



Planning and Development Committee

Board Information Item IV

December 21, 2006

Results of Regional Bus Conference

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

<input type="checkbox"/> Action <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information	MEAD Number:	Resolution: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
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PURPOSE

To provide the Planning and Development Committee with a status report on the the Regional Bus Conference held on November 30, 2006.

DESCRIPTION

The WMATA Regional Bus Study (2001) and Regional Mobility Initiative (2004) identified numerous opportunities to work with local and state governments to improve regional and local bus service. Three strategies were highlighted: 1) bus stop improvement, including better access for individuals with disabilities, and maintenance; 2) bus travel time enhancement through a variety of priority bus treatments and traffic management techniques; and 3) bus customer information improvements. Many of these improvements would be made in high priority bus corridors.

In October 2004, WMATA executed the Metro Matters funding agreement, which provides capital funds to replace aged buses, to expand the bus fleet with new buses, to build a new bus garage, and to make investments in customer facilities including providing bus customers with real-time information and building bus centers in high-priority bus corridors. Each of these capital improvements is in the implementation phase. Additional bus operating support was approved in the FY07 Budget. The bus program portion of the FY07 budget focuses on high performing bus routes experiencing crowded conditions and high-priority bus corridors where there are running time problems.

At the February 23, 2006 Special Budget Committee meeting, Board Member Gordon Linton proposed a Regional Bus Conference at which WMATA could bring regional partners together to discuss ways to secure regional commitment towards implementing the recommended local and state government strategies in the Regional Bus Study and Regional Mobility Initiative.

The purpose of the conference was to lay the foundation for improving the overall experience of bus riders. The primary goal is to provide customers with seamless end-to-end bus trips with ease and comfort.

The Conference was held at the Marriott Bethesda North Hotel and Conference Center in Rockville, Maryland on November 30, 2006 with over 280 attendees from a diverse group of local and state leaders and transportation experts.

The Regional Bus Conference produced action plans in four areas: traffic management, bus stop, service integration and fare policy. The next steps associated with the conference will include: producing final Conference Reports (hardcopy and web-based); WMATA's Planning and Joint Development Department's leading an Interdepartmental Management Team; creating a Regional Bus Committee (Steering and Technical subcommittees, producing annual budget estimates and funding requests, and implementing strategies).

FUNDING IMPACT

\$100,000 from FY07 Project Development Program was allocated for the Regional Bus Conference; however \$65,000 was used for the conference. The final conference report will be developed from remaining funds.

RECOMMENDATION

None, this item is informational.



Results of the Regional Bus Conference

Presented to the Board of Directors:

Planning and Development Committee

December 21, 2006





Conference Facts/Showcase

Marriott Bethesda North Hotel and Conference Center

Over 280 attendees plus 20 exhibitors

Showcases represented many systems/agencies:

Fairfax County Connector

Fairfax City CUE

Prince George's THE BUS

Arlington Transit (ART)

Alexandria DASH

Montgomery County Ride-On

District of Columbia Circulator

MTA Maryland Commuter Bus

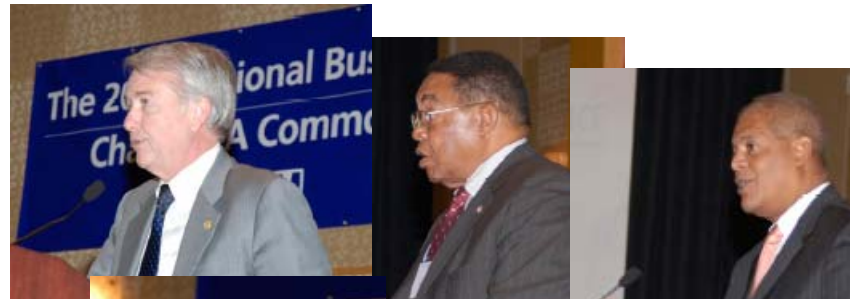
Metrobus



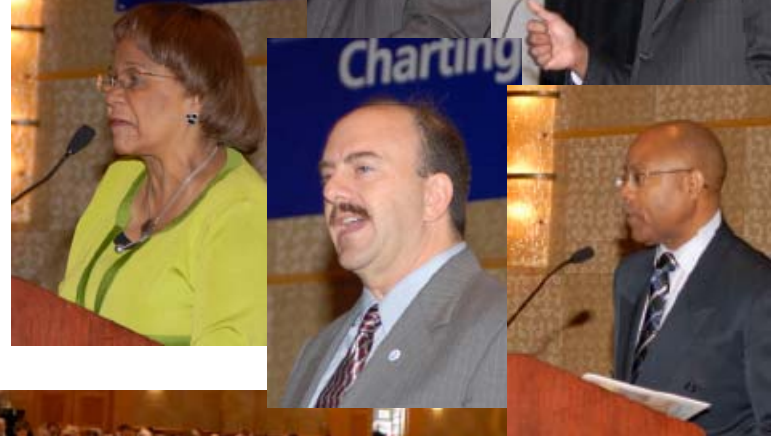


General Session

- *Opening Session*



- *Improving Bus Customer Service through Regional Integration*



- *National Best Practices*

- Traffic Management
- Transit Waiting Environment
- Service Integration
- Fare Policy





Break-Out Workshop Summaries

Service Integration

- Recommended developing a unique, multi-jurisdictional committee comprised of representatives from various agencies.
- Establish a new paradigm for planning coordinated corridor service that emphasizes marketing, information technology/communication and infrastructure.



Traffic Management

- An institutional action plan must be identified and implemented.
- The diversity of the issues, stakeholders, and policy makers is the most significant challenge facing regional traffic management.





Break-Out Workshop Summaries

Bus Stops

- Concluded that action on bus stops is required on a regional basis.
- The discussion highlighted service change communication, maintenance, interactive multimedia trip planners, universal guidance on bus stop design, jurisdictional coordination.



Fare Policy

- Focused on promoting SmarTrip® convenience.
- Consensus was reached on the principles behind the policies discussed.
- Panel members wanted specific benchmarks met and action plans in place before the day pass and transfer were eliminated.





Participation from Diverse Agencies

Craig Keish, Southwest Airlines spoke about *Providing Outstanding Customer Service*



“ An unhappy customer shares experience with 15-30 people and a happy customer only 6 people.”



The conference provided the regional bus stakeholders a rare chance to meet, greet and share perspectives.





Regional Bus Services - Next Steps

Future plans lay out an aggressive role for WMATA in preparing strategies for meeting these future obligations.

1. Generate Conference Reports (hardcopy and web-based)
2. Lead WMATA's Planning and Joint Development Department's Interdepartmental Management Team
3. Create a Regional Bus Committee (Steering and Technical subcommittees)
4. Provide Annual budget estimates and funding requests
5. Implement Strategies