



## ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>County Board Agenda Item Meeting of April 25, 2009</b></p>
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**DATE:** April 16, 2009

**SUBJECT:** Request to Advertise Amendments to the County Comprehensive Plan to Add a Transit Element, dated March 2009, to the Amended Master Transportation Plan (MTP) and to delete the Master Transit Plan adopted in 1976, and to delete the Paratransit Element adopted in 1989.

**C. M. RECOMMENDATION:**

Authorize the Advertisement of an Amendment to the County Comprehensive Plan to add a Transit Element entitled “Master Transportation Plan Transit Element”, dated March 2009, to be included in the Amended MTP as defined in Attachment A to this Board Report, and to delete the Master Transit Plan adopted in 1976 and the Paratransit Element adopted in 1989, to be heard by the Planning Commission at its June 1, 2009 meeting, and by the County Board at its June 13, 2009 meeting.

**ISSUES:**

- How to design, fund and operate a network of high-quality transit services that provide excellent connection between Arlington neighborhoods and commercial districts building on the success of the Metrorail corridors with emerging bus and streetcar technologies.
- Insuring that sufficient transit capacity is available on Metrorail and bus to provide sufficient transit to support ongoing community development and ridership growth for the next several decades.
- Undertaking the necessary system upgrades, including installation of multiple elevators in transit stations, to ensure reliable travel for all persons including those that are wheelchair dependent.

**SUMMARY:** The current request is to authorize advertisement of the proposed MTP Transit Element which will replace the existing Master Transit Plan and the MTP Paratransit Element which were adopted in 1976 and 1989 respectively.

The Transit Element takes the ten transit-related policy statements that were adopted as part of the overall MTP Goals and Policies document and provides specific actions to implement each of those policies. Measures for tracking Arlington’s performance in achieving its stated goals are also provided in the document. In addition the Transit Element addresses the vision for the future condition of Arlington’s rail, bus and paratranist systems.

<p>County Manager: _____</p>
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<p>County Attorney: _____</p>
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<p>Staff: Ritch Viola, DES, Transportation Planning</p>
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The integration of transit and land use, the organization of community development around high quality transit service, has been a foundational policy for the Metrorail corridors in the County for more than 30 years. That policy is now extended in the MTP and this Transit Element to the Primary Transit Network, and it calls for a higher level of investment in transit infrastructure and services along these corridors, such as Columbia Pike, that are planned for an appropriate level of development and that create a demand for services.

**BACKGROUND:** In 1941, Arlington adopted its first long-range, Countywide transportation plan: Major Thoroughfares for Arlington, Virginia. Approximately 20 years later, a new thoroughfare plan was adopted, this time in concert with Arlington's General Land Use Plan (GLUP). Thereafter, in the mid-1970s, Arlington's long-range transportation plan became multimodal, with four elements adopted for bikeways, streets, transit and walkways. Ten years later, a new Countywide Plan, Part I was developed, bringing together the streets, bikeways and walkways into one document in 1986. Between 1986 and the current efforts to update the MTP and all elements thereof, a new element was adopted for paratransit, and the portions of the 1986 plan for bikeways (now, bicycle) and walkways (now, pedestrians) were updated in 2008.

In October 2004, the Arlington County Board tasked County staff to undertake a complete revision of the County's MTP. The public process was initiated with a community-transportation survey that generated responses from about 800 Arlington residents and a series of focus-group and public-forum sessions held in the fall of 2005. The information collected from the community was presented to the 24-member MTP Plenary Group which was comprised of representatives from several County advisory commissions, local partnerships, the Arlington Civic Federation and other community organizations. Over the course of a year-and-a-half of regular meetings, the MTP Plenary Group assisted the County staff and a consultant team with the development of the first draft of a new MTP. Three drafts of the proposed MTP revisions were presented for public review between June 2006 and March 2007 at public forums, on the County's website and through more than 50 presentations made to advisory committees and civic groups. In late 2007, the County Board decided to split adoption of the revised MTP into two general phases with the adoption of the overall goals, policies and map portions to occur first, and adoption of the six modal element documents to occur during 2008 and 2009.

