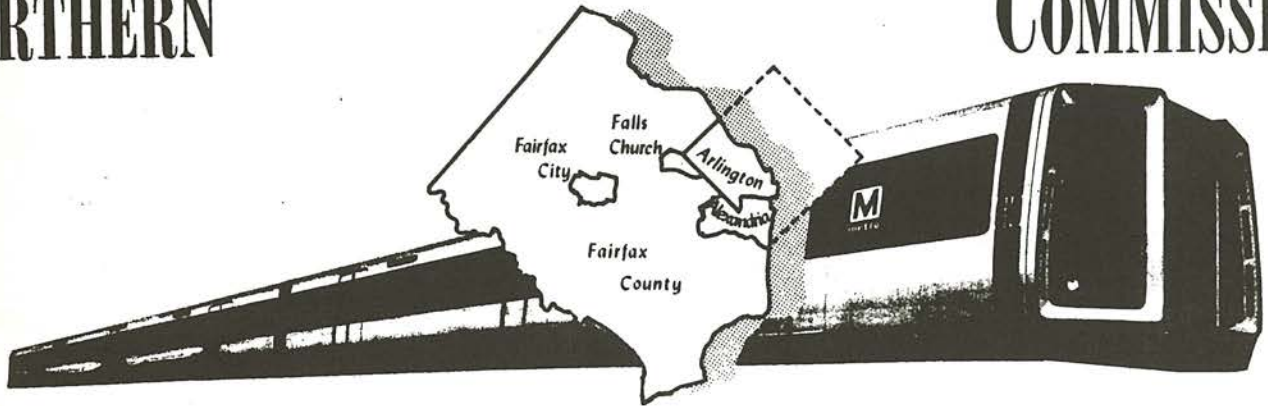


# VIRGINIA TRANSPORTATION

# NORTHERN

# COMMISSION



**STAFF REPORT  
ON  
EXPRESS BUS SERVICE,  
ADVANCE LAND ACQUISITION,  
AND FRINGE PARKING**

NORTHERN VIRGINIA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION  
Room 211, Citizen Resources Building  
1430 North Uhle Street  
Arlington, Virginia 22201  
Telephone: 524-6118

STAFF REPORT

ON

EXPRESS BUS SERVICE,

ADVANCE LAND ACQUISITION,

AND FRINGE PARKING

Submitted to

Northern Virginia Transportation Commission

September 26, 1969

NORTHERN VIRGINIA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

City of Falls Church

Lee M. Rhoads, Chairman

Fairfax County

Joseph Alexander, Vice Chairman

Frederick A. Babson

Herbert E. Harris, II

Harold O. Miller

Fairfax City

Nathaniel F. Young

City of Alexandria

Charles E. Beatley, Jr.

Nicholas A. Colasanto

Arlington County

Kenneth M. Haggerty, D.D.S.

A. Leslie Phillips

Ned R. Thomas

Virginia Department of Highways

John P. Mills, Jr.

Secretary-Treasurer

Harold J. Casto

Executive Secretary

Judson E. Edwards

Public Information Officer

Jack O. Crawford

Administrative Secretary

Ernestine H. Wormwood

Secretary-Bookkeeper

B. Carol Murray

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is a review of: (1) express bus service in the Mount Vernon corridor; (2) advance land acquisition needs and potential; and (3) fringe parking potential as especially related to utilization of advance acquisition of rapid transit sites for fringe parking to possibly be used for express service during the interim period prior to transit construction. The inter-relationship of the three subjects was also considered.

Staff analysis is conducted in accordance with the resolution of this Commission on a motion by Commissioner Harris concerning fringe parking and express service (seconded by Commissioner Babson) at the June Commission Meeting; and with request of Commissioner Harris for a market study for express bus service in the Mount Vernon-Lee area at the July Commission Meeting.

The staff is very grateful to staff representatives of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Commission, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, Transportation Planning Board of the Council of Governments, AB&W Bus Company, and to representatives of the Northern Virginia jurisdictions for their cooperation, counsel, and assistance in this matter. This document is a general administrative analysis to assist the Commission in making a policy judgement.

