



Loudoun County Transit Plan

To: Loudoun County Transit Plan Project Team

Date: 20 June, 2008

Subject: TPAC Meeting #2 - Results

INTRODUCTION

The second Transit Plan Advisory Committee (TPAC) was held on Tuesday, June 17th at the Loudoun County Government Center. Approximately 15 persons were in attendance, in addition to the County staff and project team members. A project update was given on recently completed tasks. A presentation provided details on the results of a service assessment of County transit services as well as the outcomes of public surveys (passengers and seniors). The presentation was accompanied by supporting documentation, available on the project website (<http://www.loudouncountytransitplan.com>). The documentation reviewed by the presentation included:

- Fixed Route Survey Summary
- Commuter Bus Survey Summary
- Senior Transit Survey and Outreach Report
- Service Assessment Report
- Market Analysis Report

Following the presentation, committee members expressed several questions and comments during an inclusive discussion, with key highlights including:

- 1) The Market Analysis report (pg. 12) seemed to indicate that there should be a reduction of service to Arlington, and it was noted that this seemed to be counter-intuitive. The consultant team agreed to look at the context and determine if this was a correct interpretation.
- 2) Considering the dependence on some ideas for collaboration outside Loudoun County, the Committee members wanted to know if other jurisdictions were performing similar studies or if discussions had been held in the analysis of this study with appropriate officials. Ms. Parkins responded that indeed both Prince William and Fairfax County discussions have been on-going. She noted that the Loudoun plan is actually slightly ahead of a 10-year Transit Development Plan (TDP) effort by Fairfax County and will provide an opportunity for sharing of ideas.
- 3) In regards to the transportation modeling for the region, the Committee noted it would be important to place emphasis on how the influence of price of gasoline has changed assumptions, looking at the sensitivity to gas price as a factor in travel decisions.
- 4) Other feedback from public commentary included the request to address immediate concerns, such as lighting/security as well as parking capacity issues at park and ride locations. Also, further information on the methods for reaching the public was sought and the study team



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provided more details on the public engagement process and future attempts to engage the current non-riding public for their input as well.

Following this discussion, additional detail was provided on the components of the captive and choice transit markets. The TPAC members were then divided into two groups to consider a series of questions and ultimately derive some overarching guidelines. These guidelines will aid in the next step of the project, namely the development of alternatives, which may incorporate proposed route modifications, expanded services, different operational approaches, physical improvements to facilities, and associated policy actions. The results of each break-out group discussion are presented in the remainder of this memo.

CAPTIVE RIDERS

Captive transit riders must rely on mass transit; they do not have an alternative way to travel for some or all of their trips because an automobile is required but none is available or because they cannot drive or cannot afford an automobile. Typical population groups include, but are not limited to: seniors, the disabled and low income populations. The following feedback was given from TPAC members participating in the break-out meeting directed at the needs and issues affecting this segment of transit ridership:

Q1. What are the objectives for meeting the transit needs of captive riders? (i.e. a statement of what we are seeking to accomplish)

- Connectivity between all public transit services, especially facilitating travel outside the county is important
- This is Loudoun County and we can achieve a high-degree of excellence in our transit service
- Branding of all modes of transit services, so that riders know that this particular route or vehicle is “for me”
- Transit service should not be seen as just for workers
- There should be more focus on the Ashburn area of the County, providing more options and addressing the currently underperforming routes in this area
- Focus affordable housing along existing transit corridors/routes.



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Q2. What are the service characteristics that would meet the objective? (hours of service, frequency of service, transit stop characteristics...)

- Schedules and maps should be provided at bus stops
- High degree of visibility to transit service, at bus stops and on vehicles
- Park and ride lots in less isolated locations, with bicycle, pedestrian access (particularly sidewalk improvements), and security (lighting) enhancements
- Transit stops should feature bike lockers
- There would be a high degree of predictability of service, requiring enhanced tracking and monitoring of the provision of service (i.e. on time performance, customer service issues, etc.)
- Service can be operated to/from clusters of development and include express service options for longer-distance travel
- Morning and evening service on the local fixed-route services would synchronize with the commuter bus schedules
- Evening service until 9pm should be considered for the Sterling area
- Provide weekend service to West Falls Church Metrorail Station
- Service oriented specifically for teenagers
- Increased holiday-specific service

Q3. What are the destinations of captive riders (i.e. ?

- For the following locations, it is important to note that different types of riders and different times of day may be more appropriate based on travel needs and the operational hours of the locations.
 - Outlet Mall
 - Dulles Town Center
 - Community / Senior Centers
 - Libraries
 - Churches
 - Community College
 - Government Center
 - Medical Complex
 - DMV
 - Shopping Centers
 - Parks and Recreation Areas
 - Hotels
 - Commercial Centers



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Q4. What communication is needed to successfully meet the objective?

- Place information kiosks at bus shelters and stop locations
- Provide trip planning assistance, over the web and phone (in Spanish too)
- Targeted outreach to:
 - Non-profits
 - Hotels
 - Grocery Stores
 - Homeowner Associations
 - General public at major events
 - Engage the top 10 largest (captive rider) employers
- Employer incentives are needed, either for funding/sponsorship of various routes or for advertising agreements.

