



**Customer Service and Operations Committee**

**Board Information Item III-A**

**March 13, 2014**

**Improving Accessibility of Regional Bus Stops and Pathways**

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

Action  Information

MEAD Number:  
200650

Resolution:  
 Yes  No

**TITLE:**

Accessible Bus Stops and Pathways

**PRESENTATION SUMMARY:**

This presentation describes an approach Metro intends to pursue to improve inaccessible bus stops on a priority basis, recognizing that accessible bus stops decrease the dependence of customers with disabilities on MetroAccess service.

A summary of the number of inaccessible bus stops is provided by jurisdiction and 57 priority stops are identified for initial improvement. Also presented is Metro's standard for accessible stops for regional adoption.

**PURPOSE:**

To inform Board members of an effort to improve bus stop accessibility, and to encourage their direct involvement in helping Metro coordinate the improvement of prioritized stops in the respective jurisdictions, particularly with regard to permitting and other regulatory processes; and to help speed adoption of a regional definition of an accessible bus stop that includes a pathway from the stop.

**DESCRIPTION:**

Metro has developed a comprehensive plan to identify specific inaccessible bus stops, which if they were improved to be made accessible, have the potential to greatly reduce demand for MetroAccess service by customers who live or travel near the inaccessible stop.

There are more than 31,000 individuals certified to use MetroAccess service, and approximately 55% (approximately 17,000) of those are certified as conditionally eligible, meaning that their disability(ies) does not prevent them from using accessible fixed route services for at least some of their public transportation trips.

By prioritizing improvements to non-accessible stops specifically mentioned by conditionally eligible customers, ACCS has identified 57 of these locations, and taking a very conservative estimate that providing accessibility to these stops would reduce the need of at least two round trips per week by the customers pointing out the stops, the reduction in MetroAccess demand would be nearly 12,000 trips over the course of a year, which would represent savings of nearly \$600,000 or more than \$10,000 per stop. However, through travel training and customer messaging, ACCS anticipates a higher use of fixed route services by these customers.

Metro will use the recently-developed modified standard for accessible bus stops, which now

includes the pathway from the corner nearest to the bus stop to at least one sidewalk adjacent to the bus stop. Staff has used feedback from customers and travel trainers to identify 57 initial prioritized bus stops for repair. Staff will be seeking federal grant dollars to update the Metro Bus Stop Inventory database, not only for new information, but to include pathway information as well. This will improve our ability to continue prioritizing stops for improvement. Finally, staff will identify other prioritized stops by way of mapping MetroAccess demand against the locations of inaccessible bus stops.

### **Key Highlights:**

- Accessible bus stops decrease demand for MetroAccess service and afford customers a more independent travel option.
- All inaccessible stops cannot be improved immediately, so prioritization based on reducing MetroAccess demand is the most sound approach to identifying stops to improve.
- Accessible bus stops must include accessible pathways away from the bus stop.

### **Background and History:**

Previously, Metro has successfully employed demand management initiatives such as conditional eligibility, travel training, and the aggressive promotion of the Free Ride Program for conditionally eligible MetroAccess customers to address forecasted increases in ridership.

There are more than 19,000 bus stops in the MetroAccess service area (in parallel to Metrobus and jurisdictional bus service routes). More than half of these stops are not fully accessible. The Accessibility Advisory Committee has interviewed jurisdictional (DOT) staff to obtain progress reports with the support and encouragement of the WMATA Board. Progress on the improvement of bus stops has been slow in recent years and inconsistent among the jurisdictions. The large number of inaccessible bus stops is causing dependency on MetroAccess at a cost to jurisdictions of \$50 per trip, and making a bus stop accessible allows the same trip to be taken on bus or rail for less than \$4.

The cost to make a bus stop functionally accessible, including design, coordination, and construction, can be managed to approximately \$10,000 per stop. This does not include installation of shelters or any aesthetic considerations. To improve all 10,006 inaccessible stops will cost approximately \$100 million.