In November and December of 2007, the County Board amended the MTP to adopt a Goals and Policies document and a MTP Map (known collectively as the "MTP Additions"). The new documents provided updated vision, objectives, goals and policies for the future of the Arlington transportation system, as well as identified key planned transportation facility and service additions including new streets, transit lines, intersection and roadway improvements, and bicycle/pedestrian trails. In July 2008, as part of the "MTP Additions" the County Board adopted the Bicycle and Pedestrian elements to the Amended MTP and in December 2008 the MTP Demand and System Management Element was adopted. The three new elements plus the MTP Goals and Policies document and MTP Map were added to the three previously-adopted MTP documents listed below, including all subsequent supplements and amendments thereto:

- Master Transit Plan (adopted in 1976)
- Master Transportation Plan – Part I (1986)
- Paratransit Element (1989)

The MTP Additions, Bicycle Element, Pedestrian Element, Demand and System Management Element and the previously-adopted MTP documents (known as the Existing MTP) now comprise the Amended MTP. (See Attachment A to this report for definitions of other terms used herein.) The Transit Element is one of three supplemental modal element documents that are still to be adopted by the County Board to replace and add to previously-adopted corresponding MTP documents. The Transit Element would replace the existing 1976 Transit Master Plan and 1990 Paratransit Element.

**DISCUSSION:** As part of the Comprehensive Plan, the MTP is Arlington's principal means of establishing planning policy for transportation matters. The MTP Additions were developed to incorporate the transportation-policy directives established by the County Board in recent years. Moreover, the MTP Additions guide the implementation of a multimodal transportation system that will serve the future Arlington as envisioned by the County's GLUP. By the year 2030 Arlington's residential and employment populations are forecasted to grow about 30%. Arlington will experience increased travel demands not only from its own growth, but also from greater amounts of pass-through travel. The forecasted increased travel demands will challenge Arlington's transportation system unless measures are imposed to manage travel times, shift more travel away from single-occupant driving and achieve greater efficiency in traffic accommodation. Transit is expected to be the primary mode of travel for the many thousands new trips expected to be generated each day in Arlington by the projected increases in local residential and employment populations.

Transit trips that either originate or terminate in Arlington have increased substantially in recent years (about 43% between 1996 and 2008 alone) and now number about 250,000 trips per weekday, or around 84 million per year. The Arlington transit system not only provides access to jobs and services but also permits many residents to live a car-free lifestyle. The County's vision for public transit is for increased transit utilization for all trips, especially intra-Arlington travel, and the expansion of transit-convenient districts to cover nearly all of Arlington.

Major elements of the MTP Transit Element include:

- The adopted MTP Goals and Policies established 10 transit-related policies for Arlington. Those policies provide guidance for how the County's Transit program should operate over the next 20-some years. The Transit Element specifies 62 actions to be undertaken to implement the County's transit policies.
- A Primary Transit Network (PTN) that consists of both rail and bus services is identified to serve Arlington's five most-heavily traveled corridors. In addition to the identified PTN corridors, the characteristics of the PTN are identified with an emphasis on service frequency, hours of operation, travel speed and service identity.
- Supplementing the PTN is a Secondary Transit Network (STN) of bus routes that run on a less-frequent schedule, but cover more than of 90% of residences in Arlington neighborhoods. STN service may be entirely within Arlington, with connections to PTN routes and stations, or may link directly to other regional centers in adjacent jurisdictions.
- New entrances to existing Metrorail stations, a new ART bus garage and the development of new rail lines along the Columbia Pike and Crystal City-Potomac Yard corridor are

examples of physical improvements that are called for to enhance local transit service capacities.

- Improving access to transit for everyone, including persons with disabilities, is emphasized through local and regionally provided paratransit service as well as physical improvements that enhance the accessibility of all transit stops, vehicles and stations.
- Transit information and marketing enhancements and technological-advancements are proposed to increase user awareness and ease of travel. Travel training programs that serve special populations, such as seniors, teens and non-English speaking persons are also called for to encourage more widespread use of transit services.

The Transit Element identifies a significant number of community investments to expand existing and provide new transit services, including the construction of two new streetcar systems within Arlington and neighboring jurisdictions. The scale of the capital and operating investments is likely to greatly exceed current levels. It will be a challenge to find the necessary funds to achieve the intended improvements as well as to ensure that the expenditures made are both timely and well-spent. While the Transit Element identifies funding needs, it does not attempt to specify funding sources or impose local funding commitments. A Transit Development and Coordination Plan (TCDP) is proposed as the vehicle to examine short-to-mid-term needs and establish funding priorities for capital investments and operating changes. The TCDP would be closely coordinated with the County's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and annual budget dollars to guide expenditures.

