

Section 2 Largo Town Center



Largo Town Center

The Largo Town Center Activity Center study area consists of the area between Landover Road, Central Avenue, I-95, and the intersection of I-95 and Landover Road, including the area along Arena Road and the Largo Metrorail Station. Service to Prince George's Community College, located south of Central Avenue and West of MD202, was also considered as part of the study area.

Largo Town Center is an emerging employment and residential center in Prince George's County that includes the Largo Town Center shopping plaza. Now served by a Metrorail station, the area has been slated by county planners as a future town center for the county, an area where growth and density should be concentrated. The sector plan, *Adopted Sector Plan and Endorsed Sectional Map Amendment for the Morgan Boulevard and Largo Town Center Metro Areas*, calls for land use in this area to be mixed use. More specifically, the 2004 plan recommends that development in this area be focused and use the mixed-use infill zone designation so that Largo Town Center would become a Metropolitan Center within the county.

The center has office parks to the north, medium- to high-density residential areas to the east and southeast, light industrial to the south, and a commercial strip along Central Avenue west of the I-95/I-495 interchange. The USAir Arena has been replaced with a street-based shopping mall, the Boulevard at Capital Centre. The streetscape along the roadways traveled by buses vary from just-adequate maintenance west of the I-95/I-495 interchange to well maintained near the office parks and apartment complexes in the east. See Figure 2-1 on the following page.

According to the 2000 cooperative forecast data in COG's Regional Activity Center report, there were 5,800 households in the area corresponding roughly with the study area and 11,300 jobs. COG's cooperative forecasts show an 88 percent increase in jobs to 21,400 in 2025, and a more modest increase in households to 8,300.

Largo Town Center is the site of significant anticipated job growth in the next twenty years and it has been the subject of planning by both Prince George's County and the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission.

Construction of Metrorail's Blue Line Extension has been completed with a new station at Largo Town Center. The station opened in December 2004 and ridership so far has been steady. Other characteristics of the center that led to its selection for study:

- Reasonable existing employment and household density with planned future development and a new Metrorail station under construction.
- Potential to capture new riders with improved access to new service.
- Potential for more detailed demand management techniques to improve ridership.

Mode share for the Largo Town Center study area is shown in Table 2-1. Not surprising for a suburban area, driving alone constitutes the most significant percentage of home and work-end trips.

Table 2-1
Largo Town Center Mode Share

	Home End			Work End		
	Transit	Drive Alone	Walk/Bike	Transit	Drive Alone	Walk/Bike
Largo Town Center	9%	79%	0%	4%	82%	2%

Source: 2000 Census Transportation Planning Package

Figure 2-1 Largo Town Center Land Use



Transportation System Characteristics

Traffic congestion is moderate on Largo Road during peak and off-peak hours. Major back-ups occur on eastbound Central Avenue as it approaches Hampton Park Boulevard. This is largely due to traffic in and out of Hampton Park Mall. Back-ups also occur on east- and westbound Campus Way South approaching Largo Road. This is due to a long red traffic signal phase at that intersection, coupled with traffic from Prince George's Community College. The I-495 Interchange at Arena Drive is open only on days when there are games scheduled at FedEx Field. Maryland State Highway Administration is planning to open it to all traffic by 2007.

Because parking is constrained at the Addison Road Metrorail station, increased traffic congestion is expected around the Largo area as vehicles access the new Largo Metrorail Station park-and-ride from Central Avenue and Landover Road.

Pedestrian Environment

There is a limited amount of pedestrian activity in the area. There is no pedestrian circulation within the Largo Center shopping plaza due to an incomplete and circuitous sidewalk network. Each roadway is lined with a sidewalk, but there is no buffer between traffic and pedestrians, limited landscaping, no benches, and infrequent crosswalks. The long distance between crosswalks encourages jaywalking, and pedestrians crossing to catch buses bound in the opposite direction are required to dodge traffic. There are pedestrian connections from nearby residential areas to the new Metrorail Station and a higher-quality pedestrian environment (distinctive paving, lighting, benches, planters) in the new Boulevard Center retail complex.

Transit Facilities and Operations

Transit services currently consist of one Metrobus route with five sub-routings and two Prince George's County TheBus routes. Bus lines and routings within the study area are shown in Table 2-2 and Figure 2-2. The primary streets within the study area, including the Prince George's County Community College area, contain approximately 45 bus stops as shown on Figure 2-2. Of those, only five stops have shelters. The shelters at the new Largo Town Center Metrorail station are an updated design in keeping with the aesthetics of the new station.

