

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

777 North Capitol Street, N.E., Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20002-4290 (202) 962-3310 Fax: (202) 962-3202 TDD: (202) 962-3213

Item #5

MEMORANDUM

April 15, 2010

TO: Transportation Planning Board

FROM: Ronald F. Kirby
Director, Department of
Transportation Planning

RE: Letters Sent/Received Since the March 17th TPB Meeting

The attached letters were sent/received since the March 17th TPB meeting. The letters will be reviewed under Agenda Item #5 of the April 21st TPB agenda.

Attachments

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

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Item #5

MEMORANDUM

April 13, 2010

TO: Transportation Planning Board

FROM: Ron Kirby,
Director, Department of Transportation Planning

RE: Update on Planning for the "Conversation on Setting Regional Transportation Priorities," May 26, 2010

At its meeting on November 18, 2009, the TPB voted to host an event on regional transportation challenges and opportunities, with a focus on the region's process for setting priorities. On April 12, 2010, a Planning Team was convened to discuss this program and solidify the agenda. This memo provides an update on the planning for this event, offers a draft agenda, and provides planning logistics.

What is the Conversation on Setting Regional Transportation Priorities?

The Conversation on Setting Regional Transportation Priorities will be an invitation-based event involving approximately 100 participants that will include TPB members, TPB Technical Committee members, members of the CAC, and representatives of other committees and subcommittees in the TPB committee structure. Press will be invited. The Conversation will feature presentations and interactive discussion of regional transportation challenges and opportunities, and possibilities for enhancing the process of setting and implementing regional priorities. The Conversation will also provide an opportunity to address the Citizens Advisory Committee's recommendation that the TPB should develop a long-range regional transportation priorities plan. The Conversation will be invitation-based. Registration will be required, but there will be no registration fee. Peter Shapiro will provide formal facilitation services for a portion of the Conversation.

When and where will it be held?

The Conversation will be held Wednesday, May 26 from noon to 3:30 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency (400 New Jersey Avenue, NW, about four blocks from COG's office).

DRAFT AGENDA

Conversation on Setting Regional Transportation Priorities

Hyatt Regency Capitol Hill

May 26, 2010

- Noon – 12:15** **Registration**
- 12:15 – 12:45** **Working Lunch and Opening Remarks**
The Honorable David Snyder, Chairman, TPB
- Buffet lunch to be provided
- 12:45 – 1:15** **Overview of Regional Transportation Challenges & New Opportunities**
This presentation will be shared by the three TPB officers: David Snyder, Todd Turner and Muriel Bowser.
- **Where We've Been, Where We Are Today**
David Snyder
Some background on regional goals, accomplishments and realities.
 - **What We Are Currently Doing in Pursuit of Our Regional Goals**
Todd Turner
Brief overview of what the TPB is doing to pursue regional goals, along with an assessment of future trends.
 - **The Emerging Policy Context and Opportunities**
Muriel Bowser
The TPB is being called upon to conduct more expanded long-range planning activities in a changing policy context. But given severe funding constraints and other pressures, how do we provide a planning framework that both fulfills our regional goals and is realistic?
- 1:15 – 1:25** **Recommendation to Develop a Regional Transportation Priorities Plan**
Presentation by CAC Chair Maureen Budetti
The TPB's Citizens Advisory Committee has recommended that the TPB develop a regional transportation priorities plan that would identify unfunded priority projects and provide a big-picture context for understanding the TPB's Constrained Long-Range Plan.
- 1:25 – 1:30** **Setting the Stage for a Conversation**
Peter Shapiro

1:30 – 2:45

How Do We Move Forward?

