

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 March 24, 2009

Noon – 2 PM

Meeting Attendees:

Carrie Anderson-Watters, Frederick County TransIT	Beverly Lemasters, Ride On Montgomery County Transit
David Awbrey, DRPT	Jim Maslanka, City of Alexandria
Howard Benn, Transit Services -- Ride On	Mark Moran, MWCOG
Michael Eichler, COG/TPB	Bill Orleans
Lynn Everett, Northern Virginia Transportation Commission	Valerie Pardo, VDOT
Scott Gross, Loudoun County	Wenjing Pu, TPB Staff
James Hamre, WMATA	Hans Semple, National Naval Medical Center
Al Himes, City of Alexandria DASH	Chuck Steigerwald, PRTC
Pierre Holloman, City of Alexandria	Circe Torruellas, DDOT
Ryaw Jones, PTRC	Alexis Verzosa, City of Fairfax
	Randall White, Fairfax County Dept. of Transportation

TPB Staff in Attendance:

Monica Bansal	Mark Moran
Joe Davis	Wenjing Pu
Michael Eichler	

Agenda Items:

Welcome and Introductions

Chair Howard Benn, Montgomery County

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

Update on the Scenario Study “CLRP Aspirations Scenario” Development

Monica Bansal, TPB Staff

Ms. Bansal provided a brief verbal update on the progress of the CLRP Aspirations Scenario development. TPB staff has met with groups of transportation and land use planners from the following jurisdictions: The City of Alexandria, Arlington County, the District of Columbia Office of Planning, the District Department of Transportation, Fairfax County, Frederic County, Montgomery County, Prince George's County, Prince William County, the Virginia Department of Transportation. Staff is currently working to arrange a meeting with the Maryland Department of Transportation's SHA and MTA staff.

TPB staff are current receiving feedback from the jurisdictions and incorporating it into the scenario.

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 slideshow to the subcommittee on the progress being made on developing a package of rapid transit routes to qualify for federal stimulus funding. The presentation explained the causes of delay to buses and explored a series of techniques to remedy such delay. They then illustrated a draft five-line network of rapid bus transit for the Washington region that could possibly qualify for stimulus funding.

Mr. Holloman inquired as to the definition of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) being used. Mr. Eichler explained that true BRT can not be accomplished in the short term, and that the techniques described in the presentation can be applied as needed to the selected routes in an effort to increase bus speeds.

Mr. Maslanka expressed concern with an example used, that showed increases in bus speeds from 10 to 15 MPH, stating that an average speed of 15 MPH was potentially unattainable for local buses. Mr. Eichler replied that an average speed of 10 MPH (the starting point for the example) was already exaggerated, and that a more likely example would be to increase speeds from 5 to 10 MPH. Such an increase (100%) would result in even greater decrease in operating costs or increase in service levels.

Mr. Benn suggested that staff approach this effort with caution, as the current bus services are being cut due to the economic crisis. He suggested, as these plans develop further, to base potential increases in levels of service on any newly decreased service levels instead of what is currently on the ground now.

Mr. Yaffe suggested a potential issue with one of the maps presented to the subcommittee that illustrates effective headways along corridors in the core. He stated that those corridors with frequent bus service might also have very slow speeds. The map was presented to show where in the region bus lanes could be rationalized on a basis of frequent bus service.

Mr. White stated that the map illustrating bus frequency would need to be updated to illustrate the change in buses to the West Falls Church Metrorail station once the Silver Line is in place. Mr. Eichler replied that the map was actually what is in the CLRP for 2030, including the Silver Line. He reminded the subcommittee that TPB Staff Jane Posey presented a request to the group in January that they review and update the transit assumptions used in the model. Any changes to future bus service should be provided to TPB staff so that the model's transit networks can be updated.

Ms. Everett suggested that skip-stop operations also be considered, citing the MetroRapid experiences in Los Angeles, where 10-15% increase in average running speeds were achieved by reducing the number of bus stops served by express routes.

Mr. Gross noted that with advancements in fare payment technology, ridership data is getting more accurate. Such advancements will provide better data for use in service planning.

Mr. Maslanka noted that the VA Rte. 7 line did not currently have high frequency bus service as illustrated by the bus headway map distributed to the group. He also noted that Christopher Zimmerman, Chairman of the Arlington County Board, proposed BRT corridors along the Shirley Highway (I-95/395) and I-66. Mr. Eichler replied that inquiries into potentially stimulus-funded improvements along these corridors with VDOT, and was told that there were no unfunded transit facilities that could qualify for funding. Mr. Yaffe replied that there is a persistent concern about the geometries of an on-ramp to the HOV/HOT lanes at the Pentagon at Eads Street that prevents buses from entering the lanes, and suggested that this problem could be fixed.

Mr. Hamre noted that he was puzzled by the selection of the corridors recommended for the Phase 1 rapid bus network, suggesting that several of the WMATA priority corridors have already had service improvements and are ready for running-way improvements, which have already been identified. He recommended that the following bus routes be considered for the proposal: 30s, 70s, NH1, J4. He also noted that the P12 route in Prince Georges is a prime candidate for running-way improvements though the service enhancements have not yet been completed. Mr. Eichler noted that the set of 5 routes was a draft that could be updated based on subcommittee feedback.

Mr. Verzosa inquired whether the selected corridors were part of a greater underlying network. Mr. Eichler replied that, yes, they were part of WMATA's priority corridor network.

Mr. Benn inquired as to the selection of the routes, in an effort to create a network of express bus versus using new express bus routes to extend the reach of the existing Metrorail system. He wondered whether the need for network

connectivity between bus routes was enough to drive the design of the network. He raised the concept of “clusters” suggesting that a different approach could look at the three primary clusters of bus transit in the region: the downtown core, Silver Spring and the Pentagon.

Mr. Hamre recommended that staff also evaluate transit centers as part of the package seeking funding, though he admitted that it is hard to move quickly on such projects. Mr. Gross noted that, in the current economic climate, there may be more land available for transit centers than in the recent past.

Discussion on Draft Results the TPB Regional Bus Survey

Bob Griffiths, TPB Staff

Due to circumstances beyond his control, Mr. Griffiths was unable to present the draft results from the Regional Bus Survey. His presentation was emailed to the subcommittee the day after the meeting.

New Business

There was no new business.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 1:30 PM.

The next meeting of the TPB’s Regional Bus Subcommittee will be held on April 28, 2009.

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