



Friday, September 27, 2024
9:30 AM
WSTC Bi-Annual Commissioners
Meeting Minutes

Commissioners in Attendance
Mr. Thomas Graham, Chair
Mr. Tom Hucker, Vice-Chair
Mr. Michael Goldman, Secretary-Treasurer
Mr. Eric Olson
Mr. Don Drummer
Mr. Raymond J. Briscuso, Jr
Mr. Joe McAndrew MDOT as Secretary's Designee
Staff in Attendance
Mr. Jonathan Rogers-Director, Washington Area Transit Office
Ms. Tammy Cooper
Mr. Sara Murdoch
Mr. Ryan Traher
County Representatives in Attendance
Ms. Efon Epanty, Prince George's County
Mr. Haley Peckett, Montgomery County, Deputy Director
Ms. Corey Pitts, Montgomery County
Mr. Philip McLaughlin, Montgomery County
Public in Attendance
Mr. Bill Orleans

I. Call to Order

Chair Graham called the meeting to order at 9:40 AM and a quorum was met.

II. Consent Calendar

- A motion to approve the agenda was presented by Chair Graham and approved unanimously by attending commissioners.
- A motion to approve the minutes from the March 26, 2024, Bi-Annual Business Meeting was presented by Chair Graham and approved unanimously by attending commissioners.
- Chair Graham read Resolution 03-2024 into the record and made a motion to approve the resolution. The motion was unanimously approved by attending

commissioners.

III. Public Comment

- a. Mr. Orleans asked for public comments during meetings of the DMV Moves Task Force. Additionally, regarding DMV Moves, he believes the Government Partners Work Group and the Community Partners Work Group should be open for at least observation if not participation by the public. He asked that Mr. Hucker and Mr. Goldman investigate amending the Community Advisory Work group to include the Action Committee for Transit (ACT).

Lastly, Mr. Orleans asked Mr. Olson and Mr. Graham to conduct a meeting and invite RATP Dev, DPW&T people and drivers and employees of the RATP Dev to resolve any outstanding issues regarding loss of employment service because of poor record keeping by both RATP Dev and DPW&T. Mr. Olson has not heard of any employment service issues but will investigate and find out what the issue is. Per Mr. Orleans, this is a very recent occurrence that drivers have been informed that there is no record of their service.

Mr. Joe McAndrew advised if ACT wants to participate in DMV Moves, Mr. Orleans or someone from ACT should email Director Jonathan Rogers directly to have them added to the roster.

IV. WSTC Update

a. Update on WSTC Internal Matters

i. New Director

Mr. Rogers started as the Director of the Washington Area Transit office on May 1, 2024, and is looking forward to working with the Commission. Professionally, Mr. Rogers has a background in working with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments and DDOT, he is also a Montgomery County native and an active public transit user.

ii. New Transit Analyst

Mr. Ryan Traher is the new Transit Analyst for WSTC. Mr. Traher previously worked for the U.S Department of Education and attended American University to obtain a master's in public policy where he developed a deep passion for public transportation policies.

b. Policy and Program Updates (FY2025 Work Plan)

Mr. Rogers highlighted a few areas of the FY25 Work Plan, one focus being Metro Lift. Metro Lift is WMATA's program that offers reduced fares for bus and rail for people who are enrolled in the SNAP program. WMATA staff provided an update this summer specifying enrollment being low, particularly in Maryland. In Maryland, it is essential to make sure that everyone who qualifies for this program is aware of its existence, especially in Montgomery and Prince George's counties to reduce the burden of recent WMATA fare increases. WSTC is working with the WMATA and county staffs to develop a

communications and outreach strategy to increase Metro Lift awareness and registrations. The strategy includes partnering with sister agencies in the counties to work through human services organizations, libraries and school systems. Mr. Rogers requested the assistance of commissioners to help engage county agencies, but also identify non-profits like food banks that should be included.

