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Regional Bus Subcommittee

Roles and Responsibilities

PURPOSE

The Federal Metropolitan Transportation Planning Regulations published on February 14, 2007, requires that

The Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), the State(s), and the public transportation operator(s) shall cooperatively determine their mutual responsibilities in carrying out the metropolitan planning process. These responsibilities shall be clearly identified in a written agreement among the MPO, the State(s), and the public transportation operator(s) serving the Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA).

This agreement describes the mutual responsibilities of the listed parties for conducting the metropolitan planning process in the Washington Metropolitan Area.

PARTIES

The MPO

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board

State DOTs

District of Columbia Department of Transportation

Maryland Department of Transportation

Virginia Department of Transportation

Transit Operators

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

District of Columbia Mass Transit Authority

Maryland Transit Authority

Frederick County (TransIT)

Montgomery County Department of Public Works and Transit (RIDE ON)

Prince George's County Department of Public Works & Transit (The Bus)

City of Laurel (Connect-A-Ride)

Arlington County (ART)

Fairfax County (Fairfax Connector)

Loudoun County Transit

City of Alexandria (ATC/DASH)

City of Fairfax (CUE)

Potomac and Rappahannock Transit Commission (PRTC)
Virginia Railway Express

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

The region's current transportation network includes approximately 16,000 lane miles of highway, nearly 200 miles of carpool lanes, 106 miles of Metrorail and 162 additional miles of commuter rail. In addition to rail, the Washington region has an extensive bus network of local and commuter services. Three major airports—Reagan National, Dulles International, and Thurgood Marshall Baltimore/Washington International (BWI)—serve the metropolitan area. The region has one of the most extensive bicycle/pedestrian trail systems in the country, stretching from the outer suburbs to the National Mall in the heart of Washington.

PARTICIPANT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

The National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB)

The TPB is the federally designated MPO for the region, and plays an important role as the regional forum for transportation planning. The TPB prepares plans and programs that the federal government must approve in order for federal-aid transportation funds to flow to the Washington region.

Members of the TPB include representatives of local governments; state transportation agencies; the Maryland and Virginia General Assemblies; the WMATA; and non-voting members from the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority and federal agencies. The TPB has an extensive public involvement process, and provides a 30-day public comment period before taking action on plans and programs.

The TPB's planning area covers the District of Columbia and surround jurisdictions. In Maryland these jurisdictions include Frederick County, Montgomery County, and Prince George's County and the St. Charles urbanized area of Charles County, plus the cities of Bladensburg, Bowie, College Park, Gaithersburg, Greenbelt, Rockville and Takoma Park. In Virginia, the planning area includes Alexandria, Arlington County, the City of Fairfax, Fairfax County, Falls Church, Loudoun County, Manassas, and Prince William County.

In general, the TPB does not exercise direct control over funding and does not implement projects, but it does perform a range of activities that promote an integrated approach to transportation development. The requirements of federal law compel the key transportation players in the region to work through the TPB process. The TPB exercises its basic role as a coordinating agency in several ways:

1. **The TPB ensures compliance with federal laws and requirements.** Federal requirements inject consistency and coordination into regional transportation decision-making. The federally mandated metropolitan planning process requires all MPOs across the country to produce two basic documents – a long-range plan, which in the Washington region is called the Financially Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan (CLRP), and a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which lists projects and programs that will be funded in the next six years. Since 2000, the CLRP has used a planning horizon of 25 years. In order to receive federal funding, transportation projects must be included in the CLRP and the TIP. Federal law also requires the TPB to show that the region will have adequate funds to build the projects listed in these two main planning documents. The funding for the CLRP and TIP must be “reasonably expected to be available,” according to federal transportation law enacted in 1991. This financial constraint is intended to make sure the different partners in the region’s transportation system are realistically planning for the future.

In addition, the TPB must make sure that the projects in its CLRP and the TIP, taken collectively, contribute to air quality improvement goals for the region. This is a requirement of the federal Clean Air Act. The TPB must also comply with federal laws, regulations and policies stipulating that regional transportation plans must not disproportionately affect low-income or minority communities in an adverse way.

2. **The TPB provides a regional transportation policy framework and a forum for coordination.** While federal law and regulations drive much of the region’s regular transportation planning activities, the TPB has also developed a policy framework—known as the Vision—that is intended to guide the region’s transportation investments in the new century.

Approved in 1998, the Vision is a long-range document laying out key goals and strategies that will help the region to develop the transportation system it needs to sustain economic development, environmental quality and a high quality of life. The agencies that implement transportation projects—the states, the District of Columbia, the regional transit authority and others—must show that the goals of their projects are consistent with the Vision.