The extension of the Blue Line and the completion of the Largo Town Center Metrorail station provides a unique opportunity to enhance transit service in the community. Planning involving bus rerouting, TDM policies, and pedestrian access to improve transit access can further capitalize on WMATA's transit investment at the Largo Town Center station.

Figure 2-2
Largo Town Center
Study Area Bus Routes & Stop Locations

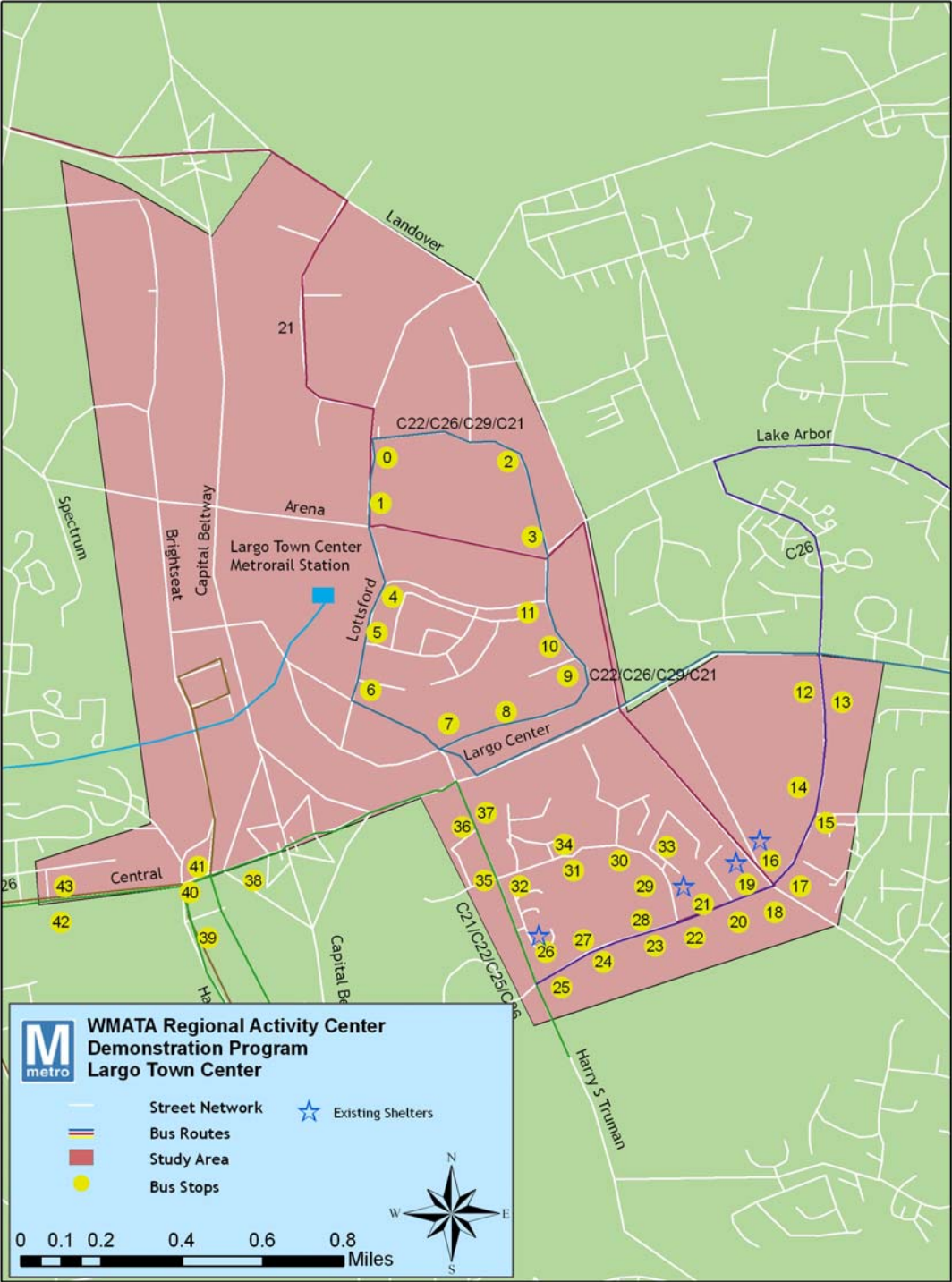


Table 2-2
Existing Bus Service within the Largo Town Center Study Area

<u>WMATA</u>	<u>Headway</u>	
	<u>Peak</u>	<u>Off-Peak</u>
Line C2x -Central Avenue Line		
C21/22 - Pointer Ridge/PGCC/Central Ave/Addison Road	30	60
C25/26 - East Kettering/PGCC/Central Ave/Addison Road	30	60
C29 - Bowie/Pointer Ridge/Kettering/PGCC/Addison Road only	Saturday	
<u>TheBus</u>		
Line 21 - Upper Marlboro-New Carrollton Line		
PGCC/Largo/Landover Mall	30	60
Line 26 -		