## EXPRESS BUS

As a prelude to establishing the staff recommendations in relation to express bus service in the Mount Vernon corridor, statements from a meeting held on this subject in the NVTC offices on August 4, 1969 are cited:

The report of the Transportation Planning Board/Council of Governments issued by Mr. James Echols was as follows:

"Mr. Echols explained that there are two kinds of bus travelers: those who walk to the bus and board, and those who drive to the bus and board. If there was a large, free fringe parking lot at Huntington, it would attract many auto trips for express bus service. The status of the Shirley Highway Express Bus Feasibility is: the consultant has advised that it is feasible to provide an

exclusive busway throughout the construction that remains to be done on the Shirley Highway. This roadway would be an 18-foot wide temporary roadway with wooden bridges going over the permanent roadway being built. Speeds of forty to fifty miles per hour would be maintained. At this time, where the construction on Shirley Highway ends near Shirlington Circle, the completed portion of the reversible lanes will be available for use within a month.\*

"Mr. Douglas Fugate (Commissioner, Virginia Department of Highways) has agreed to permit northbound buses only to use those reversible lanes that will be completed. That is, buses will have exclusive use of the reversible lanes between their ending out in Springfield and Shirlington Circle during the A. M. peak period within a month or so. AB&W can route some 38 buses into those lanes now. The consultant estimates that between that point and the Potomac River Bridges, the design and construction of the temporary roadway would take about eighteen months, but at the end of that period it would pick up the reversible lanes carrying one of the lanes inbound for exclusive use for the buses. The next step is to devise the agreement on funding and financing of that roadway and the required bus service. All indications are that this roadway would be 95% Federally funded.

"There are two other things that can be done to foster patronage: 1) improving circulation patterns through residential areas and 2) establishment of fringe parking for commuters. The possibility of using the parking lots of shopping centers for free fringe parking is being investigated. This could also tie in with advance land acquisition. There followed discussion in reference to means of financing the acquisition of fringe parking lots.

"In summary, Mr. Echols said that COG could furnish an indication of fringe parking demand at a site. The acquisition could be done, at least in the case of the Huntington site, by Fairfax County. Discussion ensued as to how this acquisition would be financed. Mr. Fahl indicated that this is the problem in Fairfax County.

"Mr. Sheldon Kinbar, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Commission, gave a brief review of existing bus service in the Mount Vernon area. Service is provided by the AB&W Bus Company. Those coming through Alexandria use the George Washington Memorial Parkway. There is a

\* This express service was implemented September 22.

problem with lack of speed during peak period due mostly to the bottleneck of getting into Alexandria at the south end and getting out at the north end. Essentially, it is a question of insufficient highway capacity. During rush hours there are three express trips that use the GW Parkway, but they do make stops in Alexandria. Complete express service is feasible, but AB&W is rather conservative. There is only one route to the Southwest and anyone coming from this corridor would have to transfer in order to get to the Southwest. There is true express bus service in the Shirley Highway corridor to various D. C. locations which is subject to the constraint of traffic jams on Shirley Highway. In regard to fringe parking, there is nothing set up in either corridor in reference to fringe parking. The only fringe parking facility is in the East Falls Church area on the right-of-way of I-66. From here, the WV&M Bus Company runs express trips. Various fringe parking lots in the District have been quite successful.

"Mr. William I. Herman, WMATA Office of Planning, said that he felt NVTC should be in charge of the market study for express service in the Mount Vernon area. It was felt that this study should be broadened to include other station sites for express service. Mr. Fahl emphasized the need for expediency in regard to the Huntington site, adding that utilization of this site for fringe parking was completely in line with Fairfax County staff's thinking.

"Mr. Herman stated that there are two approaches: 1) studying all possible transit stations as potentials for fringe parking for buses; or 2) taking Huntington, the immediate concern, as a demonstration project, seeing if this is applicable, going ahead and doing it, and if so, applying it to other situations. Mr. Edwards said that this (2) is our mandate, but that in achieving the report on this mandate, NVTC has an obligation to report its judgment on the whole matter.

"Mr. Herman said that among the things to be considered are: 1) the legal implications, 2) financing, and 3) feasibility (usage). It was the consensus of the group that NVTC, with the help of a steering committee of WMATC; COG, Fairfax County, and WMATA, explore the legal, financial, and feasibility aspects in trying to design a more detailed work program, emphasizing again that Huntington will be used for this study, but with applicability to other probable transit sites, and with each organization rendering

the appropriate help and information. It was felt that another meeting should be held after staff had reported to the Commission on the meeting. "

A further step in the review of this matter has been a request from NVTC to General Counsel of WMATA for evaluation of legal aspects of potential implementation of programs needed in order to effect express bus service, advance acquisition, and fringe parking.