Q5. How can the transportation needs of rural residents be met?

- Focus on specialized service – combine trips based on similar purpose
- Engage and form partnerships with local communities (Lovettsville) for daily service (one-round trip) to enable access to medical appointments, etc.
- Offer taxi vouchers to complement travel choice
- Conduct outreach to specific rural businesses, perhaps to initiate public transportation or coordinate private shuttles, vanpools
- Consider weekend-focused rural service to provide access to retail/restaurants in more suburban locations

CHOICE RIDERS

Choice riders use transit if it provides service competitive to that of their principal alternative, usually the automobile. The TPAC members that participated in the break-out meeting targeting this segment of transit ridership provided the following input:

Q1. What are the goals & objectives for meeting the transit needs of choice riders? (i.e. a statement of what we are seeking to accomplish)

- Service to choice riders should enhance quality of life, be economical, timely, reliable, and accessible.
- Additional benefits of transit should be emphasized, namely the reduction of emissions, congestion, increased property values, and the promotion of non-commute trips to boost economic activity.
- Look to make commuter services self-sustaining while still being competitive



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Q2. What are the strategies for meeting choice riders' commuting trips?

- Additional outreach and information
- Improve accessibility and reduce the amount of time needed to reach bus stop locations
- Stabilize park and ride locations (less changes, moves, etc.), and increased security
- Create incentives for businesses to participate in Transportation Demand Management programs
- Encourage mixed-use development and reduced parking requirements
- Work with businesses to give subsidies through Smart Benefits
- Offer a reduced introductory fare
- Provide more buses and services

Q3. What are other types of trips choice riders might make via transit, and how should they be served?

- Focus on convenient schedules and longer hours of operation.
- Emphasize good service plans and frequent service plans
- Bus entrances to Dulles access lanes at Route 28 and Centerville Road
- Dedicated overnight parking for Amtrak / National Airport riders
- Improve connections and minimize transfers (particularly to Herndon / Monroe)
- Add feeders/people movers to Metro from Dulles Town Center

Q4. What are specific strategies for choice riders in western Loudoun in corridors that are and will continue to be congested (Route 15 and Route 9 in particular)?

- Western Loudoun riders need incentives to ride buses
- Western Loudoun riders will drive to Metro (when extended) or stay on commuter bus (no three-mode trips)
- Good highway access needed to park and ride lots

Q5. What communication is needed to successfully meet the goals & objectives?

- Provide personalized profiles of transit users and how they use transit in local newspapers (time saved, routes used, total cost and cost savings versus driving)
- Provide real-time information via text messaging
- Use the buses (on-board) to communicate transit info (website, LED sign, etc.)
- Provide employer-based information, especially for Government agencies
- Advertise the cost savings
- Use outreach to community organizations



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GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following statements intend to capture the main points raised from the TPAC feedback, public input, and service assessment. These principles provide broad statements of goals and objectives to be achieved in the development and implementation of transit initiatives for Loudoun County. Since this plan is intended to guide the transition of transit services in Loudoun County throughout the introduction of Metrorail service to the area, principles for both near and longer-term timeframes have been considered. These principles should be used as a benchmark for gauging the relative merits of various alternatives developed in later study phases, and assist in the selection of the most preferred options.

Near-Term

- **Branding of service:** New transit services developed for Loudoun County shall help to integrate commuter, fixed-route and demand-response systems. Shared stops, logos, and other elements shall create a seamless look and feel that emphasizes customer service amenities such as trip planning, real-time vehicle status, and provision of system information in multi-lingual formats.
- **Public focus:** In preparation for future community partnerships as well as capturing new groups of riders, a multi-faceted outreach strategy shall be emphasized in the development of new services. Techniques may include advertising to riders, and targeted focus group meetings with business and community partners, with new routes, hours of operation, and service delivery being responsive to the feedback from this outreach campaign.
- **Utilization of service standards:** For new and existing services, an enhanced incorporation of service standards is required, with a more systematic and formalized method for tracking key transit performance indicators. Adoption of advanced technology, organizational oversight, and periodic review and modification of routes will provide enhanced accountability to the riding public and a quantifiable measure of success for new routes and service changes.

Longer-Term

- **Improved Connectivity:** Improved transfers outside the County are essential, and no more than one transfer should be required to reach major activity centers outside Loudoun County, including expanded Metrorail access to Tyson's Corner (in this timeframe). Within Loudoun County, existing transfer-hubs should be extensively integrated with surrounding developments and isolated park and ride lots should be either moved or greatly enhanced for pedestrian/bicycle access.
- **Expansion of Service Hours:** As funding is available, service hours should be expanded to synchronize fixed-route service with some early AM inbound commuter routes and all outbound PM services. Limited Saturday service should be introduced with focus on retail, tourism, and other economic development opportunities. As such, extended evening and weekend service shall target both service employee and retail shopper needs.
- **Policy Incentives:** In conjunction with new and expanded transit services, modifications to parking policy (limiting supply or introducing new charges) and employer incentives (subsidy options) will be needed to further support transit ridership growth. Specific strategies such as parking cash-out, transit reimbursement, guaranteed ride-home and other supportive services should be investigated for applicability.