PGCC/Central Ave/Hampton Mall/Addison Road	30	30

Effective December 18, 2004, C21, C22 and C29 buses serve the new Largo Town Center station. These buses follow their previous routings from their eastern terminals to Harry S. Truman Drive, then continue to the station. From the station, buses run to Addison Road-Seat Pleasant station. C21 and C22 buses also serve Centre Pointe Office Park on Brightseat Road. On Sundays, new C29 service runs every hour between Pointer Ridge and Addison Road-Seat Pleasant station. C26 buses end at Largo Town Center station and do not continue to Addison Road-Seat Pleasant station. C25 buses were converted to C26 buses and terminate at Largo Town Center station. All service by the above routes no longer serve the grounds of Hampton Mall Shopping Center.

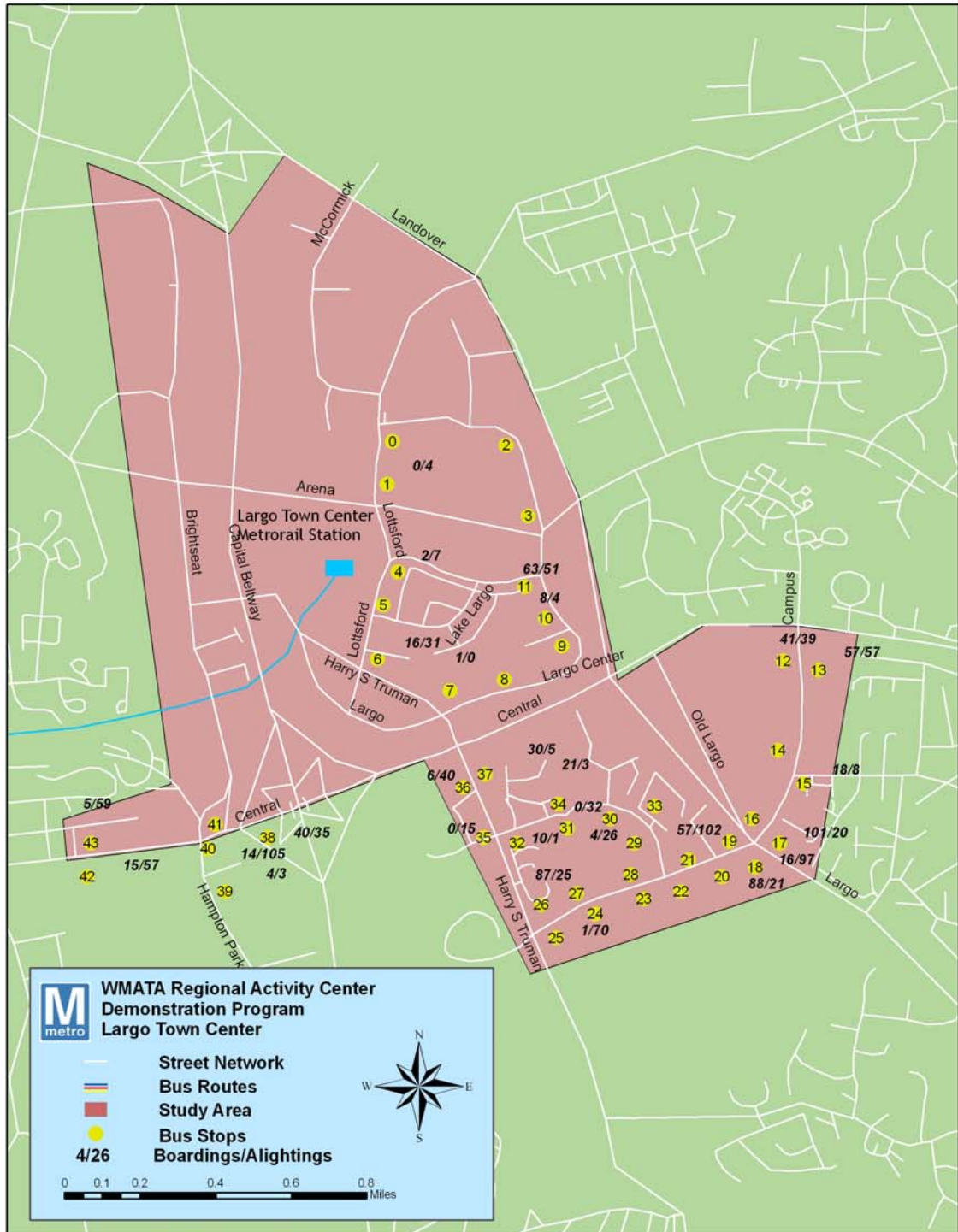
TheBus now terminates routes 28 at the new Largo Town Center Metrorail station.