Interactive Round Table Discussions

- Each of ten tables will engage in a focused conversation based off of one guiding question, and 5-7 accompanying questions and statements that will be provided in a hand-out to each participant. By reframing the guiding question, the accompanying questions and statements serve as a springboard to enhance conversation, spark new ideas, and provide additional means to engage participants.
- Each table-top conversation will be facilitated by an elected official (to be selected), who will ensure that the group stays on task. TPB staff, in conjunction with Peter Shapiro, will prepare facilitation guidelines to be shared with each facilitator prior to the program.
- Each table will have a designated scribe (TPB staff member). The scribe is charged with recording salient points of the conversation, and will not participate in the conversation. All scribes will collaborate to synthesize the information after the Conversation is over.

2:45 – 3:00

Break

- Participants break and have refreshments
- Scribes synthesize salient points and deliver to Chairman Snyder.

3:00 – 3:30

What Have We Heard and Where are we going?

Concluding comments by David Snyder

- Chairman Snyder reports back salient points in plenary session, invites comments and discussion from the participants, and offers concluding remarks and next steps.

Event Logistics

1. Invitation-based event with RSVPs required by May 7, 2010.
 - Board members/alternates (40)
 - Technical Committee (25)
 - Citizens Advisory Committee (15)
 - Other TPB Committees/Subcommittees (10)
 - Staff (DTP, OPA, EO, Facilitator) (12)
 - Press (4)

2. Registration/set-up
 - Badge
 - Name plates
 - Assign attendance at tables to ensure “mixing” of jurisdictional representation as well as TPB members, Tech Committee members, CAC, and other TPB Committees/Subcommittees
 - Separate table for press
3. Copies of all PowerPoints, latest Region magazine to be provided
4. Buffet lunch provided before the session begins. Attendees encouraged to introduce themselves at their assigned tables. During the session coffee, tea, soft drinks, snacks will be provided at a table in an outside room.

Planning Schedule

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|---------------|--|
| March 10 – 11 | Review by TPB chair Inform, seek comments from TPB officers |
| March 11 | Review outline at CAC meeting Seek discussion on CAC presentation |
| March 17 | Announce date, time, invitations at TPB |
| April 12 | Planning Team convenes |
| April 14 | Invitations sent out via email |
| April 15 | Discuss CAC presentation at CAC meeting |
| May 7 | Participant RSVPs due |
| May 7 | Review PowerPoint presentations of TPB Officers at Tech Committee |
| May 13 | Final review of CAC presentation at CAC meeting, briefing provided of PowerPoint presentations of TPB Officers |
| May 19 | Update to TPB on agenda & RSVPs received |
| May 26 | Event |
| June 16 | Report results of Conversation at TPB Meeting |

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

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April 7, 2010

Mr. Peter Benjamin, Chairman
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
Board of Directors
600 5th Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20001

Subject: National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) Access for All
Advisory Committee Concerns and Recommendations for the FY2011
MetroAccess Budget

Dear Chairman Benjamin:

In December of 2009, I wrote to the WMATA Board as Chair of the TPB's Access for All (AFA) Advisory Committee regarding concerns committee members had about the FY2011 WMATA budget discussions on MetroAccess. Since that time, the AFA has held two special meetings on proposed policy options for MetroAccess and have the following concerns and recommendations to share with the Board. An attachment provides further details on the concerns that led to the recommendations.

The AFA understands that the MetroAccess budget needs to be reduced by \$10 million because of the \$189 million shortfall in the FY2011 budget. The AFA does not take issue with the fact that WMATA is dealing with a serious financial shortfall, but does believe that the MetroAccess and the Metrobus proposals are not the most efficient way to reduce costs with the least impact to the rider.

To reduce the FY2011 MetroAccess budget by \$10 million, the **AFA recommends** the following:

1. Increase taxi usage for MetroAccess trips by 10 to 20 percent (savings could range from \$3.8 to \$7.7 million annually);
2. Self-insure the MetroAccess fleet (WMATA staff estimated a savings of approximately \$2 million annually);
3. Improve the capacity of MetroAccess's eligibility certification process to reduce the number of people being given presumptive eligibility; then after public vetting has

occurred, introduce conditional eligibility (WMATA staff has estimated changing to conditional eligibility could save between \$3 to \$5 million annually); and

4. Increase the MetroAccess flat fare and the premium fare for service outside $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile (but not by 300 or 400 percent as proposed; a more reasonable fare increase would be the same as Metrorail and Metrobus, 15 or 20 percent).

