



Customer Service and Operations Committee

Board Information III-A

November 5, 2015

MetroAccess Sustainability Study

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority
Board Action/Information Summary

Action Information

MEAD Number:
201651

Resolution:
 Yes No

TITLE:

MetroAccess Sustainability Study

PRESENTATION SUMMARY:

Dr. Terry Clower, Chair, George Mason University School of Policy, Government and International Affairs and Deputy Director for GMU's Center for Regional Analysis will provide a forecast of long term MetroAccess growth and policy actions supporting sustainable growth.

PURPOSE:

To provide the Customer Service and Operations Committee the results of the Board directed study on the long term sustainability of MetroAccess.

DESCRIPTION:

The study provides a 2025 MetroAccess service level forecast. It describes demographic factors that will shape MetroAccess growth and three forecast scenarios which are driven by regional adoption or non-adoption of coordination policies to shape MetroAccess sustainability. Eleven policies are presented for Board consideration in two distinct areas: demand/cost management and jurisdictional based services.

Key Highlights:

- MetroAccess service levels, driven by the senior "age wave" will increase to 3.1 million trips/year by 2025 under current policy direction; an increase of 1 million trips and \$50M in operating expense over FY2014
- Regional coordination through aggressive implementation of regional policy changes can reduce 2025 service levels to 2.6 million trips
- An increased MetroAccess role as a major provider of human services transportation increases the forecast to 3.6 million trips

Background and History:

In 2010, the Board enacted policies to align MetroAccess service to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements that require paratransit as a safety net to transit service. These policies included restricting service to the areas and times that transit service is available. In 2013 the Board amended fare policy to enable paratransit fares set at twice the fastest transit fare, also consistent with ADA policy. As a result of both

Board actions, coupled with stronger eligibility screening and increased travel training, rapid MetroAccess growth was halted and service stabilized at 2 million trips per year. Growth driven by increased enrollment has resumed at 4.6% in FY2014 and is projected to be 5.1% in FY2015. The Board requested that additional policy actions be provided for Board consideration for FY2017 budget deliberations.

The report conveyed to the Board has been reviewed by the Accessibility Advisory Committee. Comments are being reviewed by staff.

Discussion:

The Center for Regional Analysis recommends eleven policies, in two categories to obtain MetroAccess sustainability. The categories are Demand/Cost Management and Jurisdictional Based Services.

Demand/Cost Management policies implement actions in which Metro has strong coordinating role but which require local support including funding and planning coordination.

Jurisdictional Based Service policies require implementation of local transportation alternatives to MetroAccess by local jurisdictions with Metro technical support.

Where currently possible, Metro staff has assigned preliminary projections to the potential reduction in MetroAccess trips if a policy is fully enacted.

Demand/Cost Management

Policy 1: Improve accessibility of transit stops

Each bus stop improved under the Board's approved goal to make 100 bus stops per year accessible attracts 100 annual trips that would have been made on MetroAccess. Over 10 years, 1,000 more accessible bus stops can deflect 100,000 MetroAccess trips per year. Priority is given to improving "high value" bus stops near to large numbers of MetroAccess customers.

Policy 2: Expand travel training programs

MetroAccess's Board approved travel training reduces reliance on MetroAccess. At current service levels, in 10 years, 2,000 MetroAccess customers will be travel trained and will result in 50,000 fewer MetroAccess trips per year. Recommendation is to maintain or increase Metro travel training service levels. The alternative is to obtain increases in travel training activity by compact members and local agencies.

Policy 3: Enforce trip-by-trip eligibility for all customers

Approximately 60% of MetroAccess customers are conditionally eligible and take approximately one million trips per year. If 10% of these trips can be diverted onto fixed route, there is a reduction of 100,000 MetroAccess trips per year. Staff will provide recommendations later this year for Board consideration.

Policy 4: Expand reduced fare programs

Similar to trip by trip eligibility, customers can elect to participate in the Board approved Reduced Fare Program instead of MetroAccess. A more aggressively marketed

Reduced Fare Program that deflects 1,000 potential MetroAccess customers per year to fixed route can also deflect 50,000 trips per year onto fixed route.