Transit Ridership

The heaviest bus passenger volumes in the study area today occur at the Prince George's County Community College, with approximately 260 daily boardings across several stops. As Metrorail ridership becomes more established, Metrobus ridership at the newly opened Metrorail station is likely to surpass that at the Community College. Other high-volume bus stops include the residential area at Largo Town Center with 60 daily boardings, several stops along Harry S. Truman Drive with 90 and 40 boardings respectively, Campus Way at Central Avenue with 100 daily boardings, and the Hampton Mall, inside the Beltway, with 100 daily boardings. Figure 2-3 shows daily weekday ridership at each stop.

Current rail ridership figures for the Metrorail station indicate approximately 3,900 average daily entries and 3,800 average daily exits.

Figure 2-3
 Largo Town Center
 Boardings & Alightings by Stop



Needs and Opportunities

The Largo Town Center study area, although constrained somewhat by current land use and circulation patterns, has some potential for increased transit service. In particular, increasing headways along the existing routes, and extending evening and weekend service should encourage area residents to take advantage of the new access to the regional rail system by means of the various Metrobus routes. The Regional Bus Study recommended several operational improvements. To complement these, field study for the demonstration program suggested a number of other opportunities. The following significant needs were identified in the field review and stakeholder interviews:

Capital Improvements

Many high-volume stops do not have shelters, including several at PGCC, on Central Avenue, and near the residential areas at Largo Town Center. To demonstrate that low-cost capital improvements, such as shelters, can have a measurable, positive effect on transit ridership, shelters should be installed at stops with more than 50 daily boardings.

Transit Operational Issues

Most bus delays occur on Central Avenue inside the Beltway. The opening of the Largo Town Center Metrorail station and the rerouting of the bus lines has eliminated the majority of those delays. Because Harry S. Truman Drive provides direct access to the station from the south with a grade-separated crossing of Central Avenue many delays have been eliminated.

Pedestrian Safety Issues

Area stakeholders identified pedestrian safety as an issue of concern. Route 202 has no crosswalks, and surrounding developments that contain routes to the new Metrorail Station do not have sidewalks. A crosswalk on Arena Drive at Lottsford Road could improve safety for pedestrians there. Better pedestrian circulation within the center and to the new station is a significant need.



Recommended Actions

The recommendations below focus in large part on taking advantage of the new Metrorail station and increasing bus headways in the Largo Town Center area. For example, the C route improvements will improve access to the Metrorail station for residents and workers in the immediate area as well as for the entire Central Avenue corridor. The intention is to enhance the quality of the transit experience for existing riders with both service and amenity improvements and attract new riders through marketing new and existing service and raising the profile of transit for area residents and employees.

Proposed Bus Service and Capital Enhancements

Service

Regional Bus Study Recommendations

- **TheBus Route 21**

The proposed increased service of TheBus route 21 is adopted from the Regional Bus Study. It is proposed to provide 30-minute service during the midday operations, thereby extending the same frequency of service offered in the peak. In addition, it is recommended to extend the evening service at 30-minute headways until 9:45 p.m. New Saturday and Sunday service is also proposed with 60-minute headways.