Other Recommendations

5. WMATA should immediately begin to develop a plan to restructure the MetroAccess contract structure to lessen the concentration of responsibilities and operating functions in one company.
6. WMATA should carefully review the proposed Metrobus changes to ensure that low-income bus riders are the least affected by the service reductions and fare increases.

The AFA also stresses that MetroAccess costs should be put in context with other growing costs in the WMATA budget such as health care, pension and liability insurance costs. In addition, MetroAccess costs should be put in context of the **benefits** of helping the region's most vulnerable populations. Growth in the number of MetroAccess trips means more people with disabilities are working, getting medical care, and experiencing freedom and mobility they would otherwise not have.

Thank you for your consideration of these concerns and recommendations. The AFA looks forward to continued discussions about the challenges of providing accessible transportation to traditionally-disadvantaged population groups.

Sincerely,



Supervisor Catherine Hudgins
Chair, TPB Access for All Advisory Committee

Attachment

cc: Christian Kent, Assistant General Manager, Department of Access Services

ATTACHMENT: TPB Access for All (AFA) Advisory Committee Concerns and Recommendations on Proposed MetroAccess Policy Changes for the FY2011 Budget

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| <p>A. Align MetroAccess service area with the ADA definition and/or charge a premium</p> | <p>Option 1. Align MetroAccess service area to the ADA definition of $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile around existing fixed-route services and service by day and time. This means that no paratransit service would be offered for trips that either start or end beyond $\frac{3}{4}$ mile of existing fixed-route services nor during days and times where fixed route is not operating. <i>Estimated cost savings: \$2.4 million annually.</i></p> <p>Option 2. Align MetroAccess service area with ADA definition as in Option 1, but charge for the service provided beyond the ADA corridor with a premium fare added to the base fare depending on the existing zone structure (400% increase from existing zone fare charges). <i>Estimated cost savings: \$330,000 annually.</i></p> |
| <p>AFA Concerns</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing the MetroAccess service area to the strict $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile around fixed-route services, or increasing the premium zone fare by 400% does not save enough to make it worth burdening riders getting this service, most of whom live in economically- disadvantaged areas in Prince George’s County. • The savings of Option 1 (\$2.4 million) represents only 2.3% of the MetroAccess proposed FY2011 budget (\$103 million). The benefits that MetroAccess customers receive by being able to travel outside the $\frac{3}{4}$ of mile area and travel during longer time periods are greater than the small amount of savings. • Customers have chosen places to live based on the availability of MetroAccess service, and the availability of affordable housing which tends not to be located near fixed-route services. • Metro could eliminate MetroAccess service to Zone 4 (9 miles beyond the corridor) now so that people making residential location decisions don’t have an expectation that MetroAccess will be available. • The AFA supports raising the premium zone for service outside the $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile area, but believes a 400% increase is too much. Most MetroAccess customers live below the poverty line and people with disabilities have two times the unemployment rate as able-bodied individuals. |
| <p>AFA Recommendation</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The WMATA Board should not implement Option 1 nor Option 2. The AFA supports raising the premium zone fare but not by 400%. • WMATA should look at other ways to reduce costs, such as using more taxis which can save <i>more</i> than these options combined without burdening the rider. For example, if 20% of MetroAccess trips were provided by taxis¹, WMATA could save approximately \$7.7 million annually (assumes a \$20.00 average taxi trip cost)¹. • The AFA supports the increase in local jurisdictions subsidies to help defray some of the MetroAccess costs. |

¹ Six to seven percent of MetroAccess trips were provided by taxis as found in the TPB *Independent Review of WMATA’s MetroAccess Service*. Final Report. Prepared by TranSystems, Inc. and KFH Group. November 25, 2008. Page 1-13.

