

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

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MEMORANDUM

April 18, 2007

TO: Transportation Planning Board

FROM: Wendy Klancher
Senior Transportation Planner
Department of Transportation Planning

SUBJECT: Comments Received and Recommended Responses on the Draft Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan

On March 15, 2007 the draft Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan for the National Capital Region was released for a 30-day public comment period at the Citizens Advisory Committee meeting. The public comment period closed on April 14, 2007. Comments from the public were encouraged and could have been submitted on-line, by e-mail, phone or mail.

This memorandum reviews the comments received during the public comment period from WMATA and Community Support Services, Inc., and provides recommended responses. The comments received are attached and are posted on the TPB website at www.mwcog.org/transportation/public. The comments were also distributed and discussed at the April 12, 2007 TPB Human Services Transportation Coordination Task Force meeting.

1. Comment: Community Support Services, Inc. proposed two additional ideas to fill transportation gaps for persons with disabilities. The first suggestion is that agencies sponsoring day programs for persons with developmental disabilities in Montgomery County could coordinate transportation to these sites, and the second is to develop a system for MetroAccess customers to use taxis to go to and from Metrorail stations.

Response: These are helpful suggestions that could promote more coordination and improve service delivery. In response to this comment, language has been added to the Draft Coordinated Plan that states that in Phase II of the Coordinated Plan specific ideas such as these will be examined by the TPB Human Service Transportation Coordination Task Force.

2. Comment: Community Support Services, Inc. supports the initiatives for same day service and door through door service and states that these services are necessary to maximize safety of individuals with disabilities using the system.

Response: The comment is in support of two priority projects in the Draft Coordinated Plan: Door-through-Door Service (page 32) and a Same-Day Service Pilot (page 34). These two

projects were recommended because the services address unmet transportation needs and respond to one or more of the strategies in the Coordinated Plan.

3. Comment: Community Support Services, Inc. made two comments on improving MetroAccess service, one regarding guaranteed pick-up or drop off times and the other a recommendation for MetroAccess to set policies on routing, trip times and the number of passengers.

Response: The Draft Coordinated Plan does not include specific recommendations about improving MetroAccess service. These comments were forwarded to WMATA's Office of MetroAccess.

4. Comment: WMATA fully supports the intent of the Coordinated Plan to efficiently use increasingly scarce funds and stressed the importance of regional partners in creating efficient and reliable transportation.

Response: The Task Force benefited from the participation of WMATA's former Chief Operating Officer for Community Transportation Services and welcomes continued participation and input from the Acting Chief Operating Officer. The Task Force also benefited from the participation of state, local and regional transportation and human service partners.

5. Comment: WMATA is pleased that travel training and sensitivity training are recommended priority actions in the Coordinated Plan. WMATA has developed programs in these areas which could be used as templates for other projects.

Response: The comment is in support of two recommended priority actions in the Coordinated Plan: "Provide a range of travel training to older adults and persons with disabilities" (page 36) and "Sensitivity and Customer Service Training". Coordinating training programs with local and regional partners could expand WMATA's current efforts.

6. Comment: WMATA is sponsoring an "Accessible Pathways" study with TPB's technical assistance to identify accessible pathway concerns around transit stations for popular MetroAccess customer origins and destinations. Any 'accessible infrastructure' projects submitted to the TPB could use the methodologies identified in this study to assess other areas of the Region.

Response: The comment refers to the recommended priority action "accessible infrastructure support for transit stations" (page 34). The findings and methodologies of the accessible pathways study will be shared with the Task Force so that local governments and other partners can learn from the study.

7. Comment: WMATA suggested that the accessible taxi pilot program should be in place before a same-day taxi service pilot is considered.

Response: In response to WMATA's concern that a same-day service pilot should be available to all paratransit customers, including those that require a wheelchair-accessible cab, language will be added to Section 6 "Recommended Priority Actions" that addresses this issue.

8. Comment: WMATA states that transportation providers should be well represented on the Selection Committee.

Response: The proposed selection committee includes three transportation providers: one representing public transit, one representing private providers and one representing non-profit providers. To ensure an open and transparent selection process, selection committee members cannot be from an agency or organization that submitted a proposal.