Policy 5: Ensure that MetroAccess maintains ADA baselines

MetroAccess requires continued Metro Board of Directors support to maintain ADA baselines.

Policy 6: Monitor efficiency of MetroAccess system

MetroAccess continues to administer and maintain current efficient paratransit contracts. Implement other efficiencies where possible. An example is establishment of Metro owned MetroAccess garage and parking facilities. A Metro study underway projects that it may be cost efficient to do so.

Jurisdictional Based Services

Policy 7: Establish regional or sub-regional one-stop shops

Assumes that compact partners will develop and implement Fastran like structures which provide transportation provider information and/or human services transportation in lieu of MetroAccess service. Requires long term planning effort and regional planning coordination.

Policy 8: Pursue partnerships to secure vehicles for local providers

Metro is working to develop a grantee to grantee or surplus grant program that provides retiring MetroAccess vehicles to human service agencies. Alternatively, compact members could increase New Freedom funding for human service agency capital equipment. The primary goal is to enable continued operation of service by human service agencies with fleet age and shortage problems to prevent service shift to Metro.

Policy 9: Encourage consolidation among individual providers

Human service agencies obtain their transportation services more efficiently by coordinating their transportation operations. A consolidated provider can scale upward to be the more efficient primary provider for more than one human service agency. The incentive for human service agencies is improved service for customers. The incentive for jurisdictions is reduced expense. Metro technical support is available to support the jurisdictions.

Policy 10: Provide support for expansion of jurisdictional based services

These include Metro initiated and a recently concluded (Community Support Services) alternative to MetroAccess and to be implemented project (ARC of Prince George's County) in Maryland and an on-going and general purpose taxi program (Transport DC) in the District. These pilots operate at about half the cost of MetroAccess. Local funding support is necessary and can be obtained through reduced MetroAccess subsidy. Potential annual transfer is estimated at 300,000 trips per year from MetroAccess to local service.

Policy 11: Coordinate with state and local governments to ensure consistency with regional policies

The region benefits from a coordinated regional approach with state and local governments. Metro can assist by providing a forum in which jurisdictions can work to develop and coordinate regional policy. For example, jurisdictions could develop regional policy prohibiting addition of Medicaid customers onto MetroAccess to be

enacted at the local level. Other examples of regional policy include amending tax regulations which currently prohibit taxi transport of MetroAccess or other customers with disabilities across county and city lines.

FUNDING IMPACT:

No impact on funding because those aspects of the recommendations that are already in progress have been included in the assumptions of the proposed budget as submitted.

TIMELINE:

Previous Actions	March 2014 – Board commissioned staff to conduct a study, due June 2015 with subsequent actions by end of year. June 2015 – Final report provided to the Board.
Anticipated actions after presentation	Staff to commence work on developing full project proposals, including budget, to be provided for Board FY2017 budget consideration.

RECOMMENDATION:

Support policy recommendations as described herein.



Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

MetroAccess Long-Term Sustainability Study

Customer Service and Operations Committee

November 5, 2015



Purpose

As part of the FY2015 budget approval, the Board directed staff to commission a study of the long-term sustainability of MetroAccess

- Mission was to examine demographics, bus stop accessibility and other ways to leverage fixed-route service, MetroAccess service delivery model and cost alternatives
- George Mason University's Center for Regional Analysis conducted the study as Metro's research partner



Background

Following a period of unsustainable growth, MetroAccess implemented a demand management strategy (2009)

- Aggressive promotion of fixed-route service
- More robust travel training program

The demand management strategy worked

- Three years ridership reduction, increased fixed-route use
- Operating expenses contained, even through award of new contracts

MetroAccess also implemented a number of successful measures to reduce cost and increase efficiency



Cost Savings / Efficiency Gains

Cost Savings

- Assumption of risk management and liability insurance function (\$2M annually)
- Direct provision of tax-exempt fuel (\$.5M annually)
- Direct ownership of fleet (\$2M in FY2014 capital budget)
- New business model with multiple contractors
 - Competition yielded only a 2% cost increase from the previous 8-year contract