ATTACHMENT: TPB Access for All (AFA) Advisory Committee Concerns and Recommendations on Proposed MetroAccess Policy Changes for the FY2011 Budget

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| <p>B. Align the MetroAccess Fare Structure to the Maximum Allowed Under the ADA</p> | <p>The travel path between origin and destination for each paratransit trip will be measured against Metro’s Trip Planner to identify what fixed-route services would be available and required to provide a comparable trip. Comparable trip shall be defined as any combination of available bus and/or rail services that would facilitate travel between the requested origin and destination for the shortest possible duration. The fare for the paratransit trip will then be calculated as twice the fare of the comparable trip. <i>Estimated cost savings: \$2.4 to \$4.6 million annually</i></p> |
| <p>AFA Concerns</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking MetroAccess riders to pay double the fare of the shortest possible trip, could result in them having to pay double the fare of the most expensive possible trip (since Metrorail will likely be the shortest). • The AFA has previously stated that the cost of riding Metrorail is too high for many transit-dependent individuals in the region, therefore many individuals rely solely on bus service for their transportation needs. • Asking MetroAccess riders, many of whom have fixed, limited incomes to pay substantially more for their trips could be an overwhelming burden. • The increase in MetroAccess fares for some trips could be 300% which is much greater than the 15% or 20% increase proposed for Metrorail and Metrobus, respectivelyⁱⁱ. • The proposed fare structure could be very confusing to MetroAccess customers, particularly those with cognitive disabilities. • In addition, the administrative burden to WMATA in implementing this change outweighs the potential cost savings. Since each fare would have to be calculated based on the comparable fixed-route shortest trip, reservationists may have to spend more time with each call and drivers would have a more complicated fare collection. |
| <p>AFA Recommendation</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The WMATA Board should not adopt this change and keep the flat fare structure in place. However, the AFA recognizes the serious financial situation that WMATA is in and does support a reasonable MetroAccess fare increase in the flat fare. • WMATA should carefully review the proposed Metrobus changes to ensure that low-income bus riders are the least affected by the service reductions and fare increases. |

ATTACHMENT: TPB Access for All (AFA) Advisory Committee Concerns and Recommendations on Proposed MetroAccess Policy Changes for the FY2011 Budget

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| <p>C. Limit the Free Ride Program to Only Conditionally-Eligible MetroAccess Customers</p> | <p>Currently, all registered MetroAccess customers are permitted to ride free without limitation on Metrobus and Metrorail. The proposed change would limit this privilege to those customers who are found to be conditionally eligible for MetroAccess paratransit service. Conditional eligibility shall be defined as eligibility for paratransit service for certain trips in which prevailing conditions would make use of fixed-route service impossible for the customer in question. <i>Estimated Cost Savings (largely from allowing Conditional Eligibility): \$3 to \$5 million annually</i></p> |
| <p>AFA Concerns</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This proposal is contradictory to the goals of WMATA in reducing MetroAccess demand and costs. Assuming that the Free Ride Program shifted 10% of MetroAccess trips to fixed route, the annual savings of this program is approximately \$1.5 million making the program a win-win for both WMATA and customersⁱⁱⁱ. • Enabling MetroAccess customers to ride Metrobus or Metrorail, where possible for the customer, is a cheaper and a more convenient alternative. • To take this option away from the MetroAccess riders appears to be counterproductive, in that it would force MetroAccess riders to always use MetroAccess, where the per-trip costs of the service are higher than on the fixed-route. <p>Conditional Eligibility The committee has the following concerns about the eligibility certification process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The TPB Independent review found that WMATA does not have the capacity to process all of the MetroAccess applications received within the ADA required 21-day timeframe under the current eligibly process. • WMATA needs to ensure that it has the capability to determine conditional eligibility on a trip-by- trip basis. • WMATA must implement and apply conditional eligibility carefully and ensure that the process accounts for people with conditions that can fluctuate anytime, such as Multiple Sclerosis. |
| <p>AFA Recommendation</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Free Ride Program should remain available for all MetroAccess customers. • WMATA needs to increase the capacity of the current eligibility certification process before they have the institutional and technical ability to implement conditional eligibility. • To save limited resources, WMATA should immediately simplify the certification process for individuals with permanent disabilities. |

ATTACHMENT: TPB Access for All (AFA) Advisory Committee Concerns and Recommendations on Proposed MetroAccess Policy Changes for the FY2011 Budget

Endnote i.

