



**Budget Committee**

**Action Item III-A**

**November 9, 2006**

**Approve Project to Build a  
Metro Transit Police  
Firearms Training Range**

**Washington Metropolitan Area Transportation Authority  
Board Action/Information Summary**

Action  
 Information

MEAD Number:  
99672

Resolution:  
 Yes  No

**PURPOSE**

To obtain the Budget Committee's concurrence and the Board of Directors approval to: (1) amend Fiscal 2007 Reimbursable Operating Projects budget to include a new Metro Transit Police Firearms Training Range; (2) temporarily fund the project with up to \$3,500,000 from prepaid fare media deposits; (3) repay the prepaid fare media account principal and interest by transferring \$500,000 annually from overtime savings in the Operating Budget and revenue from leasing surplus range time; (4) use range revenues, upon repayment of all principal and interest, to maintain and upgrade the firearms training range; (5) issue preliminary engineering and environmental assessment tasks to the "On Call" General Architectural and Engineering consultant not exceeding \$300,000; and (6) authorize staff to release the Environmental Assessment, hold a public hearing and release the Draft Staff Report.

**DESCRIPTION**

Metro Transit Police Department (MTPD) officers may face decertification in 2007, because they may be unable to schedule enough time at firearms ranges to practice and re-qualify. Without state certifications, an officer is prohibited from performing police officer duties. It is vital to the safety of police officers and the public for officers to continually improve their firearms proficiency.

MTPD police officers re-qualify at firearms ranges at least twice a year, and meet standards set by the Maryland Police and Correctional Training Commissions and the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services. The District of Columbia requires armed-commission special police officers to re-qualify annually. The WMATA Compact requires compliance with jurisdictional mandates: "[Members are] subject to such additional limitations in the use of weapons as are imposed on the duly constituted police force for the political subdivision in which he is engaged in the performance of his duties."

MTPD has an authorized strength of 423 sworn police officers, 98 armed-commissioned Special Police Officers and four armed revenue guards; however MTPD does not own or operate a range facility, and utilizes the ranges of other agencies (at nominal cost).

The availability of those ranges has drastically decreased in 2006 and will be virtually non-existent in 2007.

In 2005, MTPD scheduled 35 range dates at the Loudoun County firearms range, but this year the Loudoun County range has only 7 available dates. In 2005, MTPD used the Montgomery County range once, but in 2006 no range dates are available. In 2006, the Ft. Meade range has only 6 range dates available to MTPD. Consequently, for the first time in more than a decade, MTPD cannot sustain its historical, regionally recognized, high level of firearms training — a level that has helped prevent any firearms-use-of-force lawsuits in that period.

In 2007 and beyond, MTPD will be unable to re-qualify all members unless it: (1) acquires its own range, or (2) pays \$133,000 in users fees annually to the federal firearms facility in Cheltenham, MD. *and* incurs \$400,000 in overtime; because Cheltenham is open only when most MTPD members are off-duty. Total annual Cheltenham costs: \$533,000.

MTPD recommends building an environmentally safe firing range on a lot now owned by WMATA on Auth Place, across from MTPD's Canine Facility, near the Branch Avenue Metro Station. That location would make it easier for on-duty officers to visit the range. LAND has determined that the lot is suitably zoned and available for MTPD's use. The estimated project cost is \$3,500,000.

MTPD's new range shall have an overhead baffling system and sound-absorbing walls to prevent stray rounds from leaving the range and loud sounds from crossing the property line. MTPD will ensure that the range meets and/or exceeds all applicable federal, state and local safety and environmental laws. MTPD's range will employ an electric spent-round recovery system to capture spent rounds and to prevent any round from reaching the soil. MTPD proposes holding a public hearing to describe the training range and solicit public input.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

The Board can choose not to approve construction of a Police Firearms Training Range, but if a range is not constructed, MTPD: (1) risks having fewer officers available to patrol the system due to de-certifications; (2) risks use-of-force suits that may follow cut-backs in firearms in-service classes at ranges; (3) risks paying overtime to backfill the assignments vacated by officers not certified; and (4) will pay approximately \$533,000 annually in range fees and overtime costs linked to using the Cheltenham facility.

## **FUNDING IMPACT**

Amend the FY07 budget for Reimbursable Operating Projects by \$3,500,000, temporarily using funds in the prepaid fare media account. Annually transfer \$500,000 from the Operating Budget, from overtime savings and revenues from leasing surplus range time, to the prepaid fare media account until principle and lost interest are recouped.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Budget Committee concur and forward to the Board of Directors for approval to: (1) amend Fiscal 2007 Reimbursable Operating Projects budget to include a new Metro Transit Police Firearms Training Range; (2) temporarily fund the project with up to \$3,500,000 from prepaid fare media deposits; (3) repay the prepaid fare media account principal and interest by transferring \$500,000 annually from overtime savings in the Operating Budget and revenue from leasing surplus range time; (4) use range revenues, upon repayment of all principal and interest, to maintain and upgrade the firearms training range; (5) issue preliminary engineering and environmental assessment tasks to the "On Call" General Architectural and Engineering consultant not exceeding \$300,000; and (6) authorize staff to release the Environmental Assessment, hold a public hearing and release the Draft Staff Report.



