

WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSIT AUTHORITY

W M A T A

Regional Activity Centers Demonstration Program June 30, 2005

Implementation Plan



Bailey's Crossroads



Dunn Loring/Merrifield



Largo Town Center



Mark Center



M Street SW/ SE Federal Center

Rock Spring Park

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Executive Summary

The Regional Activity Centers Demonstration Program was initiated to demonstrate low-cost transit improvements and supportive demand management policies that offer alternatives to the single-occupancy automobile. Neighborhoods and activity centers were the focus.

The demonstration program was undertaken as part of WMATA's Regional Mobility Initiative, a comprehensive effort to coordinate WMATA bus service and facility enhancements with supportive actions and mobility improvements made by local transportation and planning agencies. The Initiative grew out of a number of local agency and WMATA programs designed to improve regional mobility and accessibility by enhancing the quality of transit service. These programs all share a common theme: to provide lower-cost, faster-to-implement strategies for improving transit service and helping to achieve regional goals of reducing traffic congestion, increasing mobility and accessibility, and improving the quality of life in the region. In an era of fiscal constraints, it seeks to apply the capabilities and resources of both the public and private sectors to the common goal of enhancing mobility.

Activity centers identified by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments were the basis for the program. In consultation with jurisdiction staff, WMATA selected six of these centers for the demonstration program:

- M Street SW/SE Federal Center, District of Columbia
- Largo Town Center, Prince George's County, Maryland
- Rock Spring Park, Montgomery County, Maryland
- Bailey's Crossroads, Fairfax County, Virginia
- Mark Center-Beauregard Street, Alexandria, Virginia
- Dunn Loring-Merrifield, Fairfax County, Virginia

The recommendations for the six centers analyzed in the Regional Activity Center Demonstration Program create an ambitious program of transit service increases and supportive actions. The recommendations outlined in this implementation plan consist of a significant increase in bus service frequency, span, and coverage in the six centers analyzed. All six centers need several types of supportive actions. Better information, more shelters that are cleaned and maintained, and more effective partnerships are appropriate in all. Implementing these recommendations alone would create real benefits for these centers. But the demonstration program also identified characteristics and concepts that can be applied elsewhere in the region.

Highlights for each center include:

- M Street SW/SE Federal Center is an established employment center with some dense residential development that is programmed for extensive growth, including a new major league ballpark. It is a logical location to target with transit, given its dense concentration of employees with predictable work patterns and an employer, the federal government, with pre-existing policies to promote transit use among its workers. WMATA already provides a high level of transit service to the center. Primary needed improvements are additional shelters at high-volume stops, improved walkways to the Navy Yard Metrorail station and bus stops, and

improved signs and transit information. The already high quality of service means that further improvements, in particular improving circulation within the activity center, would require significant capital investment in the form of a new transit mode, such as limited stop bus service or streetcar. Continued planning to respond to future growth, including the ballpark, is needed.

- Largo Town Center has tremendous potential for improved transit service because its identity as a regional activity center is in the process of being formed. In particular, the new Metrorail station can and should serve as a catalyst to improving transit service and ridership throughout the activity center. New bus and pedestrian connections to the station are necessary to allow the activity center to benefit from Metrorail service. Largo Town Center presents an excellent opportunity for WMATA to partner with the emerging business and community groups, establishing partnerships for delivering tailored transit service that will last as more and more varied development comes on line. Establishing a transportation management association (TMA) with new businesses, forming partnerships with the homeowner groups in the area, and forming a strategic partnership with the Prince George's Community College will ensure that WMATA can respond flexibly to changing area demand.
- Rock Spring Park is a classic suburban activity center, established at the nexus of high-volume, limited-access highways as a self-contained employment site that employees could easily access by car. The significant amount of transit service and ridership is testament to the active implementation of Montgomery County's alternate commute policies and the high quality of existing Ride On and WMATA service. For this activity center, and others like it, many good practices are already in place. The primary needs are to continue those practices and to improve the pedestrian walkway system.
- Bailey's Crossroads, like many places in the region, developed over the past few decades as an automobile-oriented corridor. The center is a mixed-use area that contains a significant concentration of jobs and households as well as a shopping mall. The dominance of the roadway network in the center makes walking difficult and risky, but plans are in place for streetscape and pedestrian improvements. The primary transit improvement needs are increased transit service levels to respond to the existing and expected development, improved pedestrian connections to address safety and convenience concerns, and improved signs and transit information.
- The Mark Center, like Rock Spring Park, is a classic auto-oriented office campus. There are nearly no opportunities for improving transit service in the center, except for supplying patrons with amenities and improving the distribution and the accuracy of information about transit service in the immediate center and the surrounding area. Beyond the office campus, which is quite well served by the free shuttle service supplied by the Mark Center management, the apartment buildings in the area, particularly Southern Towers which already demonstrates a high number of transit riders, could be better served with shorter headways or more express service to nearby Metrorail stations.

- Like Largo Town Center, the Dunn Loring/Merrifield activity center is poised for substantial change. And like Largo Town Center, Dunn Loring/Merrifield already has a Metrorail station that should be capitalized upon. Implementing a well-routed circulator could do much to capture new riders and improve mobility in the center. More dense, more transit-oriented development will be easier for WMATA to match with tailored bus transit service. The most significant opportunity for enhancing transit service in the corridor and demonstrating WMATA's commitment to customer service consists of supplying shelters at the two high-volume stops.

The recommendations for the six centers create an ambitious program of transit service increases and supportive actions. The recommendations also identified characteristics and concepts that can be applied elsewhere in the region. Based on the results of this demonstration program, WMATA will address activity center needs through its capital investments, work cooperatively with the local jurisdictions on improvements that require joint effort, and look to the local jurisdictions to include transit considerations in their planning and development decisions.