In analyzing the matter of express bus service, some of the types of express service which one can consider for implementation were also reviewed:

I. Premium Special, a type of service in which the individual rider's needs are fitted identically by the bus service--the bus virtually picks him up at the door, delivers him to the exact point to which he wants to go, and he pays a premium. This has been experimented with on a Federal demonstration grant in Peoria, Illinois; was found to be very successful when subsidized by Federal grant; ridership was found to drop off when the subsidy was discontinued and service minimized.

II. Similar service has been further evaluated and experimented with through a Federal grant recently in Flint, Michigan wherein the situation found the ridership far below expectations because of built-in rider antipathy to poor bus service.

III. There is a very recent Washington Center for Metropolitan Areas Study of the Reston bus service. The service was instituted by a citizens group contracting with the bus company--with doughnuts and coffee in the morning and occasional cocktails on Friday afternoons (service from Reston to the Central Business District and back). This worked very well with no real government assistance. In fact, the Washington Center For Metropolitan Studies (per Mr. Henry Bain's Study) is somewhat critical of the lack of government assistance in this matter. Access to Reston-Dulles is currently the subject of other studies as yet not concluded.

Cited above are only three studies. There are many such studies which have been conducted throughout the United States. The subject has been touched on along with the subject of cross-county (i. e., lateral) bus transportation in a number of evaluations. To the best of our knowledge, there has been no evaluation of express Premium Special luxury bus service in a corridor where fringe parking was offered, where subsidies were offered, and where this was considered as an

interim service indigenous to the acquisition in advance of transit station sites for later use in a rapid transit system. The Mount Vernon corridor would seem to offer an excellent opportunity for such study.

### THE STUDY AREA

In order to devise such a study, three factors need consideration:

I. What is the legal position for this Commission, WMATA, or TPB in implementing a program wherein advance land purchased for rapid transit is used for fringe parking indigenous to express bus service during the interim construction for rapid transit? It would seem that the legal framework exists for this to be implemented best by the suburban Commission, subject to minor amendments in the Compact, per research by WMATA General Counsel which is being undergone at this time in accordance with the request from NVTC.

Most research and most demonstration grants in the field of urban mass transit in the realm of express bus service have proven that for the most part express bus may be a viable transportation factor mode: (1) in a corridor wherein one can effect real express service (in example, from Mt. Vernon possibly via the GW Memorial Parkway or US-1, the Woodrow Wilson Bridge, Kenilworth Avenue, and the South Capitol Bridge into the Southwest Employment Center for redistribution from the Southwest terminal); (2) wherein there is real luxury service (with doughnuts in the morning and occasional cocktails for sale in the afternoon); and (3) where this service is extensively and effectively promoted and is originally tailored to ridership needs via a professional opinion survey. The latter (3) may be the crux of the whole question which should be directed to the Department of Transportation--"Is it certain that there has ever really been a professional public opinion survey, wherein we actually have the appropriate random samplings, we figure the standard deviations, and know where the ridership needs exist? Therein we can tailor the service, the promotion, and the cost virtually to the rider's own desires."

II. The second question to be posed in considering the matter of whether such a study is feasible is: "Can the plan that will be later used for rapid transit stations be effectively used during the interim period of construction for fringe parking facilities for express bus?"



III. The third question is "How can advance funding of acquisition of such land be best attained?"

The three subjects are inter-related, but from the standpoint of Federal funding, they may best be funded under separate programs. Programs to be considered are as follows:

A. For express service, a Federal demonstration grant for Premium Special tailored to obtain the grant because in this case we would be demonstrating a professional type poll and whether it could work in tailoring express bus service. This could possibly be funded under a 90/10 funding grant.

B. The second route, which is a one-third/two-thirds grant, would be a technical facilities grant wherein the Federal government merely purchases the equipment to be used. The latter type of grant is easier to obtain, but of course the local matching funds are larger and thus more difficult to assemble.

C. Fringe parking could possibly be funded under the 1968 Highway Act which provided for fringe parking monies. There is a very definite problem in implementing this matter in this way since the fringe parking monies are only available for facilities that are contiguous to Federal aid highways. This would eliminate several transit stations.

