

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JANUARY 21, 2015

TO: MEMBERS OF THE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

FROM: T&ES STAFF

SUBJECT: AGENDA ITEM # 5 – WMATA OPERATIONS PLANNING PROCESS

ISSUE: Staff will provide the Commission with a summary of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) bus operations planning process.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Commission receive the following for information.

BACKGROUND

The Transportation Commission requested that staff provide them with a summary of the types of operational bus planning work WMATA does, and how Alexandria staff interfaces with these activities. The following discussion summarizes this information.

DISCUSSION:

WMATA manages several operational planning activities regarding their bus services on a regular and ad hoc basis. They include the following groups of activities:

- 1) State of Good Operations (SOGO) Analyses of Bus Services
- 2) Detailed Line Analyses
- 3) Detailed Analyses of Specific Issues
 - Metrobus Transit Service Guidelines Study
 - Metrobus Network Effectiveness Study
 - Metrobus Late Night Service Study
- 4) Ad Hoc Transit Analyses

State of Good Operations (SOGO) Analyses of the Performance and Structure of Existing Services

On a monthly basis, WMATA produces ridership counts similar to that illustrated in Attachment 1, which show the ridership of each bus route in comparison with its ridership in the same month of the previous year. This provides an early warning that bus services are either getting too crowded or are not being used efficiently. These monthly reports are provided to the City's representative on the Jurisdictional Coordination Committee.

On an annual basis, WMATA reviews all of its bus services to determine if they could be more efficiently provided. A recent illustration of the supporting documentation WMATA generates is provided in Attachment 2. This review consists of analyzing monthly data, and a detailed examination of the efficiency of all services, which looks at the following factors:

- Weekday daily riders;
- Cost recovery;
- Subsidy per rider;
- Riders per revenue trip; and
- Riders per revenue mile.

With all of this information, WMATA bus planning staff initiates their annual SOGO analysis. This analysis has been shown to be very effective. Historically, WMATA has had success with this process. These changes have contributed to a 9.6% increase in ridership and a 5.3% improvement in on-time performance on those roads which have been subject to these changes in service. The goal of this analysis is to allocate resources better, so that overcrowded bus services are relieved while underutilized services are trimmed. All of this is done with the assumption that no additional bus operations funds will be provided by WMATA. WMATA develops a set of proposals, in consultation with jurisdictional staff, for better utilization of bus services. The suggestions might include adding services, eliminating portions of services, rescheduling services, or suggesting better marketing of services. A proposal is developed in the spring or early summer, and is brought before the WMATA Board in the summer to approve a set of public hearings. The actual public hearings are held in the Fall, and an extensive public participation effort is mounted by WMATA. WMATA uses some of the following techniques for outreach:

- On board take-one paper surveys
- On-line surveys
- Distribution of paper surveys at high-ridership stops
- Agenda items at previously scheduled community meetings
- Open house meetings near high ridership stops on the lines affected
- Distribution of information and one-on-one discussions with Bus Planning staff at high-ridership stops on the lines affected
- On-board take-one flyers
- Advertisements in multi-lingual newspapers
- Social media and transit agency blog
- Official public hearings

In addition, WMATA performs a Title VI analysis to determine if there is a disparate impact on minority populations or a disproportionate burden on low income populations. The SOGO packet is then approved after the 1st of the year, and is typically implemented sometime during that year.

WMATA's latest set of SOGO changes are scheduled to be approved by the entire WMATA Board on January 22, 2015. Two of the most significant changes for Alexandria are combining the Routes 7B and 28G, which will provide an additional trip, and eliminating Route 25E service on Van Dorn Street from Braddock Road to Menockin Drive (See Attachment 3), impacting fewer than 1 person a trip. These resources will be used to improve service to Parkfairfax.

Detailed Line Analyses

A more detailed planning analysis is performed on some lines to obtain specific detailed information about the line through public participation and the analysis of data. These analyses identify the strategic needs for program and facilities; review capacity, productivity, reliability, and quality of service indicators; and recommend changes that will improve service for the subject Metrobus Routes. These analyses have been done for both WMATA's Priority Corridors (Routes 29K and 29N) and such local regional bus services as the Route 10A and 10B travelling on Mt. Vernon Avenue.

Detailed Analyses of Specific Issues

WMATA currently has specialized studies in a few areas, which are likely to impact WMATA's service evaluation in the future:

- Metrobus Transit Service Guidelines Study
 - Guidelines are being developed for such items as:
 - Bus stop spacing
 - Service directness
 - Fare policy/media
 - Type of vehicle
 - Service change process
 - New route trial period
 - Annual service review
 - Branding
 - Customer complaints/comments
 - Bus stop amenities
- Metrobus Network Effectiveness
 - WMATA is evaluating its entire route network to determine the future role of WMATA bus services which might include which routes should optimally be operated by WMATA, and which should be given to other transit operators in the region.
- Metrobus late Night Service Analysis
 - Which bus routes should be operated late at night and how much service should they provide?

Ad Hoc Service Analyses

WMATA bus planning has responded to both the instructions of upper management and of jurisdictions to analyze a variety of service planning issues, such as:

- Can WMATA bus services provide an alternative to the Metrorail Blue Line?
- Should Metrobus service to National Harbor be increased?
- How can problems with Route 11Y be addressed?

SUMMARY:

Alexandria staff will continue to interface with WMATA in developing annual operations plans and other operations planning documents, which will make bus services in Alexandria and in the region more effective and efficient. If issues arise in these discussions, which have major policy implications, the Transportation Commission will be requested to provide their inputs.