3. **The TPB provides technical resources for decision-making:** the TPB is a technical resource. The TPB staff is continually working in close coordination with the staffs from the local and state jurisdictions and WMATA, as well as with outside consultants, to produce numerous studies and analyses, including but not limited to corridor level analysis and scenario studies. This technical information is essential for the decisions made by the TPB itself and for the decisions of the jurisdictions comprising the region.

Technical information and analysis are prepared on a variety of topics, most of which fit into a few broad categories. Travel monitoring activities gather

information on current travel patterns and conditions. For example, data is collected on transportation facilities throughout the region to assess the performance of highway and transit facilities. Congestion levels are calculated based upon measures of the average number of cars per lane-mile of highway. Personal travel patterns are also surveyed to determine how people are traveling, for what purpose and how far.

Travel forecasting develops predictions about future travel conditions. The TPB staff develops these forecasts using computer programs (“models”) whose inputs include assumptions about the future, including projected population and job growth, data about planned or potential improvements in the transportation system, and assumptions about future travel demand. The model’s outputs produce travel forecasts that inform a variety of decisions, such as helping to determine how various transportation investments will affect mobility in the region. Information about current and future travel conditions is used for a number of purposes—especially for the regional air quality analysis required by the federal Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990, as amended. Technical data produced by the TPB staff are also used by other jurisdictions and agencies. The states, the District of Columbia and WMATA (the regional transit authority) use TPB data on a regular basis to plan and operate their services and facilities.

Each year, the TPB with its member jurisdictions develops the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). The UPWP incorporates all federal assisted state, regional and local transportation planning activities proposed to be undertaken during the fiscal year. It provides a mechanism for the coordination of transportation planning activities in the region, and is required as a basis and condition for all federal funding assistance for transportation planning and by the federal planning regulations. As such, the UPWP describes in full detail how the federal planning regulations are being met by the TPB and its member jurisdictions. Figure 3 of the UPWP for FY 2008, located on page 1-6, provides a basic sketch of the transportation planning and programming responsibilities throughout the region.

The TPB is a policy-making body. It has a rich set of committees, subcommittees and task forces. These committees oversee the details of the metropolitan planning process. Figure 6 of the FY 2008 UPWP, located on page 2-7, illustrates this committee structure and FY 2008 work activity oversight.

Of the committees described in the UPWP, the Regional Bus Subcommittee is of particular interest to signatories of this agreement. The Regional Bus Subcommittee held its first meeting in January of 2007. Its mission is to provide a permanent process for the coordination of bus planning throughout the Washington region, and for incorporating regional bus plans into the CLRP and TIP. High quality bus service in the region depends upon successfully linking vehicles, services, stops and stations, running ways, operating facilities, maintenance shops, storage yards, and passenger and operating support systems to produce a service that is easy to use, provides rider information where and when needed, and facilitates intra- and inter-agency service transfers. Increased customer

satisfaction can broaden the appeal of transit in the transportation market place and generate increased ridership. Considerable cooperation among the agencies responsible for bus service and transportation in the region is required to implement these high quality bus services, owing to the complex nature of transit service provision and transportation facility ownership in this multi-state region.

Finally, the TPB is the designated recipient for the Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC, 5316) and New Freedom (5317) funding for the Washington DC-MD-VA Urbanized Area. The TBP established Human Service Transportation Coordination Task Force in 2006 to oversee development of the required Human Service Coordinated Plan, which was adopted by the TPB in April, 2007. This task force is also responsible for soliciting applications for the 5316 and 5317 funding and selecting grant recipients on an annual basis.

State Departments of Transportation (DOTs)

District of Columbia Department of Transportation (DDOT)

For the purposes of metropolitan transportation planning, the District of Columbia is considered a state.

DDOT is currently in the process of updating its Strategic Transportation Plan. The new plan, which has a horizon year of 2030, maintains the prior plan's transit recommendations with an emphasis on surface transit, including light rail. In addition, it focuses on maximizing travel efficiency, safety, and public space quality in major transportation corridors.

Coordination

The District of Columbia is a member of the TPB and fully participates in the metropolitan planning process. TPB members representing the District of Columbia include members of the District of Columbia city council as well as staff of the District Department of Transportation. DDOT staff members participate in TPB committees, subcommittees and task forces.

Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT)

The Maryland Transportation Plan (MTP) establishes policy goals for state transportation services and infrastructure over the next 20 years. The MTP is a starting point for the development of strategic plans, programs and projects by MDOT's different agencies. Every year, MDOT submits the MTP to the state General Assembly, along with the six-year Consolidated Transportation Program.

Coordination

The state of Maryland is a member of the TPB and participates in the metropolitan planning process. TPB members representing the State of Maryland include members of

the Maryland house and senate, as well as staff of the Maryland Department of Transportation. Maryland's TPB members participate in TPB committees, subcommittees and task forces.

Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT)

VDOT has unusually far-reaching responsibility for public roads, bridges and tunnels. Covering more than 55,000 lane-miles, VDOT has the third largest state-maintained highway system in the country. The VDOT system includes most local and country roads in the state.

VDOT is guided by the Virginia Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB). The Virginia Secretary of Transportation serves as chairman of the 17-member CTB, which also includes the commissioner of VDOT, the director of VDRPT and 14 citizens appointed by the governor. The CTB is responsible for developing the Six-Year Improvement Program for transportation.

Virginia has a number of long-range planning efforts that serve as the basis for project development. A 20-year statewide transportation plan, called VTrans2025, provides policy guidance for all transportation modes. VTrans2025, along with the State Highway Plan, serves as the basis for project prioritization and submission into the TPB CLRP.

Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (VDRPT), an agency under the Virginia Secretary of Transportation, provides technical and financial assistance to Virginia's public transit, ridesharing and railroad operations.

Coordination

The Commonwealth of Virginia is a member of the TPB and participates in the metropolitan planning process. TPB members representing the Commonwealth of Virginia include members of the Virginia house and senate, as well as staff of the Virginia Department of Transportation. Virginia's TPB members participate in TPB committees, subcommittees and task forces.

Transit Operators

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)

WMATA is the primary transit provider for the Washington Metropolitan Region. WMATA operates bus and heavy rail transit systems throughout the WMATA compact area. Its fleet consists of 1,471 buses and 1,074 rail cars, providing 133.6 million bus passenger trips and 214.1 million rail passenger trips annually.¹ WMATA also provides paratransit services to the region through a contract with First Transit.

WMATA is an interstate compact agency and, by the terms of its enabling legislation, is an agency and instrumentality of the District of Columbia, State of Maryland, and Commonwealth of Virginia. This agency was created by the aforementioned states and the District of Columbia to plan, finance, construct, and operate a comprehensive mass transit system for the Washington Metropolitan Area.

The WMATA planning zone covers the District of Columbia, the cities of Alexandria, Falls Church and Fairfax and the counties of Arlington, Fairfax, and Loudoun and political subdivisions of the Commonwealth of Virginia located within those counties, and the counties of Montgomery and Prince George's in the State of Maryland and political subdivisions of the State of Maryland located in said counties.

Coordination

WMATA is a member of the TPB and participates in the metropolitan planning process. WMATA staff members participate in TPB committees, subcommittees and task forces. The TPT Technical Committee and the TPB Regional Bus Subcommittee are currently chaired by WMATA staff.

District of Columbia Mass Transit Authority

The District of Columbia Mass Transit Authority provides transit services within the District of Columbia. The DC-MTA currently provides the DC Circulator bus system, which operates 3 routes and maintains a fleet of 29 buses, providing 2.5 million passenger trips annually. The Authority is also developing the DC Streetcar system, which is planned to provide light-rail/streetcar service throughout the District. Finally, the Authority has worked with WMATA to provide the "Metro Extra" Rapid Bus service, currently available on one major bus route in the District. Finally, MTA also supports and manages various special programs for District residents such as the District's School Transit Subsidy Program and the capital grant assistance program for non profit organizations to provide transportation services for the elderly and disabled.

The DC Mass Transit Authority (MTA) is a department within the DC DOT which plans, implements and operates transit facilities. The mission of the MTA of DDOT is to provide the public with efficient, affordable and diverse means of travel within the

¹ All transit statistics are from the WMATA "Regional Bus Conference White Paper, November, 2006" except where noted.

District of Columbia. MTA pursues its mission by providing funding, policy recommendations and coordinating transit services with the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA). The staff at MTA continuously works to develop signature transportation services that offer excellent internal mobility to all city residents and visitors.

Coordination

The DCMTA participates in the metropolitan planning process through the activities of DDOT.

Maryland Transit Authority (MTA)

The MTA is a modal agency of MDOT. The MTA provides commuter bus and commuter rail services that extend into the Metropolitan Washington region. The MTA maintains a fleet of 206 commuter buses and 153 commuter rail cars servicing suburban Maryland, providing 2.8 million bus passenger trips and 6.7 million commuter rail passenger trips annually.

Coordination

The MTA participates in the metropolitan planning process through the activities of MDOT.

Frederick County (TransIT)

TransIT Services of Frederick County, a division of Frederick County government, provides public transportation, paratransit and commuter services to Frederick County residents. TransIT provided 0.65 million one-way passenger trips in FY 06.²

Coordination

The county is a member of the TPB and participates in the metropolitan planning process. County staff members participate in TPB committees, subcommittees and task forces.

