

**JOINT SUBCOMMITTEE TO STUDY  
CREATING A REGIONAL RAPID TRANSIT NETWORK**

(SJR 357, 2009)

<http://dls.virginia.gov/transit.htm>

October 6, 2009

10:00 a.m.

Prince William County Development Services Building  
Woodbridge, Virginia

Meeting Summary

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Barker. The other members in attendance were Senators Colgan and Puller and Delegates Watts, Frederick, Hugo, and Scott.

The first presentation was by Eric Marx, Director of Planning and Operations, Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission (PRTC). Mr. Marx began by explaining that the PRTC is a transportation district comprised of five local governments: Prince William County, Stafford County, City of Manassas, City of Manassas Park, and City of Fredericksburg. Under state law, PRTC is authorized to plan and operate transit services for residents of the member governments. PRTC provides express bus, local bus, ride matching, and commuter rail services (the latter in cooperation with the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission). Mr. Marx looked at some elements that are needed to make bus rapid transit (BRT) a competitive transit option. Travel time advantages and reliability require lanes that allow buses to have largely unimpeded movement for the majority of the route. However, new dedicated or shared HOV lanes require a significant capital investment. Another element involves increasing the frequency and ease of use of service to make bus transit more attractive. However, with fares typically covering no more than 50% of operating costs, a significant amount of new, on-going, and consistent operating subsidies would be required. Finally, providing access is another element to consider. In the current service environment, there is a good chance commuters will only be able to access BRT by walking on one end of their trip. Where walking and/or biking is not feasible, new and expanded parking lots and/or a supplemental feeder bus system is necessary. PRTC's approach to BRT includes (i) using existing HOV lanes, (ii) operating as frequently as every eight minutes, (iii) using a comfortable, late model fleet, (iv) having well trained bus operators, and (v) using systems to maintain on-time performance and keep customers informed. Mr. Marx explained that service quality directly correlates to success, which can be achieved to varying degrees by differing levels of investment.

Mr. Marx next discussed what is needed to achieve a quality BRT service. Money is the primary hurdle, especially on the operating side. Simply maintaining existing services is a challenge. Local funding accounts for the majority of operating subsidy, but is yielding less than what is needed to sustain the service. Low and fluctuating state assistance makes multiyear planning difficult. The program needs a steady source of state funding tied to achieving the General Assembly's stated aim of covering 95% of eligible costs. Also needed are more proactive efforts to enhance BRT's travel time advantage. This includes improving existing HOV lanes, increasing efforts to keep bus stops clear of traffic and parked vehicles, requiring that HOT lanes aim to maintain existing posted speed limits, and promoting greater state/regional cooperation in sponsoring commuting between suburbs. Incorporating technology is also needed to achieve a quality BRT service. This includes providing real-time transit information to customers, adding amenities such as wi-fi, and installing vehicle system remote monitoring to reduce breakdowns. Mr. Marx ended his presentation by looking at the importance of parking

and access, including (i) making park-and-ride funding a priority in the region, (ii) conducting a serious assessment of pedestrian needs, (iii) providing funding for passenger amenities, (iv) adding bike racks, bike storage, and a loaner bike system, and (v) formally recognizing "slugs" and considering them in plans to reduce congestion.

The next presentation was by Stephen Del Giudice, Transit Bureau Chief, County of Arlington. Mr. Del Giudice looked at the community development transportation question from the successful Arlington experience. He explained that the reduced reliance on auto travel leads to other ancillary community benefits, including (i) more efficient use of land, (ii) reduced environmental impacts, (iii) lower energy use and carbon footprint, (iv) enhanced quality of life, and (v) improved public health. Part of what made the Arlington experience a success involved the integration of land use and transportation principles and the alignment of transportation investment, infrastructure, and services with development. Arlington is 25.8 square miles in area, including federal lands and home to major federal facilities (Pentagon and Arlington Cemetery). It is located in the core of a rapid growing Washington region, and it is a region that continues to grow. Arlington's development concepts include (i) concentrating high and mid-density redevelopment around transit stations, (ii) preserving and reinvesting in residential neighborhoods, (iii) encouraging a mix of uses and services in station areas, (iv) creating high quality pedestrian and bike environments, and (v) enhancing open space. Mr. Del Giudice looked at various travel trends, such as average weekday ridership, arterial street travel, and commuting and other transit trends.

Mr. Del Giudice closed his presentation by talking about the lessons learned from Arlington's experience. He said that Arlington's strategies have yielded extensive transportation, environmental, economic, and quality of life benefits. Many policies contributed to enhanced performance, including (i) building mixed-use environments with highest densities around transit stops and protecting neighborhoods, (ii) expanding viable and attractive transit options, (iii) making user information readily available and providing ongoing education, (iv) sustaining transportation demand management, and (v) actively managing parking. It is not a short-term commitment. Achieving full benefits requires sustaining and enhancing programs and policies over time.

The final presentation was by Dan Rathbone, Division Chief, Transportation Planning Division, County of Fairfax. Mr. Rathbone focused his presentation on what was learned from the Tysons analysis. The transit improvements included in the 2030 analysis were Dulles Rail, express bus service on I-66/I-495, I-95/I-495, improved bus service between Tysons and surrounding communities, and improved bus service within Tysons. It is important to keep vehicle trips constant as Tysons grows beyond the year 2030. Mr. Rathbone presented various charts showing how to keep those vehicle trips constant. The charts can be found at: <http://dls.virginia.gov/GROUPS/transit/meetings/100609/Tysons.pdf>.

In looking at growth beyond 2030, one strategy involves enhanced transportation demand management (TDM). Examples include: (i) in-house carpool and vanpool matching services, (ii) on-site bus pass sales and a half time transportation coordinator, and (iii) significant employee participation in telework. Another strategy is to lower cost improvements in order to increase transit share by identifying transit corridors for improvement. Another strategy for growth beyond 2030 involves traffic and parking management by increasing tolling and congestion pricing and limiting parking and parking pricing. Mr. Rathbone concluded his remarks by explaining that the expansion of highway capacity is limited, TDM and lower cost transit improvements help but are also limited, and additional rail/high quality rapid transit corridors combined with transit oriented development have the potential to increase the percentage of transit use over time.

The next meeting of the subcommittee will be October 27, 2009.