The MetroAccess study is going to be a large focus for WSTC that was approved by the Commission for this year's budget; the WSTC joint study fund. Maryland accounts for 62 percent of the MetroAccess costs. The study will identify a high-level roadmap for Maryland to consider maintaining high-quality service while managing costs.

The RFP was issued over the summer and closed a few weeks prior to this Bi-Annual Commissioners Meeting. Proposals are currently being reviewed, upon the selection on a consulting firm to advance, the Commission will be notified. Once work begins, the process should take approximately six months during which the Commissioners will be engaged.

Transit-Oriented Development is a key goal of the Moore-Miller Administration and is a focus of the WSTC. This also includes developing near Metrorail stations and MARC stations mostly in Prince George's County through to the Penn Line Joint Development Strategy that MDOT is close to releasing. Work with WMATA will be ongoing.

Lastly, the approach for the joint study fund is to fund and produce one study per year. The WSTC staff welcomes feedback from the Commission regarding whether to fund the studies out of additional contribution, WSTC reserves, or a combination thereof as well as suggested study topics for FY2026.

Mr. Goldman responded with the suggestion to add Purple Line(PL) coordination with WMATA and WMATA Services to the Work Plan. As the Purple Line is getting closer to opening, ensuring streamlined user experience across multiple transit systems is important. Fare collection so that PL riders with Metro Smartrip cards can use them to pay for PL fares at stations and placement of the Purple Line on the WMATA maps should be a focus in the future work plan.

Mr. Dummer and Mr. Hucker are excited about the work plan. The work plan provides a framework to establish priorities for WSTC.

Mr. Olson will forward information regarding the Metro Lift program to his staff to get the information circulated. Mr. Hucker would be happy to engage the Montgomery County Council and agencies.

Mr. Olson requested a briefing on the Penn Line JD Strategy.

c. **Interest-bearing Account**

In previous Bi-Annual Commissioners meetings the Commissioners requested information regarding an interest-bearing account since WSTC carries a large bank account balance. M&T Bank's only interest-bearing account product is a sweep account. The sweep account option requires a one-time set up fee of \$65 and a monthly recurring fee of \$300. The monthly interest income is variable based on current rates and balances, interest is earned daily and credited daily on the Money Rate Commercial Sweep. The Money Rate Commercial is 3.75% for balances up to \$1 million and 4.25% for balances from \$1 - \$2.5 million. The rate for the Money Rate Commercial Sweep is set by the bank and based on the published Euro rate minus a spread to the bank, the spread fluctuation is based on the daily published rate. The mechanics of the sweep work automatically. The Commission requested additional information about alternate interest-bearing options and did not vote on the interest-bearing account action item. Mr. Graham suggested inquiring about CD options and looking into other bank options in the area.

d. **Audit**

i. **Status of FY24 Audit**

The FY2024 audit is underway and on track to complete by the October 30, 2024, deadline.

ii. **Audit Contract**

The current audit contract with Key & Associates expires after the FY2024 audit is completed. A 1-year, 3-year and 5-year contract proposal was received by Key & Associates for continued audit services. The fee for the FY2025 audit is the same for all 3 proposals in the amount of \$11,300, a 30% increase over the FY2024 fee. At the request of the Commission, staff will solicit quotes from additional firms to understand prevailing audit pricing and inform a strategy for securing an audit contract for FY2025 and beyond.

v. **FY2026 Proposed Budget**

The proposed FY26 budget totals \$677,678 which includes \$150,000 for the Joint Study Fund. The \$150,000 is an estimate and staff will have better information after reviewing the Maryland MetroAccess Strategy Study proposals. The salaries assume a 3% increase effective 1/1/2025. The fringe and benefits reflect a large decrease due to a WSTC employee benefits changing from family to self+1. The proposal received from the current auditor for the FY2025 audit is an increase of 30%. The monthly internet fee is an increase of 17% due to the static IP address required by MDOT IT. The miscellaneous category decreased by 42% with the removal of moving fees and Zip Recruiter job postings. Also added \$100 a year for a Washington Business Journal subscription and \$300 for a framed WSTC logo for the WSTC office. Based on the lease terms the rent increases by 4%. The Bank /