In defining an accessible bus stop, Metro has always used the standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):

1. Firm landing surface;
2. At least 5 feet wide and 8 feet long; and
3. Connects to the curb.

Metro has completed an inventory of its own bus stops using the standard, but we need access to the jurisdictional bus stop inventory to further our work.

It is not realistic or cost-effective to try to improve nearly 10,000 stops in the short term, so Metro is undertaking this initiative to prioritize which stops to improve to make Metro more accessible.

**Discussion:**

Current Efforts:

Metro has successfully applied for and received New Freedom Grant funding in the amount of \$1.2 million aimed at improving 88 stops: 17 in Alexandria; 31 in Arlington; 6 in Fairfax County and City; and 34 in Prince George’s County.

Concurrently, ACCS has identified 57 non-accessible bus stops to be recommended to the local jurisdictions for priority repair, based on feedback from MetroAccess customers. These stops are located in the following jurisdictions: 28 in the District of Columbia; 2 in Montgomery County; 2 in Alexandria; 1 in Arlington; 5 in Fairfax County and City; and 19 in Prince George’s County.

Next Steps:

**Adopt amended bus stop accessibility standard** - To ensure that an accessible bus stop is also fully functional for the customer, Metro has added a fourth criterion to its accessible bus stop standard - A curb cut at the corner nearest the bus stop with a matching curb cut at (at least) one adjacent corner. Metro encourages regional adoption of this standard.

**Prioritize improvements** - Metro has provided a list of 57 stops from its paratransit eligibility process that should be at the top of the prioritization list. Staff has engaged with stakeholders in the selection of bus stops to improve, and has begun engaging jurisdictional staff on issues such as permitting, zoning, and procurement of contractors. The time needed to improve bus stops is affected by jurisdictional permitting and other regulatory processes, so expediting bus stop improvements will require these processes to be prioritized and streamlined. It is anticipated that some of the work on some of the bus stops will be underway prior to the end of the current fiscal year. Further prospects for prioritization will come from a mapping against MetroAccess service activity.

**FUNDING IMPACT:**

Project Manager:	Christian Kent
Project Department/Office:	Access Services

**TIMELINE:**

<b>Anticipated actions after presentation</b>	April 2014 - Begin coordination with local jurisdictions on the adoption of the Metro standard for an accessible bus stop  June 2014 - Apply for grant funding to update the Metrobus stop inventory
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**RECOMMENDATION:**

There is no formal Board action required at this time. However, ACCS recommends the following: (1) regional adoption of Metro’s standard for an accessible bus; (2) Board member support of regional discussions on improving bus stop accessibility, particularly with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments; and (3) improvements to each of the 57 initially prioritized inaccessible bus stops identified by MetroAccess customers.



Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

# Accessible Bus Stops and Pathways in the Region

Customer Service & Operations Committee

March 13, 2014



# Background

- Accessible bus stops decrease dependence on paratransit service and are safer for all customers
- \$1.2 million New Freedom Grant is available to improve as many as 88 bus stops
- More than half of the region's 19,000 stops are inaccessible





# Existing Bus Stop Accessibility Standard

In compliance with the ADA, Metro standards include:

1. Firm landing surface
2. At least 5' wide and 8' long
3. Connects to the curb

Current inventory limited to stops served by Metrobus

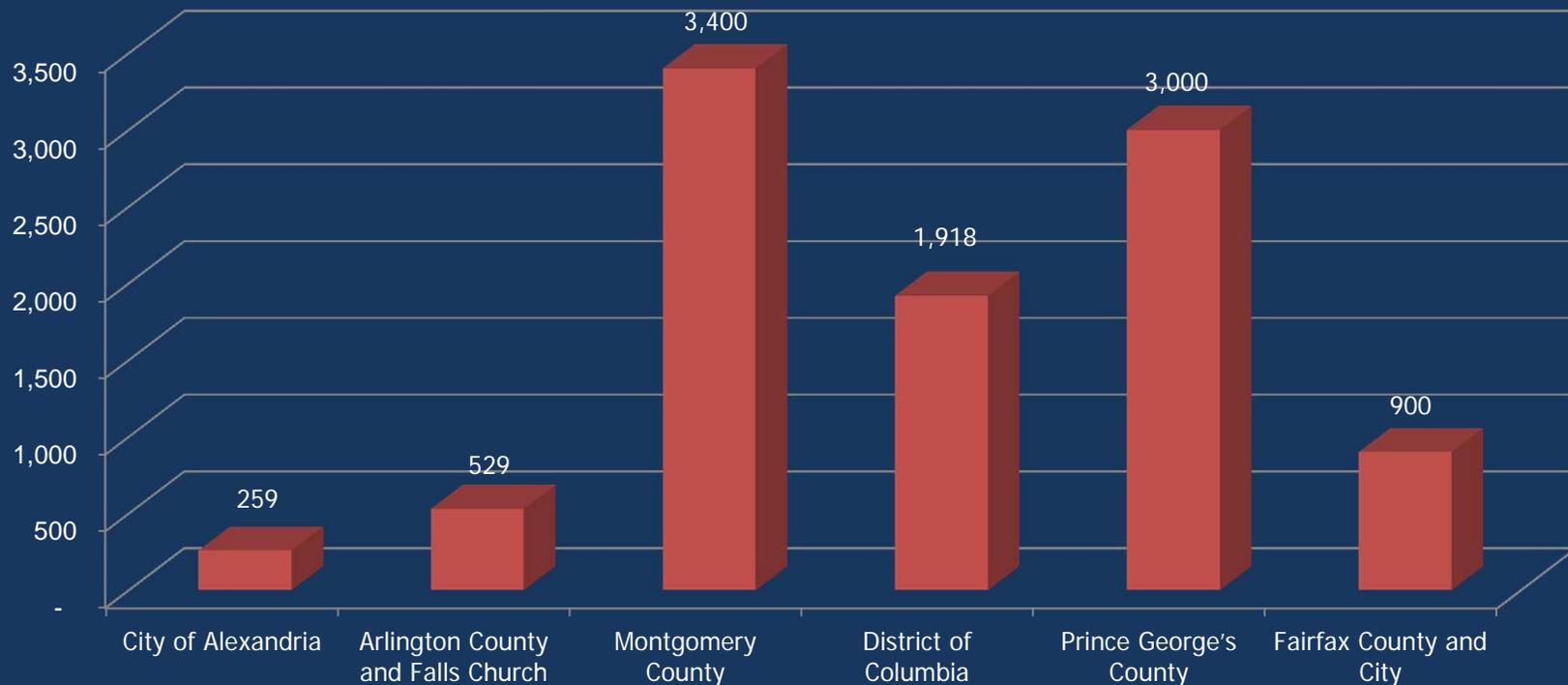




# Inaccessible Stops (Metrobus and Regional)

Source: Jurisdictional Presentations to the AAC

## Number of Inaccessible Bus Stops in the Region



- Of the region's total 19,123 bus stops, **10,006** are estimated inaccessible



# Staff Recommendation 1: Adopt Amended Bus Stop Accessibility Standard

Metro has added a fourth criterion to its accessible bus stop standard:

- 4. A curb cut at the corner nearest the bus stop with a matching curb cut at (at least) one adjacent corner**

Metro recommends adoption of this standard by all jurisdictions





## Staff Recommendation 2: Prioritize Improvements

- Metro has identified 57 priority stops from its paratransit eligibility process
- Further priorities will come from mapping against MetroAccess service





# Investment Required

- Minimum to improve -- \$10,000 per bus stop
- 10,006 inaccessible stops will cost more than \$100 million
- ROI on improving the first 57 could be as much as \$600K in paratransit cost avoidance





# Return on Investment

- Accessible bus stops are **safer** bus stops
- Paratransit customers will be able to travel more independently
- Will render many paratransit trips unnecessary -- savings on subsidy will more than pay for the investments





# Next Steps

- Collaborate with COG advisory groups on revised standard of an accessible bus stop and greater coordination of services
- Integrate jurisdictions' stops into Metro bus stop inventory
- Prioritize next bus stop improvements based on greatest potential for paratransit demand reduction