- **Metrobus Route C25**

A proposed additional evening weekday trip on Metrobus C25 was introduced in the Regional Bus Study to benefit the evening students at Prince George's County Community College. Effective December 16, 2004, C25 buses were converted to C26 buses and the recommended evening trip to better serve the community college has been included in the C26 service. Because this service has been implemented, its costs are not included in this report.

- **Metrobus Route C29**

Consistent with the recommendation in the Regional Bus Study, effective December 18, 2004, C29 buses run every hour. On Sundays, new C29 service runs every hour between Pointer Ridge and Addison Road-Seat Pleasant station. Because these services have been implemented, the incremental operating costs are not included in this study.

Other Recommendations

- **Metrobus Route C21 and C22**

Metrobus route C21 and C22 currently operate at 30-minute headways during the peak periods. Route C21 operates eastbound only in the morning and route C22 operates westbound in the morning. Conversely, route C21 provides westbound service in the

evening and C22 provides eastbound service in the evening. It is recommended to increase the frequency of service during the peak periods to 20-minute headways.

Effective December 16, 2004, C21, C22 and C29 buses began to serve the new Largo Town Center station and Addison Road-Seat Pleasant station. Service on the grounds of Hampton Mall was discontinued, although there is still a stop at the mall entrance. These service modifications would not likely have a significant effect on operating costs in the context of this study. Therefore the operating costs in the Regional Bus Study have not been revised.

- **Metrobus Route C26**

Currently route C26 operates at 30-minute headways during the weekday morning and evening peak hours, although service is provided all day through the duration of normal transit operating hours. It is recommended to increase the frequency of service to 20-minute headways during peak hours.

Capital Improvements

As explained in the Needs Assessment for the activity center, there are some small-scale capital improvements that would enhance transit service in the study area. These include shelters at high-volume bus stops, and a well maintained, continuous sidewalk network between bus stops, the Metrorail station, and activity center destinations. Shelters are recommended at the following locations:

Stop #38	Hampton Mall
Stop #11	Largo Center at Zachary Street
Stop #36	Harry S. Truman at Capital Lane
Stop #25	EB Campus Way at Harry S. Truman Drive
Stop #18	EB Campus Way at Prince Place
Stop #17/16	EB Campus Way at Largo Road
Stop #13/12	Campus Way at Central Avenue

Summary

Some of the recommendations of the Regional Bus Study have been incorporated into the Metrobus operations as noted above. The opening of the Largo Town Center station is having a positive effect on transit use in this