### **Issues:**

How should the existing network of transit services be enhanced to provide higher-quality connections between Arlington residences and commercial centers? The Arlington Master Transportation Plan places great emphasis upon the provision of higher-quality transit options as the primary means to achieve reduced dependence upon private automobiles for local transport. The Transit Element identifies the provision of new transit technologies including streetcar, SuperStops and bus travel speed enhancements as critical improvements that should be implemented in order to raise the quality of Arlington's transit services. Many other transit facility and service enhancements are also identified in the Transit Element. In order to meet the expected increased demand for high-quality transit services substantial capital and operating investments will need to be made. Those investments will need to be evaluated and prioritized against other County fiscal responsibilities and where possible new financing resources for transit services should be considered.

What steps should the County take to ensure that sufficient capacity will exist on the Metrorail system to accommodate projected future growth? Determining how to increase the peak-period operating capacity of the Metrorail system is an acute concern, particularly as growth and transportation demand management measures encourage greater Metro ridership. Current overcrowding on the Orange Line is likely to substantially increase after the service on the new Silver Line to Dulles Airport is initiated. The Transit Element emphasizes the current policy of running more 8-car trains and the consideration of rerouting of some Blue Line trains across the Potomac via the Yellow Line bridge. Arlington will need to be actively involved in regional deliberations to develop more substantial changes, including potentially the development of a

new Potomac River rail crossing, in order to develop a long-term capacity solution. The potential for additional rail lines and Metrorail stations in the I-66 corridor raises concerns for some residents whose established residential communities may be impacted.

How can the transit system be upgraded to provide more reliable service for persons with disabilities? Achieving a transit system that is truly accessible for all persons is a primary objective of the Transit Element. Today travel by Metrorail for persons with disabilities can be limited by periodic elevator outages at numerous points within the Metrorail system, as well as by malfunctioning wheelchair lifts on transit vehicles. A large number of measures and a substantial expenditure of funds for capital improvements to stations, vehicles and bus stops are proposed to increase accessibility on Metrorail and buses and to provide accessible routes that link to transit stops. Future Board budget decisions will need to prioritize accessibility improvements, such as additional elevators between the train and station levels against other substantial station improvements to accommodate greater volumes of passengers and additional hours of service.

**Community Process:**

Arlington County staff has worked closely with the Arlington Transportation Commission and Transit Advisory Committee to draft and update the proposed element. Staff has also reviewed the draft with the Arlington Planning Commission. Copies of the draft document have also been distributed to the Disabilities Advisory Commission for their review. Drafts of the element of also been posted on Arlington County's website along with other elements of the Master Transportation Plan (MTP). Comments on the draft element have generally been favorable with most comments directed towards the need to expand the carrying capacity of the Metrorail system.

In addition to the scheduled June 13, 2009 County Board hearing, the advertised Transit Element will be reviewed by the Transportation Commission and the Planning Commission at their meetings on May 28, and June 1, 2009 respectively.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** Adopting the amendments to the Existing Plan by adding thereto a Transit Element and deleting the existing Master Transit Plan and Paratransit Element, will impose no immediate financial commitments on the County. However, many of the proposed implementation actions in the document call for the establishment, operation and maintenance of higher levels of transportation facilities and services. Implementation of the MTP will require the County to determine to what extent, to which purposes and on what schedule it will commit its own revenues as well as those non-local funds that it may control. Such decisions will be made by the Arlington County Board as part of future operating- and capital-budget deliberations.

**Attachment A: Master Transportation Plan (MTP) Terminology to Board Report for April 25, 2009 County Board Meeting.**

**Name:**

**Consists of:**

*Existing MTP*

- Master Transit Plan (adopted in 1976),
- Master Transportation Plan – Part I (1986),
- Paratransit Element (1989), and
- All supplements and amendments since they were adopted by the County Board as reflected in the five-year updates, or otherwise.

*MTP Additions*

- MTP Goals and Policies Summary, adopted November 2007
- MTP Map, adopted December 2007
- Bicycle Element, adopted July 2008
- Pedestrian Element, adopted 2008
- Demand and System Management Element, adopted December 2008

*Amended MTP*

- *Existing MTP* and the *MTP Additions*

The *MTP Additions* will have precedence in instances of conflicts or inconsistencies with the *Existing MTP*.

*Future MTP*

- *MTP Additions* and the proposed future plan elements:
  - Transit Element
  - Parking and Curbspace Management Element
  - Streets Element