D. Advance land acquisition monies may conceivably be available through the advance acquisition funds of the Department of Transportation.

E. Other funding areas to be considered are HUD 701 funds through COG/TPB (a one-third/two-thirds grant) and Urban America funds.

#### AGENCY PROGRAMS

There is one further subject that should be considered. This is the programs of regional agencies that are related to bus service in Northern Virginia. They include:

##### Council of Governments

Rush hour express buses have begun using a reversible lane on the newly-constructed portion of Shirley Highway this fall on an exclusive or preferential basis. This is the result of a 15-month project

by the COG/TPB staff and is expected to save commuters on Shirley Highway, a major freeway corridor, up to 15 minutes each way.

A new express bus service begun by COG/TPB this summer in Prince George's County is coming this fall to Fairfax County operating between Tyson's Corner shopping center and downtown Washington. This project attempts to relieve highway congestion by encouraging use of buses and by providing free all-day fringe parking at the shopping center, guaranteed seating on all buses, and fast express service to the Federal Triangle and Southwest.

The service also is designed to help suburban merchants to fill long-standing job vacancies by providing fast, low-cost transportation for center city residents to suburban jobs.

Future plans call for the service to be supplemented by shuttle buses from Tyson's Corner to major commercial and industrial job sites and low-income areas of Fairfax County.

#### Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Commission

This is the regulatory body which determines where service is needed, determines rates, and the entire spectrum for bus service in the Interstate Compact Area.

#### Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

This is the activist body for the Compact zone. Senate 1814 and certain Compact amendments if passed will provide for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority to purchase D.C. Transit and other bus lines. The legislation would also provide the authority, including the power of eminent domain for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority to purchase the other bus lines and the authority for WMATA to operate such services. It would appear, in other words, that the trend is recognizable where in all probability in the near future, WMATA will own the bus lines. A resolution adopted by NVTC in September is as follows:

"Commissioner Babson moved that the Commission endorse the provision in the Senate (S. 1814) and a concomitant amendment in the Interstate Compact, the WMATA Compact, which would provide the WMATA with the option of operating transit facilities, rail and bus, and also to provide the authority for the acquisition of the Alexandria and Maryland bus companies operating in the area. The Bill is to include 100% Federal financing. This was seconded by Commissioner

Miller. Ayes: six; Noes: three. The motion carried. "

### Suburban Commissions (NVTC)

This is the regional transportation voice of those jurisdictions that comprise Northern Virginia. This Commission has been in continuous function as a coordination, communication, and policy catalyst.

### STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

I. "That the staff of this Commission be given the mandate to evaluate consultants' capabilities, including pricing, to implement a consultant's review utilizing the Mount Vernon corridor and the Huntington Station as a pilot area to determine the feasibility of: (1) a professional origin and destination public opinion poll related to executive, Premium Special express bus service and that promotional necessity which would make such a service work, including the pricing of such service; and (2) the potential of the utilization of the Huntington Station site on an advance acquired basis for fringe parking for service in that corridor, a review of other potential sites including fringe parking, and a review of the routing which would best serve this purpose.

II. "That the consultant's study mandate include a requirement to report back to the Commission within six weeks from the time of the contract with a printed document stating study results and the most desirable financing alternatives, including an evaluation of all potential Federal funding; that the consultant's mandate also include working closely with the staff of this Commission and the appropriate regional bodies including WMATA, WMATC, and TPB; that the consultant be directed to work very closely with the appropriate bus lines (in this case, AB&W) and report with its recommendation on that governmental agency which would be the most appropriate catalyst for implementation of such express service."

III. "That the Commission staff be given the mandate to seek simultaneously (while evaluating consultants) potential funding for implementation of such a consultant's study including: (1) a mixture of NVTC and WMATA funds; (2) a possible 701 Planning Grant from TPB; or (3) a possible mixture of some of these grant programs including such programs as the Urban America Program.

SUMMARY

This is a vital matter to all of Northern Virginia. The Mount Vernon-Alexandria-Crystal City-Pentagon corridor is a logical place to approach finding a solution to the problem for several reasons: (1) this line is scheduled for the earliest construction in Virginia of the rapid rail transit; (2) this corridor is experiencing some of the most severe transportation problems; and (3) this corridor has a specific advance land acquisition problem at the Huntington Station (a second advance acquisition problem may exist at the Backlick Station).