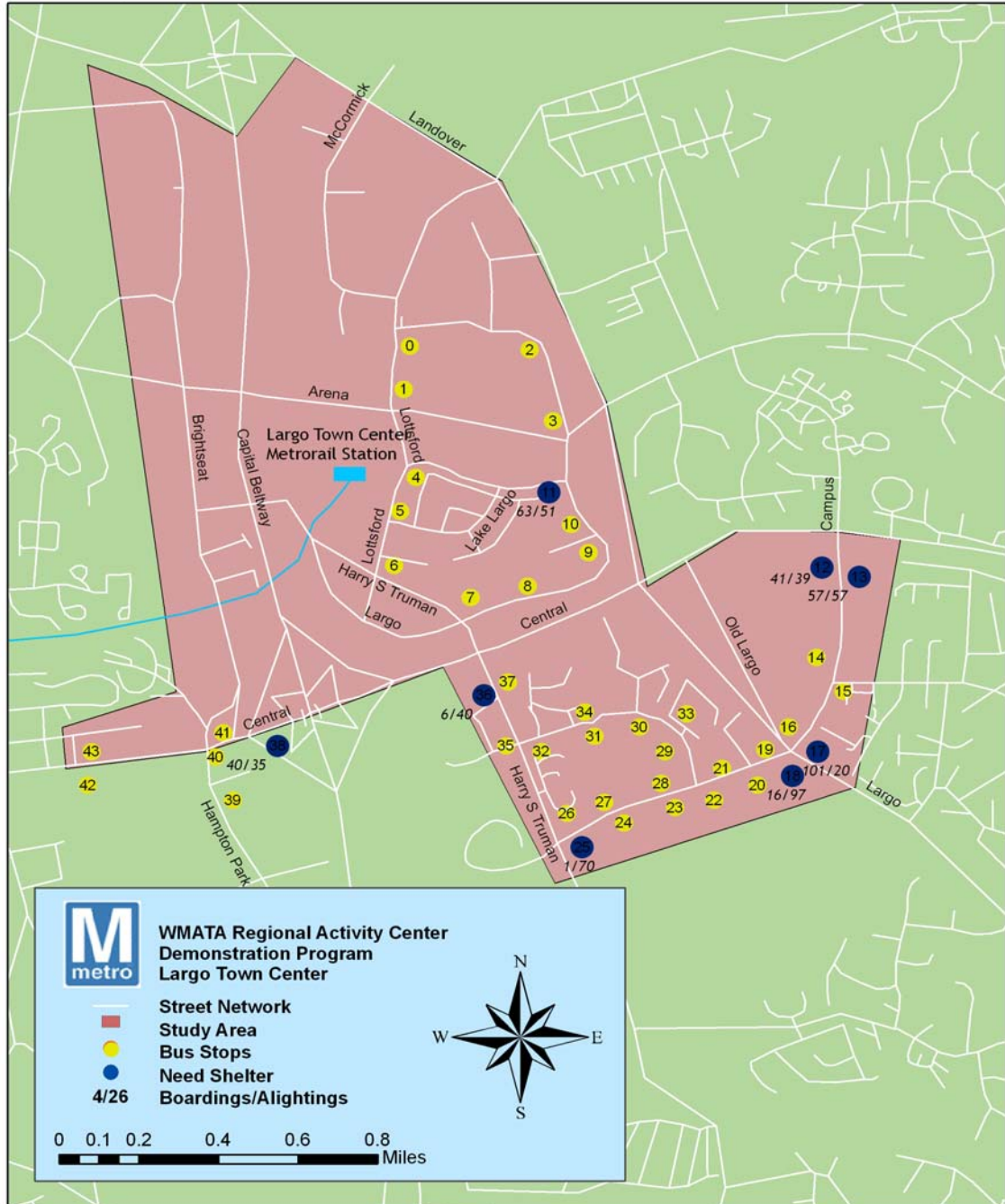
activity center and the proposed changes are organized to complement the new opportunities for connectivity. The proposed service enhancements described above would require an additional \$500,000 annually in operating costs. The enhanced service would also require 10 additional buses at an estimated fleet cost of about \$2.9 million. The proposed bus enhancements equate to an additional 9,400 vehicle revenue hours annually. The increased frequency of Metrobus C21/C22/C26 appears to be the most effective service enhancements in the Largo Town Center area in order to improve ridership from east of the station to the new station.

The service improvements operations matrix is shown below. Costs are shown in 2005 dollars. Service and capital improvements are shown on Figure 2-4.

Largo Town Center Operating Plan Matrix

Proposed Service Enhancements	Source	Additional Annual Vehicle Revenue Hours (VRH)	Additional Daily Peak Vehicles	Additional Annual Operating Cost	Additional Annual Operating Cost/VRH	Annual Ridership Change	Additional Capital Cost	Service Effectiveness: Ridership/ Revenue hours
The Bus Route 21: <i>Midday, evening and weekend service</i>	Regional Bus Study Enhancement	7,400	0	\$340,000	\$46	114,000	\$0	15
Metrobus C21/C22/C26 : <i>Increased peak service</i>	Proposed service	2,000	10	\$160,000	\$80	101,000	\$363,400	50
Center Total		9,400	10	\$500,000	\$54	172,400	\$363,400	33

Figure 2-4
 Largo Town Center
 Bus Stops Recommended for Shelters



Supportive policies to promote transit use

There are several policies and programs that WMATA could adopt to promote transit use in Largo Town Center. Alone, these would have little effect, but as a package, combined with the service and capital improvements proposed, they should positively affect transit ridership and use in the center. The novelty of the Largo Town Center Metrorail station will attract some first time users, but providing the bulk of new residents and employees at the expanding developments in the center with information on how to use the system, system maps, and MetroChek programs will reinforce the perceived utility of the new station. As Largo Town Center area responds to and changes as a result of the new transit facility, WMATA's, MTA's and Prince George's County's active involvement with the Prince George's County jurisdiction can help shape future land use decisions. Ultimately, WMATA's active participation in forming a transportation management association among area businesses will be an important strategy to support transit service and enhance the transit improvement already done, in the area.

