



WMATA Parking Program Overview and Policy Framework Executive Summary

Purpose:

The objective of this information item is to initiate a Board discussion on the future direction of our Parking Program, including a review of current parking policies and practices and a discussion of how we evolve our parking strategy to support Authority-wide ridership and customer service goals.

Currently, the majority of the WMATA-managed parking facilities fill on a daily basis. Our present cash-less, SmarTrip-only fee collection system is inconvenient for a portion of our customers who are occasional users. Furthermore, our equipment does not currently allow the Authority to charge a variable fee structure, which would be more consistent with a standard commercial parking facility.

As WMATA strives to improve the customer's experience with our system, we intend to make our parking facilities more user-friendly to the occasional customer who does not wish to make a one-time purchase of our SmarTrip fare media. A comprehensive look at the parking program has resulted in the development of several potential short-term and long-term initiatives. In addition, staff has identified ways to generate additional revenue to fund these improvements by enhanced marketing and more efficient use of our existing inventory of parking spaces.

Background:

WMATA's parking management program encompasses more than 61,000 spaces and generates about \$51 million in operating revenues annually, \$38 million of which are retained by the Authority. Parking in our system is a finite resource that is in high demand. The purpose of our parking strategy is to:

- 1) improve customer access to parking and customer convenience;**
- 2) enhance the Authority's ridership goals;**
- 3) maximize parking space utilization; and**
- 4) install parking systems and implement technologies in accordance with best practices in the parking industry.**

In FY2006, actual revenues collected for parking services exceed budgeted revenues by \$1.7 million. WMATA facilities reached the highest historical parking service levels during the third quarter of FY2006. The improved parking utilization trends are driven by increased tourism in the metropolitan region and escalating fuel prices.

Customer Feedback and Possible Program Solutions:

Although the current program is effective in collecting revenues, it has created challenges for staff and creates consistent customer complaints. The following is a list of responses to some of the customer feedback we have received:

- **Alternate payment:** The largest number of customer parking and station manager-related complaints are attributable to our current practice of only accepting SmarTrip cards at parking station exits. Customers have indicated an interest in being able to pay for parking without the use of the SmarTrip card. It is possible to institute a credit payment option in the short-term for roughly \$0.7 million and then implement debit cards and variable fee structures in the long-term.
- **Improved Metered Facility Operation:** Currently, we have 3,592 metered spaces. The allocation of some short-term (7 hours) metered parking spaces in the system results in many metered spaces going under utilized by commuters because the 7 hours time frame does not allow a person to use the space for their commute to work. We suggest converting these spaces and encouraging customers to use them, especially where stations fill and regular customers are prevented from using the system for longer periods of time. Furthermore, this equipment is outdated and creates inefficiencies in repair and collection. We favor the conversion of some short-term (7 hours) to long-term (12 hours) meters. We also want to improve the payment, collection, and maintenance systems at our metered parking facilities. Within this concept, we would award a contract to a third party to supply meter equipment and services.
- **Parking Facility Preventive Maintenance Program:** The maintenance of parking facilities currently consists of funded programs to clean and perform major rehabilitation work. It does not address routine maintenance requirements to ensure an optimal operational life of each facility. A preventive maintenance program that includes deck washing, seal coating, and minor structural repairs is currently not funded in our budget. Estimated costs for this program are \$4.1 million. Staff is developing a plan to generate the amount of revenue required to fund this program that will be presented to the Board at a later date.
- **Development of a Comprehensive Parking Services Procurement:** We are evaluating the development and issuance of a comprehensive contract for the provision of parking services. This procurement would replace our existing contract in FY08 and would provide all the current provisions of the existing parking contract and additional equipment and services that are required to manage the services required to operate WMATA's parking facilities. The base scope of services for this contract would be similar to the existing parking contract. The rest of the contract

would be options initiated after funding is determined for each program option. The contract would include the following options:

- Deliver cleaning (sweeping, sign installation/repair, and trash disposal).
- Provide an e-commerce based web application for reserved permit processing.
- Install, repair, maintain, collect, and process information for a multi-space meter program replacing our existing mechanical meters. This option will also provide for cell phone payment.
- Provide a preventive maintenance program for parking facilities.
- Provide a long-term industry standard parking equipment platform that provides debit/credit payment processing at one lane in each lot or garage, data and payment management, installation and repair, and an operations center to manage this data.
- Provide installation of other parking and communications equipment that allows WMATA to reduce the number of contract parking personnel and increases efficiency of payment systems. The proposer(s) will be required to submit a plan that reduces the need for the base contract services and through the purchase of equipment provides an increase in operational and customer efficiency. It will be expected that exercising this option will significantly reduce the funding needs for the base scope of services.
- Provide services that create car-pooling and ride sharing opportunities for our customers that maximize the use of our parking spaces.

We believe these concepts can achieve the policy goals that we have identified for the parking program as we move toward an operation more reflective of what is provided in the parking industry.

Action Items and Funding Strategies:

We will present specific action items to the Board after discussions with stakeholders. A significant portion of this discussion will involve an assessment of possible funding strategies. Potential funding sources for these proposals could come from reprogramming funds in our existing budget, fee adjustments, such as incremental adjustments to meter rates or times, and would be moved for Board approval after staff has reached out to the Jurisdictional Coordinating Committee and stakeholders to discuss fare and fee policy. A report regarding this discussion is expected in a future budget committee presentation. This report will address the possibility of a comprehensive approach that considers all elements of our fare and fee policy and the impact of parking prices on total trip costs for our customers. We will also examine how to use a funding strategy to create incentives that support the Authority's goals of increasing ridership and distributing it away from the peak-of-the-peak, such as pricing incentives for those parking customers who share their vehicle with other riders or use

parking facilities in the earlier portions of weekday mornings. We will also explore earmarking revenue sources to fund assets and service improvements in our system.

After Board input on these concepts, staff will put together a package of action items which would appear before both the Customer Service, Operations and Safety Committee and Board in September depending on Budget Committee recommendations regarding the funding of these projects.