

**K STREET TRANSITWAY PROJECT
PURPOSE AND NEED
REVISED JULY 30, 2003**

BACKGROUND

This transportation study is a combined effort of the District Department of Transportation and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority. The study is evaluating options for providing a high performance transit link and related pedestrian and traffic operations improvements in the K Street Corridor from Georgetown to Mount Vernon Square and the Massachusetts Avenue corridor from Mount Vernon Square to Union Station..

The recently completed “Transit Expansion Study” sponsored by the District of Columbia Department of Transportation and carried out by the Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority designated a number of corridors for implementation of new rapid transit segments to expand and/or compliment the Metrorail system. In the plan that emerged from the study, these segments were identified as being either Metrorail or Light Rail Transit (LRT) in their ultimate configuration; however, the study emphasized that one or more of the segments could be developed incrementally, starting with Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and then moving to LRT and even Metrorail as markets matured and sufficient resources became available. In the development of the rapid transit expansion plan, there was a significant emphasis on improved intra-District of Columbia, across-town connections.

The Washington Region Bus Study completed in 2002 also identified the Union Station to Georgetown Corridor as the location of a high quality bus link.

Need for Cross Town Rapid Transit

The District of Columbia has one of the largest Central Business Districts (CBD’s) in the Nation, with over 350,000 jobs north of the Mall and about 100,000 jobs south of the Mall. Because of the physical constraints of the Mall, (monuments, museums) and other parks, the CBD is much longer east-west than it is wide north-south. There are several activity nodes along the long east-west dimension of the CBD that differ markedly in terms of their character. These range from a mostly office concentration around Capitol Hill, to a mixed commercial area in the vicinity of the convention center, to the tourist venues (e.g., White House), institutions (e.g., World Bank), universities, entertainment and mixed commercial activity center in the west end of the CBD in Foggy Bottom and Georgetown.

There is currently no single continuous high quality, high performance rapid transit link from the eastern end of the CBD, in the vicinity of Capitol Hill (Union Station), to the part of CBD west of Farragut Square. This makes it difficult for workers, shoppers, convention attendees and other type of visitors to travel among the disparate activity nodes in the CBD.

This negatively affects not only the efficient distribution/collection of travelers using public transportation for primary work trips, but also impacts non-home based trips made during the middle of the day. At the same time, there has been a significant increase in the number of passengers using the Maryland and Virginia commuter rail networks to a total of about 30,000 trips per day, most of which have a CBD origin or destination accessed through Union Station. Most of the commuter rail travelers using Union Station destined for the Farragut Square Area, the office employment heart of the CBD, uses Metrorail's Red line for access/egress. This has led to significant crowding on the Red Line inbound in the AM peak period as well as outbound, between Gallery Place and Union Station.

The structure and performance of the conventional local bus system in the heart of the CBD does not lend itself to serving the important CBD travel needs noted above. At least two major east-west streets, Pennsylvania Avenue and E Street N.W. are closed around the White House for security reasons, and as noted in the Washington Region Bus study, there were too many bus services utilizing a street network that was inadequate even before the closings. In addition to significant congestion-related speed and reliability problems, the lack of clarity of the current surface bus network makes it extremely difficult for frequent transit users, let alone visitors, to understand routes and schedules well enough to use it for both intra CBD trips and for primary work trips originating or destined to areas outside the CBD.

Purpose of Proposed BRT Link

A BRT line would provide a continuous, high quality, high performance transit link from the eastern end of the CBD (Union Station) to Georgetown. BRT, with its high performance and unique identity could provide workers, shoppers, students, convention attendees and other visitors with a high quality transit system that could be easily used to satisfy their peak as well as off-peak travel needs. It would:

- Mitigate the adverse impacts on east-west movement by the closing of Pennsylvania Avenue and E Street near the White House;
- Serve as an east-west AM distributor and PM collector for Metrorail, commuter rail and commuter bus passengers
- Facilitate the intra-CBD, non-home-based travel among the CBD's disparate activity nodes during the middle of the day and in the evening
- Provide an important mobility resource for the growing numbers of residents in the CBD

STUDY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The situation described above has led the District of Columbia to place a high priority on providing a new rapid transit link from Union Station to Georgetown via the other mentioned activity nodes. Accordingly, this study is being undertaken to develop a concept plan for a BRT link in the K Street/Massachusetts Ave. Corridor from Georgetown to Union Station.

Recommendations developed in the study are expected to serve as the framework for near-term capital investments decisions as they pertain to the reconstruction and possible reconfiguration of K Street, N.W. between Washington Circle and Mount Vernon Square.

APPROACH

Recognizing that rapid transit is a permanently integrated system, the study is looking at the following elements of Bus Rapid Transit for application to the corridors, both individually and as an integrated system:

1. Stops, Stations and Terminals
2. Running Ways
3. Service Plan
4. Intelligent Transportation Systems (signal priority, communications)

Consideration also being given to how concurrent plans for WMATA vehicle acquisition and fare system changes (i.e., smart cards) would impact the functionality of a BRT line operating over the K St. busway. Finally, the study will establish criteria for determining the appropriate mix of BRT, local and regional services on the busway by examining the impact on over-all bus system performance of a variety of levels and types of services on the facility.

With respect to running ways, the study is examining how implementation of a dedicated transitway could improve mobility, transit and traffic operations and pedestrian and parking access. To accomplish this objective, existing traffic conditions in the corridors connecting Georgetown to Union Station via K Street N.W. and Massachusetts Avenue are being evaluated. In addition, alternative geometric modifications to the K Street roadway configuration are being analyzed so that recommendations can be made with respect to the most effective configuration to improve mobility through the study corridors.

A variety of traffic operations improvements are being analyzed that are intended to provide the BRT system with reliably high speed while ensuring that the overall CBD transportation system is more efficient and effective. In view of the high level of congestion in the CBD and its physical size, special attention will be afforded to the nexus of transit operations and general traffic.

Because of the large number of visitors, convention goers and tourists, conveying passenger information and establishing a unique identity and image for the BRT line will also be examined. Finally, because of the intent of the District to move to LRT at a future date as future travel in the corridor grows, special attention will be given to incremental development and transition issues.

MAJOR ACTIVITIES

The Study is building on the broad principles that underlie the Transportation Element of the District's "Comprehensive Plan and the Transportation Vision, Strategy and Action Plan" (1997). It is also utilizing the finding and recommendations of the Washington Region Bus Study (2002) and "Transit Expansion Study (2002) to undertake the following activities:

- Evaluation of related plans and programs, including core capacity study, circulator study, Washington Region Bus Study, Transit Expansion Study
- Collection of relevant traffic and transit operating data
 - Link volumes, turning movements
 - Pedestrians flows
 - Transit ridership data
- Analysis of transit travel times
- Investigation of the engineering feasibility of a reconfiguration of the study corridors to accommodate an exclusive transit right-of-way
- Identification of methods to implement a reconfiguration to accommodate an exclusive transit right-of-way
- Assessment of the impacts of recommended modifications to the roadway network
- Assessment of station location options for BRT line
- Assessment of the impacts of the alternative alignments on transit and traffic operations
- Evaluation of ridership potential
- Ongoing public involvement and communications