In addition to saturating the area with information concerning Metrorail & Metrobus service, other supportive actions to encourage transit usage in the center include:

- Ensure that all information at bus stops is accurate and regularly updated and maintained.
- Target an information campaign to new employers and residential units as development comes on line in vacant parcels along Lottsford Road to capture new riders, providing them with up-to-date information on service and fare structures.
- Create a multimodal access guide, demonstrating how to use bus connections from Metrorail station to area destinations, such as the Prince George's Community College campus.
- Promote the creation of bike lanes and traffic calming measures to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety and access throughout the study area. The relatively wide roadways in the study area and the proximity of so many housing units to the station indicates high potential to capture new transit riders who bike to access the station.
- Work with any new business improvement district or transportation management association to develop transit incentive programs at high density residential and employment sites in the study area, including campaigns to purchase and use SmarTrip cards. WMATA's active participation working with Prince George's County to form a new transportation management association is a unique opportunity to bring together the public and private sector to cooperatively meet their transit ridership/congestion mitigation goals.
- Prioritize ITS for the C routes through Largo Town Center and information boards at high volume stops that can track arrival times for buses. This technology would be valuable at the Largo Town Center Metrorail station and the PGCC campus stops.

Phasing and Timing of Activities

Short-Term Actions

2006	Implement service improvements in next round of operations adjustments
2006-2007	Implement shelter improvements with the next round of capital improvements
2006	Provide updated route maps and schedules at all area bus stops
2006	Create and distribute Largo Town Center Metrorail Station Area access guide
2006-2009	Information campaign at new office buildings & residential communities
2006-2010	Develop regular meeting schedule with Prince George's County traffic services and economic development representatives to strategize and implement traffic calming, cyclist, and pedestrian circulation improvements
2007	Meet with area employers and residential associations to develop a transportation committee and begin development of a transportation management association
2008	Work with newly-formed transportation management association to develop transit incentive programs and regularize the distribution of transit information throughout the center
2007	Prioritize C routes among those that will be considered for ITS

Long-Term Actions

Develop ongoing relationship with Prince Georges County economic development and planning groups to ensure that new and planned development is well-served by transit and connected to the existing transit network.



Potential Costs and Jurisdictional Responsibilities

As stated above, the proposed service enhancements would require an additional \$500,000 annually in operating costs. The enhanced service would also require 10 additional buses at an estimated fleet cost of about \$2.9 million. In addition, the costs of proposed new shelters, route maps, and ITS are listed below:

Table 2-4 Potential Costs

Improvement	unit	Unit cost	Estimated Dollar Amount	WMATA	Prince George's County	Private
Capital						
Vehicles	10 buses	260,000	\$ 2,600,000	x		
New Shelters	8 shelters	10,000	\$ 80,000			x*
Maps & Signs	44	500	\$ 22,000	x		
ITS displays at high volume stops	8 displays	25,000	\$ 200,000	x		
Transit guides to be distributed to new area employees	8000 guides	4	\$ 32,000	x		
Crosswalk painting	6 crosswalks	120	\$ 720		x	x (in new residential developments)
total			\$ 2,934,720	\$ 2,854,000	\$ 720	\$ 80,000
Maintenance -- annual						
Shelters	7	200	\$ 1,400			x
Maps & signs	46	100	\$ 4,600	x		
Crosswalks & traffic calming	6	120	\$ 720		x	
total			\$ 6,720	\$ 4,600	\$ 720	\$ 1,400
TOTAL			\$ 2,941,440	\$ 2,858,600	\$ 1,440	\$ 81,400

* private contract is currently being considered

Measuring Performance

Establish base level ridership for each stop and route.

- **Do counts after improved information and signage are carried out.**

Determine base level participation in the MetroChek program.

- **Recount after information campaign and MetroChek outreach to employers in the area.**

Determine base usage of Smartrip cards by area residents.

- **Recount after outreach and incentive program to residential communities.**

Conclusion

Largo Town Center has tremendous potential for improved transit service because it is in the process of forming its identity as a regional activity center. In particular, the new high-quality transit facility, The Largo Town Center Metrorail Station, can and should serve as a catalyst to improving transit service and ridership throughout the activity center. 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. Partnering with a potential new TMA, formed from existing and new businesses, forming partnerships with the homeowner groups in the area, and establishing a strategic partnership with the Prince George's Community College will ensure that WMATA can respond flexibly to changing area demand. Although the current pedestrian environment is not entirely hospitable for transit patrons, working with Prince George's County as they move forward with development and redevelopment in the area, creating the town center their planners envision, will provide opportunities to enhance access to transit.