Montgomery County Department of Public Works and Transit (RIDE ON)

RIDE ON is the transit system provided by the Montgomery County Department of Public Works and Transit. RIDE ON maintains a fleet of 372 buses, and provides 28 million person trips annually.

Coordination

The county is a member of the TPB and participates in the metropolitan planning process. County staff members participate in TPB committees, subcommittees and task forces.

Prince George's County Department of Public Works & Transit (The Bus)

The county operates a local bus service called The Bus. The Bus maintains a fleet of 89 buses, providing 2.7 million passenger trips annually. The county also supports paratransit through its Call-A-Bus and Call-A-Cab programs.

² <http://www.co.frederick.md.us/index.asp?NID=105>

Coordination

The county is a member of the TPB and participates in the metropolitan planning process. County staff members participate in TPB committees, subcommittees and task forces.

Arlington County (ART)

Arlington County operates the ART bus transit service and the STAR paratransit service. ART maintains a fleet of 30 buses, and provides 1.1 million passenger trips per year.

Coordination

The county is a member of the TPB and participates in the metropolitan planning process. County staff members participate in TPB committees, subcommittees and task forces.

Fairfax County (Fairfax Connector)

Fairfax Connector provides primarily non-regional (intra-county) bus service to the residents of Fairfax County. Fairfax Connector maintains a fleet of 176 buses and provides 9.6 million bus passenger trips annually.

Coordination

The county is a member of the TPB and participates in the metropolitan planning process. County staff members participate in TPB committees, subcommittees and task forces.

Loudoun County Transit

LC Transit currently operates commuter bus, local bus and paratransit services within Loudoun County. LC Transit maintains a fleet of 20 buses and provides 0.7 million bus transit trips annually.

All decisions related to funding and new service(s) are approved by the Board of Supervisors. The county is currently beginning the process to create a 20 year Countywide Transit Plan prepared by a consultant. This document would be included in the Countywide Transportation Plan as an addendum, and would incorporate planning for Metrorail to Loudoun.

Coordination

The county is a member of the TPB and participates in the metropolitan planning process. County staff members participate in TPB committees, subcommittees and task forces.

City of Alexandria (ATC/DASH)

ATC is a non-profit corporation organized for the purpose of providing mass transportation services as a public service corporation. The ATC operates transit services (DASH) within the City of Alexandria and between the City and the Pentagon Metrorail Station. Its purpose is to supplement the regional rail and bus service provided by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority and to provide a safe, reliable and

efficient local bus service. ATC maintains a fleet of 57 buses, and provides 3.7 million passenger trips annually.

The City of Alexandria is actively involved in all aspects of transit planning, through its Office of Transit Services and Programs in the Transportation and Environmental Services Department.

The City, as a member of the WMATA compact, provides subsidies for WMATA rail, bus, and paratransit services in the City. The city also provides a substantial subsidy for DASH, or the Alexandria Transit Company (ATC), a non-profit service corporation that is wholly owned by the City, but not part of City government, which provides fixed-route transit within the City. The City provides ADA compatible paratransit through its DOT program, working with three private providers.

Coordination

The city is a member of the TPB and participates in the metropolitan planning process. County staff members participate in TPB committees, subcommittees and task forces.

City of Fairfax (CUE)

The City of Fairfax operates the CUE local bus service. CUE maintains a fleet of 15 buses, providing one million bus passenger trips annually. Paratransit services in the City are provided by MetroAccess or the city's City Wheels program.

Coordination

The city is a member of the TPB and participates in the metropolitan planning process. County staff members participate in TPB committees, subcommittees and task forces.

Potomac and Rappahannock Transit Commission (PRTC)

PRTC is a multi-jurisdictional agency representing Prince William and Stafford Counties and the cities of Manassas, Manassas Park and Fredericksburg. PRTC provides three levels of public transit. OmniRide provides commuter bus service along the I-95 and I-66 corridors to points north. OmniLink provides local bus service in Prince William County and the cities of Manassas and Manassas Park. Metro Direct provides feeder service to the Franconia-Springfield and West Falls Church Metro stations. PRTC maintains a fleet of 90 commuter buses (OmniRide) and 22 local buses (OmniLink), providing 1.4 and 0.7 million (respectively) bus passenger trips annually. OmniRide has experienced high annual growth percentages, and anticipates continued growth.

Coordination

Prince William County is a member of the TPB and represents PRTC's interests on the board. PRTC staff participate in TPB committees, subcommittees and task forces.

Virginia Railway Express (VRE)

The VRE commuter rail system is co-owned by PRTC and the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC), and is operated by PRTC. VRE maintains a fleet of 93 rail cars, providing 3.4 million passenger trips annually.

Coordination

Officials and staff of PRTC and NVTC jurisdictions represent the interest of VRE on the board. VRE staff participate in TPB committees, subcommittees and task forces.