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Submitted By: An Organization
Name: Susan Ingram
Agency / Organization: Community Support Services, Inc.
Location: Gaithersburg, MD
Subject: Comments on CHSTP Draft

Position: Comment on the Draft Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan

Comments:

CSS would like to propose additional ideas to fill gaps in services: 1. Identify human service agencies in Montgomery County which provide day programs to individuals with developmental disabilities at specific sites. Coordinate transportation to these sites with transportation providers so that the human service agency can work directly with the transportation provider to arrange routes and set times for arrival and departure. These individuals could then be taken off the typical Metro Access routes freeing up routes for other customers. 2. Develop a system for Metro Access customers to use taxis to go to and from train stations so that they can use Metro for a portion of the trip. If a customer could call a taxi at any time, use their metro access card as identification for reduced payment to access a train station only, same day trip demand would be reduced and possibly some subscription trips reduced in length by using the train for a portion of the trip. The train stations are more accessible and user friendly in all weather than are the buses and bus stops. The need to use a bus to get to a train station is an obstacle to use of the train. 3. Reliable service could be improved by dividing reservations of trips into guaranteed drop off times or guaranteed pick up times. An individual reserving a trip could decide whether the drop off time was the critical piece or whether the pick up time was more important for the trip to be workable. Those using Metro access for a doctor appointment or work would choose a guaranteed, within a window, drop off time to reserve. Those needed to be picked up at the close of a program or at the end of the work day may choose a guaranteed pick up time as the priority. 4. Metro Access needs to decide on policies about routes, how many passengers, how long someone can be held on a ride and communicate these policies to everyone and enforce them. CSS supports the initiatives for same day service and door through door service. These services are necessary to maximize safety of individuals with disabilities using the system.



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April 11, 2007



Via fax: 202-962-3202

Mr. Ron Kirby, Director
MWCOC Transportation Planning Department
777 North Capitol Street, NE
Suite 300
Washington, DC 20002

Re: WMATA Comments on Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan for the National Capital Region

Dear Mr. Kirby:

WMATA is pleased to submit the following comments for consideration.

General

1. WMATA fully supports the intent of the Coordinated Plan (Plan) to coordinate increasingly scarce funds to serve the transportation needs of persons with disabilities, and older and low-income citizens of our Region. WMATA views this Plan as an opportunity to leverage our regional resources to better serve the transportation needs of the Region and these constituencies, in particular.
2. WMATA also fully supports a regionally coordinated effort to *meet* the transportation needs of these constituencies and recognizes the criticality of our regional partners' participation in meeting these needs. While WMATA may be the largest service provider, it cannot serve the Region's transportation needs alone. As with our Bus and Rail services, we rely on our partners to help create an efficient and reliable transportation service network.

Specific

1. WMATA is pleased to see that a number of the suggested projects in the recommended priority actions could support, complement and expand current and on-going WMATA activities in the areas of travel training and sensitivity training. It may be worth mentioning that WMATA has developed programs in this area that could be used as templates for other organizations wishing to pursue such projects. In addition, WMATA will begin door-to-door paratransit service this summer, as per TPB's *Improving Demand Services for People with Disabilities in the Washington Region* report recommendations. The Door-Through-Door project would be a supplemental service that could be offered by a more specialized provider.

Further, as part of its Technical Assistance program with COG, WMATA is sponsoring an "Accessible Pathways" study to identify accessibility concerns on pathways to nearest fixed route services from popular MetroAccess customer origin and destination zones. Any 'accessible infrastructure' projects submitted could use the methodologies identified in this study to assess other areas of the Region.

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2. With respect to the list of recommended priority actions, some actions may need to be in place before others (e.g., an Accessible Taxi program should be in place before considering a same-day taxi service program). TPB staff should consider either a 'priority timeline' within this section, to suggest that some projects should precede others, or perhaps consider this as a project selection criterion.
3. Regarding the Selection Committee, TPB should ensure that transportation providers be well represented on the Committee. This may present a challenge, as many providers will likely submit proposals for consideration.

WMATA appreciates the opportunity to comment on this important document.

Very truly,

Nat Bottigheimer, (Acting) Assistant General Manager
Dept. of Planning & Joint Development