Efficiency Gains

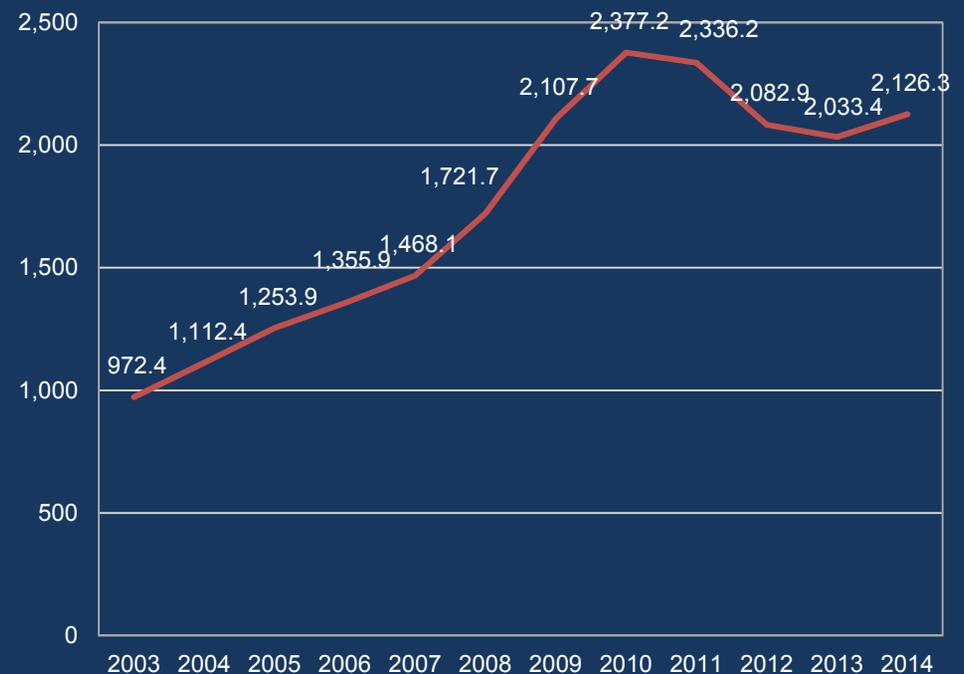
- New business model with separate scheduling
 - Productivity improved from 0.87 to 1.1 pax/hour



Current Strategy

- Demand management has delivered an effective, visible impact
- The most significant gains from this approach have already been realized
- Demand is slowly increasing again
- A combination of strategies will be necessary to ensure ongoing sustainability

MetroAccess Ridership by Fiscal Year
FY2003-FY2014 (000s)



Source: Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority; GMU Center for Regional Analysis



Demand Management Policies

Fixed-Route

- 1. Improve bus stop accessibility**
2. Expand travel training programs
- 3. Expand Reduced Fare Program**

Paratransit

- 4. Enforce trip-by-trip eligibility**
- 5. Maintain ADA service area and fare policy**
6. Monitor efficiency



Jurisdictional Based Policies

Jurisdictions can support MetroAccess sustainability by:

7. Regional brokerage for specialized transportation
- 8. Provide accessible vehicles for human service agencies to enable self-reliance**
9. Encourage provider consolidation (Fastran model)
- 10. Support expansion of jurisdictional based services (Arlington STAR, TransportDC)**
11. Regional policy alignment with local and state government



Action Plan

Policy	Implementation	Measure
Bus Stop Accessibility	In Progress	Board KPI: 100/year
Travel Training	Train-the-trainer, grant funded	Stats, surveys
Reduced Fare Program	Expand promotion to community	Usage
Conditional Eligibility	Phased Enforcement, FY18	Usage
Service Area, Fares	Maintain	Usage
Efficiency	“Last Mile” Feeder Service	Productivity
Brokerage Concept	Jurisdictional Liaisons	Regional Dialogue
Vehicles for HSAs	Grantee-to-grantee transfer, proposal to FTA pending	# vehicles issued
Jurisdictional services and policy alignment	Jurisdictional Liaisons	Regional Dialogue and Pilot Projects



Next Steps

- Identify jurisdictional liaisons
- Metro will schedule a meeting with the jurisdictions facilitated by COG
- Metro will report annual results to the Board