Estimated Cost Saving If 20% of MetroAccess trips are Provided by Taxis

20% of Monthly MetroAccess trips (180,000)=
36,000

| | | |
|--|---|------------------------|
| Per trip cost for Taxi 36,000 X \$20 = | Per Trip Cost for MetroAccess 36,000 X \$38 = | Cost Savings (monthly) |
| \$720,000.00 | \$1,368,000.00 | \$648,000.00 |

Annual Savings (\$648k X 12)

\$7,776,000.00

If 10% of trips are Provided by Taxis the Annual Cost Savings would be **\$3.8 million**

Assumptions

Average Per trip MetroAccess Taxi cost is \$20.

This assumption is based on:

“A Survey on the use of Taxis in Paratransit Programs” found that taxi-provided ADA paratransit trips cost less than \$20. Dec 2008. Easter Seals Project ACTION.

TCRP Report 121 “Toolkit for Integrating Non-Dedicated Vehicles in Paratransit Service” found ADA paratransit taxi costs to be approximately \$14.00 to \$16.00 per trip.

Endnote ii.

If the comparable fixed route fare is \$5.45, the MetroAccess fare would be \$10.90. This is a 318% increase over the current \$2.50 MetroAccess fare.

Endnote iii.

Estimated Cost Savings Resulting From the Free Ride Program

In FY2009 402,345 MetroAccess Customer Trips were Taken on Metrorail and Metrobus

If 5% of Trips Are Diverted From MetroAccess to Fixed-Route

| | | |
|-------------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| Per trip cost for MetroAccess | Number of Trips Diverted From MetroAccess to Fixed Route 402, 345 X .05 = | Cost Savings (Annually) |
| \$38 | 20,117 | \$764,455.50 |

If 10% of Trips are Diverted From MetroAccess to Fixed-Route

| | | |
|-------------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| Per trip cost for MetroAccess | Number of Trips Diverted From MetroAccess to Fixed Route 402, 345 X .10 = | Cost Savings (Annually) |
| \$38 | 40,235 | \$1,528,911.00 |



Maryland Department of Transportation
The Secretary's Office

Martin O'Malley
Governor

Anthony G. Brown
Lt. Governor

Beverley K. Swaim-Staley
Secretary

Harold M. Bartlett
Deputy Secretary

April 6, 2010

Mr. Nicholas Ramfos
Director, Alternative Commute Programs
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
777 N. Capitol Street
Washington DC 20004-4239

Dear Mr. Ramfos:

Thank you for your January 15th proposal to Ms. Debra Adams, State Rideshare Manager at our Maryland Transit Administration (MTA), to expand the Commuter Connections Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) Program operated by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) to the Baltimore metropolitan region and St. Mary's County. This proposal was supplemented by a March 22nd email to Ms. Adams, in which you provided additional information regarding an evaluation component for the Baltimore region GRH Program.

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) accepts your proposal at a cost of \$150,000 per year beginning in fiscal year 2011. MDOT will fund this program for a minimum of three fiscal years, beginning in FY 2011. In fiscal year 2013, an additional \$20,000 will be provided to fund an evaluation component as outlined in your March 22nd email.

MWCOG is to expand the existing Washington area GRH Program to the Baltimore metropolitan region and St. Mary's County under the authority of the October 30, 2003 "Funding Agreement", as amended in August 2008, among MWCOG and the member Transportation Agencies, of which MDOT is one. We will work with you to ensure that the 2010-2015 Transportation Improvement Program and the 2011 Commuter Connections Work Program are amended accordingly. We will also specify these details again in MDOT's annual Commuter Connections Program funding letter.