# Approve Project to Build a Metro Transit Police Firearms Training Range

*Presented to the Board of Directors:*

**Budget Committee**

November 9, 2006



# Metro Transit Police Department Members Must Re-Qualify Annually

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- **District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia require police officers and special police officers to re-qualify annually at firearms ranges**
- **The WMATA Compact requires armed members of the Metro Transit Police Department to meet District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia firearms standards**



# The Metro Transit Police Department Re-Qualifies Hundreds of Members Every Year

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MTPD has an authorized strength  
of:

423 Sworn Transit Police Officers

- 98 armed-commissioned Special Police Officers
- 4 armed Revenue Guards





# Officers Risk De-Certification in 2007

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- MTPD does not own a firearms range, and uses firearms ranges of other police agencies
- Available range dates are diminishing and will be virtually non-existent in 2007
- The challenge is to re-qualify all officers in 2007
- Officers who do not re-qualify will be decertified
- Decertified officers cannot perform police duties





# Options for Re-Qualifying Officers

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**MTPD cannot re-qualify all members in 2007 unless:**

- MTPD acquires its own range, or
- uses the federal firearms facility in Cheltenham, Maryland



**Cheltenham will cost \$533,000 annually**

\$133,000 in fees + \$400,000 in overtime

**Estimated cost of new range is \$3.5M**

Overtime savings and range fees will pay for range.



# Range Design Will Address Safety & Environmental Requirements

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- Safety is the first design consideration
  - Range shall have secure perimeters and “no blue sky” over firing positions
  - Preliminary engineering and environmental assessment will be contracted out
  - Final design will meet all state and federal safety & environmental regulations
- Spent rounds will not reach/contaminate soil
- Sound-absorbing material will be used on range surfaces



The Fairfax County Range uses overhead baffles and a concrete backstop for safety.



# Proposed Location for the Firearms Training Range

A suitable WMATA-owned lot sits across from the MTPD K-9 facility, not far from the Branch Avenue Metro Station

- Convenient for officers to reach range by rail
- Zoning OK for range
- Lower costs to build on WMATA property
- Land not earmarked for other use





# Recommendations



**That the Budget Committee concur and forward to the Board for approval to:**

- amend Fiscal 2007 Reimbursable Operating Projects budget by \$3,500,000 to acquire a Metro Transit Police Firearms Training Range
- temporarily fund project with prepaid fare media receipts; use overtime savings and range revenue to repay account
- issue tasks to "on call" General Architectural and Engineering consultant not to exceed \$300,000
- authorize staff to hold a Public Hearing
- authorize the Interim General Manager to release the Draft Public Hearing Staff Report for public review soon after the report is completed

SUBJECT: Internally Fund the Metro Transit Police Firearms Training Range;  
Authorize Public Hearing; Release Environmental and Staff Reports

PRESENTED AND ADOPTED:

PROPOSED  
RESOLUTION  
OF THE  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
OF THE  
WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSIT AUTHORITY

WHEREAS, It is vital to the safety of police officers and the public they serve for officers to continually improve their firearms proficiency; and

WHEREAS, Police accreditation and training commissions of the District of Columbia, State of Maryland, and the Commonwealth of Virginia and the require police officers and armed-commissioned special police officers to re-qualify in firearms proficiency annually; and

WHEREAS, The failure of an officer to complete mandated firearms re-qualification will result in the decertification of the officer, and prohibit that person from performing police officer duties; and

WHEREAS, The Metro Transit Police department (MTPD) does not own or operate a firearms range, and depends on available shooting dates at local agencies' firearms ranges; and

WHEREAS, Metro Transit Police Officers may face decertification in 2007, because, they may be unable to schedule enough time at firearms ranges to practice and re-qualify; and

WHEREAS, MTPD is incurring high user fees and overtime costs to send officers to a regional federal firearms range to guarantee officers the opportunity to re-qualify; and

WHEREAS, It is cost-effective and practical for MTPD to acquire its own firearms training range to guarantee officers an opportunity to re-qualify in firearms proficiency; and

WHEREAS, A new firearms training range can be internally-funded, with development and construction costs funded temporarily from the prepaid fare media account, to be replenished by annual savings in overtime and range user fees, and from revenue earned by leasing surplus range time to local agencies; now, therefore be it

*RESOLVED*, That the Board of Directors authorizes staff to expend up to \$3,500,000 from the prepaid fare media account to finance the acquisition and construction of a police

firearms training range, and be it further

*RESOLVED*, That that principal and interest, based on the investment earnings rate earned on the Operating Budget from which the funds are being borrowed, will be repaid by transferring \$500,000 annually from overtime savings in the Operating Budget and revenue from leasing surplus range time; and be it further

*RESOLVED*, That upon repayment of all principal and interest, any revenue earned from leasing surplus range time will used to maintain and upgrade the firearms training range, with excess revenues credited to the Operating Budget; and be it further

*RESOLVED*, That the Board of Directors authorizes staff to issue tasks to the "On Call" General Architectural and Engineering consultant for preliminary engineering and environmental assessment not exceeding \$300,000; and be it further

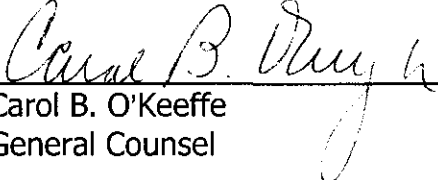
*RESOLVED*, That the Board of Directors authorizes staff to hold a Compact public hearing on the proposed construction of the Metro Transit Police Firearms Training Range with the Interim General Manager, in conjunction with Maryland Board Members, to establish the date, time and location of the hearing; and be it further

*RESOLVED*, That the Board of Directors authorizes the Interim General Manger to release the Staff Report associated with this construction when it is ready; and be it further

*RESOLVED*, That the Board of Directors amends the Fiscal 2007 Reimbursable Operating Projects budget to include this project; and be it finally resolved

*RESOLVED*, That this Resolution shall be effective immediately.

Reviewed as to form and legal sufficiency.

  
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Carol B. O'Keeffe  
General Counsel