unallocated Discretionary Bus and Bus Facilities funds for capital projects.
- 20% local match is required. FTA will not approve deferred local share. No floor/upper limit constraint.
 - FTA intends to fund as many projects as possible – applicants selected for funding may receive less than the amount originally requested.
- Projects must be ready to begin upon receipt of award.
- Projects must have a demonstrated need for resources.

Key Requirements

- Eligible Expenses: Capital Projects to purchase and rehabilitate buses, vans, and bus-related equipment (including ITS, fare equipment, communication devices), or construct and rehabilitate bus-related facilities.
- Eligible Applicant: WMATA (Direct Recipient, Section 5307 Urbanized Area Formula Program)
 - Eligible subrecipients are public agencies, private non-profit organizations, and private providers engaged in public transportation.
- MPO Role:
 - TPB must endorse project, indicating project is a regional priority (part of FTA evaluation criteria)
 - If awarded, project must be incorporated into TIP and CLRP

Attachment 3: Criteria for Jurisdictions to Consider in Selecting Projects

- In order for selected projects to exhibit promoting independence for persons in low-income communities, persons with disabilities, and/or persons who are non-native speakers of English, bus stops should fall within the corridors identified in the maps in Attachment 1.

Jurisdictions that do not have bus stops in the identified corridors on maps in Attachment 1 and would like to participate should identify bus stops locations in areas that:

- ✓ Serve a high number of bus users (ridership thresholds to be determined) AND;
 - ✓ Have been identified as inaccessible, AND;
 - ✓ Have been identified as low income according AND/OR;
 - ✓ Have been identified as having a significant number of MetroAccess users AND/OR;
 - ✓ Have been identified as having transit dependent communities, AND/OR;
 - ✓ Have been identified as having persons with limited English proficiency
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- In order to demonstrate transportation and land use/housing coordination, bus stops should fall in areas that complement related economic development, housing, or environmental projects, including:
 - ✓ State/local economic development projects
 - ✓ HUD Empowerment Zones
 - ✓ CDBG project locations
 - ✓ Affordable/Public housing
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- In order to meet Federal Livability Criteria, bus stops improvements should provide permanent, placemaking benefits in accordance with local plans and objectives, including any or all of the following, as appropriate:
 - ✓ Improved convenience, comfort and safety:
 - Addition or provision of designated bus stop area, such as unobstructed landing pads, where necessary
 - Addition of or improvement of existing bus shelters
 - Improved lighting
 - Addition of bus-stop amenities, such as benches, vending machines, and trash receptacles
 - Addition or provision of slip-resistance finishes, good grip, and sure footing to surfaces to ensure safety
 - Addition or provision of other amenities, such as bicycle storage, shopping cart storage, or daily lockers
 - Addition or provision of safety features, such as a police call box
 - ✓ Improved access to bus stop via new sidewalks, curb cuts, bulb-outs, etc
 - ✓ Improved way-finding, clearly displayed signage and other bus service information in a variety of languages and formats and at the eye-level of a wheelchair user