There is widespread support in the Baltimore region for a GRH program, just as there currently is in the metropolitan Washington region. For that reason it is MDOT's intention that this GRH program will commence as early as possible after July 1, 2010. A Notice to Proceed will be issued to COG at the appropriate time. Ms. Adams of MTA will serve as Project Manager, and in conjunction with the counties' TDM/Rideshare Coordinators will market the program.

Thank you again for your offer to promote this program in the Baltimore metropolitan region and St. Mary's County. We will be back in touch with you in the near future to finalize other details concerning this program.

Sincerely,

Donald A. Halligan, Director
Office of Planning and Capital Programming

My telephone number is _____
Toll Free Number 1-888-713-1414, TTY Users Call Via MD Relay
7201 Corporate Center Drive, Hanover, Maryland 21076

Mr. Nicholas Ramfos

Page Two

cc: Ms. Debra Adams, Program Coordinator, Office of Local Transit Support, Maryland Transit Administration
Mr. Keith Bounds, Regional Planner, Office of Planning and Capital Programming, Maryland Department of Transportation
Ms. Stephanie Brodie, Office of Capital Programming, Maryland Transit Administration
Ms. Tawanda Carter, Manager, Office of Capital Programming, Maryland Transit Administration
Ms. Beth Counterman, Grants Manager, Office of Planning and Capital Programming, Maryland Department of Transportation
Ms. Lyn Erickson, Regional Planner, Office of Planning and Capital Programming, Maryland Department of Transportation
Ms. Beth Krieder, Director, Office of Local Transit Support, Maryland Transit Administration
Mr. Brian Martin, Assistant Director, Office of Planning and Capital Programming, Maryland Department of Transportation
Ms. Heather Murphy, Deputy Director, Office of Planning and Capital Programming, Maryland Department of Transportation
Mr. Mike Nixon, MPO Manager, Office of Planning and Capital Programming, Maryland Department of Transportation
Ms. Diane Ratcliff, Director, Office of Planning, Maryland Transit Administration
Ms. Beverley K. Swaim-Staley, Secretary, Maryland Department of Transportation



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
1401 EAST BROAD STREET
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA 23219-2000

GREGORY A. WHIRLEY
ACTING COMMISSIONER

March 17, 2010

The Honorable David Snyder, First Vice Chairman
National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board
777 North Capitol Street, N.E., Suite 300
Washington, D.C. 20002-4290

Dear Councilman Snyder:

Thank you for your letter regarding funding for the Metropolitan Area Transportation Operation Coordination (MATOC) Program and for the fact sheet regarding the program.

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) supports the efforts and goals of MATOC to communicate consistent and reliable information to various agencies in response to emergencies or incidents. As you know, Mr. Richard W. Steeg (VDOT's Northern Regional Operations Director) served as the previous Chairman of the MATOC Steering Committee and has remained involved in the support of this program. Also, at the request of VDOT, the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) allocated \$100,000 in FY 2011 CMAQ funds toward the support of MATOC.

The request for commitment to provide additional funding over the next several years for MATOC support comes at a critical moment. The Commonwealth is dealing with significant shortfalls in revenues – the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) has had to cut \$4.6 billion from transportation programs since the spring of 2008, and VDOT's implementation of the "Blueprint" to cope with reduced funding has meant layoffs of employees and cuts in services.

Finally, we understand that funding has been obtained for a consultant study of MATOC and its operation. I trust the study will provide the necessary information for a better understanding of the specific benefits of MATOC's deliverables, as well as its relation to the Regional Integrated Transportation Information System (RITIS) Program also operating under tri-state oversight.

Again, thank you for your letter and for your support to improve regional coordination for improved transportation and mobility.

Sincerely,

Gregory A. Whirley

C: The Honorable Sean T. Connaughton
Ms. Connie Sorrell
Ms. Reta Busher
Morteza Salehi, P.E.