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MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: WASHINGTON AREA TRANSIT OFFICE / WASHINGTON SUBURBAN TRANSIT COMMISSION STAFF WORK PROGRAM

DATE: September 20, 2023

SUMMARY

This memorandum highlights the planned activities of the staff of MDOT's Washington Area Transit Office (WATO) and the Washington Suburban Transit Commission (WSTC) in FY2024 and related ongoing activities beyond the current fiscal year.

This memorandum also highlights a recommended use of current fund balance at WSTC to support MDOT and Montgomery and Prince George's Counties in advancing shared transit policies.

Proposed Work Plan

Vision: MDOT's goal is to establish a WMATA think tank for Maryland and a central convening for WMATA and local transit engagement in the Metro Washington region through the work of WATO and WSTC.

Priority Areas: Over the next twelve months, our priority policy areas through which we will support a coherent state and local policy are:

- WMATA Operating Budget and FY25 fiscal cliff – Working with region to identify strategies for addressing the FY25 cliff and developing sustainable long-term strategies, including participation in MWCOG committees.
- WMATA Capital Budget FY29 capacity exhaustion – Developing long-term capital budget and financing frameworks.
- Better Bus Network – Aligning with jurisdictions on planning, funding, and implementation strategies.
- Bus Priority – Working with Montgomery, Prince George's, and WMATA to implement Bus Priority Network corridors and Bus Rapid Transit.
- Blue – Orange – Silver – Developing jurisdictional perspective on Preferred Alternative and implementation approach.
- MetroAccess – Reviewing operations and cost management strategies to balance quality service and long-term cost curve.
- Zero emission bus transition – Coordination with WMATA, Ride On, and TheBus on strategy and implementation.

MDOT Initiative Coordination: Alongside these priorities, WATO/WSTC expect to provide support to the following MDOT initiatives with relevance for our role:

- MDOT Asset Management Program – MDOT is leading a strategic initiative to create a stronger asset management approach to improve the agency’s ability to track and manage our state of good repair maintenance backlog. Secretary Wiedefeld has asked WMATA to join in this initiative in parallel with MDOT’s modal administrations. We will support WMATA coordination in this effort.
- Commission on Transportation Revenue and Infrastructure Needs – MDOT will be evaluating the future of transportation revenues and how to structure project prioritization and development. Alongside this effort, WATO and WSTC staff will evaluate the WMATA needs as well as the role of both WSTC and the Washington Suburban Transit *District* in the future arrangement of Maryland’s transportation program.
- Transit-Oriented Development – MDOT has hired a new Chief of Transit Oriented Development and is working to advance TOD more expeditiously at WMATA and MARC stations. WATO staff will support WMATA and jurisdictional coordination and program advancement.

WMATA Joint Study Fund – During previous fiscal years, WSTC budgeted for, but did not fill, the Transit Analyst position. This has created a positive fund balance. Staff anticipates that approximately \$100,000 would be available to support this work. WATO staff believe that the best use of this balance is to support a policy study of interest to both jurisdictions. In discussion with agency leaders at MDOT, MCDOT, DPW&T, and NVTC, WATO staff identified interest in studies related to MetroAccess; the fiscal cliff; the value of WMATA to Maryland; zero-emission bus; and TOD. Ongoing discussions regarding the future of WMATA funding will inform the best use of Fund resources. Following approval of the Fund, WATO staff will work to finalize the scope of work with stakeholders for approval by the Commissioners.

Should the Fund prove successful in FY24, WATO staff recommends requesting permanent funding from the jurisdiction to support the Fund’s activities in future fiscal years.

Ongoing Activities – In addition to, and in furtherance of, these activities, WATO / WSTC will advance the following programmatic activities:

- Successful completion of annual compliance and reporting activities, including the audit, conflict of interest, and lobbying reports.
- Management of the WSTC WMATA grant and WSTC finances.
- Coordination and execution of WSTC office move to 8400 Corporate Dr
- Oversight and analysis of WMATA financial issues.
- Oversight and analysis of WMATA transit issues through regular data analyses
- Regular briefing of WMATA Directors and WSTC Commissioners
- Regular coordination with Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties transportation and Council staff regarding WMATA and local transit policy and budgetary issues.

NEXT STEPS

This Work Plan is being shared with the WSTC Commissioners in the September Commission meeting. Approval for the proposed budget amendment for the WMATA Joint Study Fund is requested at the time of the December meeting.