

MEMORANDUM

TO: JAY FISETTE, BOARDMEMBER
CHRIS ZIMMERMAN, BOARDMEMBER

THROUGH: RON CARLEE, COUNTY MANAGER
DENNIS LEACH, DIRECTOR OF TRANSPORTATION

FROM: CHRIS HAMILTON, COMMUTER SERVICES CHIEF
PAUL DEMAIO, BICYCLE PROMOTIONS MANAGER

DATE: FEBRUARY 7, 2008

SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO MEMO TO COG AND TPB ON BIKESHARING

Arlington County Commuter Services (ACCS) programs are designed to be regional when at all possible. Examples of this include CommuterPage.com and CommuterDirect.com which have a regional readership and customer base, respectively, in addition to our Commuter Stores which serve Arlingtonians and those who work here. The ACCS carsharing program is also an example as we allowed and encouraged other jurisdictions to use both our orange pole designs and marketing materials. From the beginning of our bikesharing program planning, we also attempted to make the program regional through conversations with local jurisdiction staff from DC, VA, and MD and the company which is providing the bikesharing service in DC - Clear Channel Adshel (CCA).

Unfortunately, for many reasons a regional bikesharing program is not possible at the present time. In summary, the District's vendor, CCA, has made it clear to us that they will not operate a bikesharing program for Arlington (or others) without having a contract for our jurisdiction's bus shelters which includes advertising. While Arlington staff continue to research the potential for a bus shelter contract for the purpose of upgrading bus stop amenities and potentially producing revenue for local bus service, we still have to complete legal review and undertake a community process and Board action before an RFP could be issued. At best, a potential RFP is more than a year away and there's no guarantee that the District's vendor would be selected. In addition, the District is too far along with CCA to change vendors at this point. While this is perhaps not ideal, it isn't necessarily a bad thing either, especially for Arlington. The region will get to test two different kinds of systems as pilot programs and Arlington will be able to provide more bikes in more locations at a lower cost than it would have with CCA.

Background and Discussion

The following provides the rationale for going with two different systems and explains Arlington's next steps:

A. CCA offers its bikesharing technology as a component of a bus shelter advertising contract. About five years ago DC DOT released a bus shelter RFP and included a bikesharing component in it. CCA won the contract. Arlington and CCA communicated last year regarding expanding DC's bikesharing program into the County, however, CCA stated this option was *only* available if Arlington uses CCA's bus shelters with advertising. They have no desire to operate a

bikesharing program independently of a shelter program. Arlington does not presently allow advertisements on public right-of-way, so this regulation would need to be revised. Arlington is in the beginning stages of considering hiring a vendor to manage its bus shelter program that may include advertising; however it would take a year or more to even get to this stage. If and when the Board changed the policy and an RFP was put out, there's no guarantee that CCA would be selected as the bus shelter vendor. There are many companies that do this work and two others, JCDecaux and Cemusa, which offer bikesharing programs. The City of Alexandria is in the same place as Arlington regarding shelters.

B. Arlington is a smaller advertising market than DC. The County would have fewer bus shelters, and accordingly, less earned revenue from a bus shelter contract. DC DOT is contracted to get 120 bikes with their current agreement which is for 20 years and 744 shelters. Given a similar contract, the County would get even fewer bikesharing bikes and stations.

C. ACCS has received grant funding from the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation for \$209,000 to set-up a bikesharing pilot program. Even with an extension, this grant will expire this year, so the monies must be spent soon.

D. For the County to change direction at this point and wait upon getting a bus shelter contract in place with CCA, it would delay the launch of Arlington's bikesharing program, which we're targeting for Summer/Fall 2008, and risk losing the grant funds.

E. It is too late for the District to change direction and go with another system. Their contract is in place and bike stations at 10 locations are already under construction.

Why not using CCA and going with a different system is good for Arlington:

The technology we have determined to have the greatest potential is called Nextbike (nextbike.net). While the cost per bike of CCA's bikesharing technology is about \$4,500, the cost per bike for Nextbike is \$750. The reasons for the difference in cost are:

- The CCA system uses stations to park the bikes. Each station must have automated hardware and an electric connection. Nextbike's system doesn't have stations. Bikes may be locked anywhere as cable locks are attached to the bikes.
- Each CCA bike requires a smartcard reader and wireless device for communication with a central server at each station. Nextbikes use a lower-tech locking system.

ACCS plans to use existing orange carshare poles (there are currently more than 75) and additional orange bike racks placed at Metro stations and other high traffic locations as our stations. Customers may check-out and return a Nextbike with their mobile phone which customers would dial a local phone number to receive random lock access and return codes. ACCS will be receiving a demo Nextbike shortly and invites you to a demonstration of the technology.

Due to the lesser expense of a Nextbike bikesharing technology, Arlington will be able to provide a greater number of bikes at launch and expand more quickly than would otherwise be possible with a program provided by CCA. In fact, with the user fees and advertising revenues from on-bike ads, it is hoped the program would become self-sustaining after a few years of operating. This would potentially make it the first self-sustaining transit service in North America in decades.

Regional transportation networks are key for long distances, such as for trips on Metrorail and Metrobus, however, aren't necessary for short trips, like those in which bikesharing is ideal. Paris's Velib' program reports the average trip duration being only 20 minutes. In an urban environment, 20 minutes equates to about 3 miles when factoring in stop lights and stop signs. While some of these trips could be made across jurisdictional borders, a majority of them would likely be from urban village to urban village.

We have many examples of jurisdictional transit systems which do not cross borders and work just fine. Just like jurisdictional bus systems like ART, RideOn, and The Bus, these trips are designed for short- and medium-distances. These buses generally remain within the home jurisdiction. The same would be true for bikesharing programs for the most common short-distance trips. Cyclists riding for medium and long-distance trips which cross jurisdictional boundaries, especially on commutes, would likely prefer their private bicycle as it would be more comfortable, have more gears, and be lighter than a bikesharing bicycle.

In conclusion, we believe a regional bikesharing network is not necessary to the success of Arlington's, or DC's, bikesharing programs or to getting more people on bicycles. Two different systems would allow for greater experimentation on which model is more successful.