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MEMORANDUM

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

DATE: August 29, 2024

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 FY2025 and related ongoing activities beyond the current fiscal year.

WSTC Proposed Work Plan

Vision: MDOT's goal is to continue the establishment of 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 WSTC.

Priority Areas: For FY25, our priority policy areas through which we will support a coherent state and local policy are:

- DMV Moves – Working with the region to identify a regional transit vision, establish transit service improvements of regional importance, and develop sustainable operating and capital funding strategies.
- WMATA Bus and Rail Subsidy Formula Revisions – Collaborate with WMATA and other regional funders to revise the formulas to improve legibility and better align investments with service levels.
- Metro Lift – Coordinate with the counties to develop aspirational targets for enrollment in the program, and develop and implement a marketing and outreach plan to enroll residents.
- Better Bus Network Redesign (BBNR) Year 1 Network – Aligning with jurisdictions on planning and implementation for the network.
- BBNR Visionary Network – Based on data analysis and projected ridership, develop a prioritization approach for future staged investments in enhanced bus service proposed in the Visionary Network.
- WMATA FY26 budget – Working with region to identify strategies for addressing the near- and long-term operating and capital budget needs and to close gaps for the FY26 budget.
- Bus Priority – Building on the success of the summer 2024 Red Line closure bus lanes, work with Montgomery, Prince George's, and WMATA to implement Bus Priority Network corridors and Bus Rapid Transit expeditiously.

- MetroAccess – Through the Maryland MetroAccess Strategy Study, review operations and cost management strategies to balance quality service and long-term cost curve and identify a strategy roadmap for the future of paratransit in the counties.

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

- Transportation Revenue and Infrastructure Needs – MDOT will continue 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 – Continue 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 – Last year, WSTC decided to budget for and initiate the Maryland MetroAccess Strategy Study to evaluate current usage patterns and cost drivers, understand what can be learned from other jurisdictions, and then use that information to suggest a high-level roadmap for future actions for Maryland should consider. Solicitation is underway and staff expect to complete this study in FY25.

Staff recommend the WSTC continue supporting the joint study fund as a way to advance transit policy of mutual interest to the State and Counties. Accordingly, staff recommends requesting permanent funding from the jurisdiction to support the fund's activities in future fiscal years. If the WSTC agrees, WSTC should begin identifying potential joint study topics. Following approval of the fund and selected topic, WATO staff will work to finalize the scope of work with stakeholders for approval by the Commissioners.

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.
- 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.
- Tracking of Washington Metrorail Safety Commission (WMSC) audits and WMATA corrective actions.

NEXT STEPS

This Work Plan is being shared with the WSTC Commissioners in the September Commission meeting.