Payroll fees increased by 156% which accounts for the monthly interest-bearing account fee. The proposed budget includes the full Joint Study Fund costs, driving an overall budget increase of 25% from the approved FY2025 budget to the FY2026 proposed budget. However, the source of Joint Study Funding can include use of reserve funds or future interest income. Without the inclusion of the Joint Study Fund costs, the proposed budget is an increase of 1% from the FY2025 approved budget to the FY2026 proposed budget. The FY26 budget will be brought back for a vote in the March 2025 meeting. The Commission requested the budget sheet include a percentage change from FY24 to better understand the year-over-year changes.

VI. County Conversation

a. Prince George's County

Prince George's County Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPW&T) have been working on our Transit Transformation Plan for two years and will continue working on this plan for the next two years. The Transit Transformation Plan has four initiatives:

- Transit Vision Plan, which focuses on transit assessment, understanding how the system could work, attract more users to transit, meeting transit needs, enhance the regional network and leveraging other transit investments.
- Transit Forward Initiative, which focuses on providing better oversight for enhancement of customer service. This will help connect people and provide accessible transportation.
- Zero-Emission Bus (ZEB) Transition focuses on the county's transition to clean buses.
- Service Changes, which involves the public and transit operator engagement, analysis of transit data, and draft recommendations.

b. Montgomery County

The Great Seneca Transit network is four bus routes connecting the Life Sciences area of the county, helping to connect Shady Grove Metrorail station with the Universities at Shady Grove. There was a ribbon cutting on September 9, 2024, to start the first two lines of that network, the Pink and Lime Lines.

Ride On Reimagined, the overall county wide bus vision network study has been shared with the County Council including:

- A full build out of our BRT network, the Great Seneca Transit Network and some new flex zones, many modified routes and some additional new routes
- Nearly doubles the existing service levels
- Increase access to jobs and key locations
- Phased implementation

Jeremiah Park: New Bus Maintenance Facility Project

- It is a 45-acre County owned site
- Mixed-use redevelopment: new, co-located MDOT and MCPS bus depot, housing, park space, and school site
- Supports transit fleet growth and zero emissions transition
- Conceptual Site Planning completed Summer

The county highlighted three recent and ongoing projects

- Germantown Transit Center bus lanes (2021)
- University Boulevard bus lanes (2024)
- Georgia Avenue bus lanes (pilot with MDOT and WMATA 2024)

The Bus Rapid Transit Program in Montgomery County has several active projects underway.

- Veirs Mill Road BRT project just wrapped up our 95% design milestone this summer and the project has been submitted to the FTA for project rating for a grant.
- The Maryland 355 BRT and 355 BRT North/South have an RFP out now for a progressive design build.
- The US 29 Flash Phase 2, which includes a median bus lane between the Tech Road and Four Corners area, is advancing with preliminary design.
- The North Bethesda Transitway on the west side of the county, connecting North Bethesda and the Rock Spring area, as well as the New Hampshire Avenue BRT, are wrapping up their planning studies, hopefully by later this year.

VII. Good of the Order

Commissioner Michael Goldman has been re-appointed to the WSTC Commission as a County Executive representative from Montgomery County.

VIII. Closing Remarks

In response to the Work Plan discussion, WSTC staff committed to include Purple Line coordination in the Work Plan. WSTC staff will update the Work Plan and distribute it to the commissioners.

Mr. Goldman requested that WSTC develop a written position on DMV Moves. After discussion, the Commission agreed that an optimal time for submitting WSTC comments on DMV Moves is after the presentation of the remaining scenarios, anticipated for December 2024.