



We Are Washington DC
Mayor-Elect Bowser's Transition Committee

Transportation Public Engagement Forum

Statement of

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My name is Monte Edwards. I am Vice-Chair of the Committee of 100 on the Federal City. The purpose of my statement is to explain the need for the new administration to develop a comprehensive Long Range Intermodal Transportation Plan for Washington DC. The recently released DDOT moveDC Plan is inadequate for that purpose because it:

1. Fails to show the important role commuter rail could play in removing commuters from our streets and providing better access to jobs for DC residents;
2. Gives a preference to freight rail over commuter rail and focuses on moving more freight through DC rather than addressing how freight rail can replace trucks for delivering freight to DC;
3. Presents a Plan at a cost of \$54 billion over 25 years, but identifies funding sources for only 40% of the Plan.

DDOT has proposed a Plan that should be designed to address congestion, transit crowding and declining transportation reliability. But in fact it is a Plan that is less than half funded by DC resources and predicts that congestion, crowding, and declining reliability will continue unless neighboring jurisdictions allocate their budget dollars to solve our transportation problems.

Commuter Rail

The moveDC Plan effectively ignores commuter rail through a flawed analysis methodology that excludes commuter rail from even being evaluated.¹ Because of this approach, the main body of the Plan does not include commuter rail as a priority transportation option.

¹moveDC Plan, Chapter 5, page 108:

B. PRIORITIZATION OF INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS

moveDC capital investment recommendations were prioritized objectively based on quantitative and qualitative evaluation measures. Investments led by other agencies or organizations that would not require DDOT or District funding, such as capacity or station upgrades for commuter rail operated by MARC or VRE, were not evaluated through this framework. DDOT can continue to support these opportunities, but moveDC did not prioritize them in the same manner as District-led improvements

MoveDC did not take into consideration MARC and VRE's current numbers of riders to evaluate the capability of commuter rail compared to other transit options.

- Current MARC ridership of 36,000/day (MARC Growth and Investment Plan Update 2013 to 2050, September 9, 2013)
- Current VRE ridership of 19,000/day (page 3-25, Virginia State Rail Plan, November 2013).

MoveDC failed to discuss the glaring discrepancy between MARC and VRE ridership levels.:

- What are the physical restrictions that limit VRE to the point that VRE is able to carry only a little more than half of the number of riders as MARC?
- Who determines priorities for fixing the bottlenecks and who determines how they should be fixed?

The large difference between MARC and VRE ridership needs to be examined in terms of the ability of VRE to cross the Potomac (the Long Bridge) and have access to the SW tracks (to get to the First Street Tunnel, the only connection to Union Station from the south), both owned by CSX.²

Looking at the long-range capabilities of commuter rail, the moveDC Plan should incorporate the current projections from MARC and VRE. MARC's plan shows that ridership will increase to 75,000 daily riders by 2040 (MARC Growth and Investment Plan Update 2013 to 2050, September 9, 2013). VRE projects they will be able to carry up to 50,000 weekday passenger trips by 2040 if the Long Bridge and SW track constraints can be removed (Virginia Railway Express System Plan 2040 Brochure, March 27, 2014, page 3). The total amounts to 125,000 riders per day, or five times that of the new Metrorail Silver line. The 23 mile Silver line Metrorail can move a significant number of commuters, but commuter rail has a much greater potential, but it is not evaluated or even acknowledged in the moveDC Plan.

Commuter rail is and should be a major factor in any plan for moving commuters. It offers the most effective and efficient option to automobile commuting and would greatly reduce congestion and emissions. But it is not even assigned a transportation priority in the moveDC Long Range Transportation Plan.

Freight Rail

The Freight element (Section F of the Plan) recommends expanding freight rail capacity throughout the District (page F-6). It acknowledges that "approximately 94% of the freight tonnage arriving in and departing from the District in 2011 was transported by truck" (page F-1), but then emphasizes

² A similar disparity exists on MARC's service between Baltimore and Washington: The Penn line, operating on Amtrak tracks carries 24,000 riders a day but the Camden line, operating on CSX tracks carries only 4,400 riders a day (MARC Growth and Investment Plan Update 2013 to 2050, September 9, 2013). While the two lines serve different Baltimore stations and the Penn line extends well north of Baltimore, the question of the the role of CSX imposed restrictions compared to Amtrak operating procedures needs to be addressed.

the importance of freight rail but in terms of regional freight deliverability, not as a viable alternative to freight deliveries by truck within DC (page F-4):

Freight rail in the District plays an important role in the regional freight network. It generates and attracts considerable demand related to consumer needs. The District does not own any railroads, but is served by two Class I and one Class III (switching or terminal) railroads including CSX's major north-south freight rail line. CSX and Norfolk Southern own, operate, and maintain nearly 70 miles of freight rail line and right-of-way in the District and carried approximately 370,000 carloads of freight in 2012.³

The moveDC Plan does not discuss the advantage of a freight depot at either the old Florida Market, (where there used to be one) or Benning Road at the PEPCO site, that would allow trainloads to be broken down into smaller truck loads for local delivery. US DOT estimates 40 Tons of freight annually per capita, which means an awful lot of freight is being trucked in for 650,000 permanent residents and some additional amount for our hyper-large office component and visitors.

Conflicts Between Freight and Commuter Rail

Neither the Union Station Master Plan nor the Washington to Richmond High Speed Rail NEPA process are mentioned in the moveDC Plan. The Plan mentions the Maryland Ave and SW Ecodistrict Plans (page F-7), but fails to mention the objectives of those plans to expand commuter and passenger rail, enlarge the L'Enfant Rail Station and thru-run MARC to Virginia and VRE to Maryland.⁴ The Plan does acknowledge the problem of shared rail infrastructure and the need to address conflicts, but does not acknowledge the role of the now on-going DC Rail Plan in addressing those issues (page F-9):

Recommendation A.4: Support rail capacity expansion. Freight and passenger rail share the same infrastructure in many locations in the District. The capacity of the rail network limits the ability for freight and passenger rail to increase service. DDOT should continue to work with freight, passenger, and commuter rail operators to implement projects that alleviate bottlenecks and allow operators to increase service levels. DDOT's

³ The Class III railroad is apparently the Washington Terminal Company. I understand it performed switching services only in the Washington Terminal Rail Yard (adjacent to Union Station) but not at the Benning Rail Yard (on the east bank of the Anacostia River). Their operations were taken over by Amtrak in 1981, but apparently they still exist as a legal entity. A current description of the status of the Washington Terminal Company, its operations and regulation, should be addressed in the DC Rail Plan, now being overseen by the Council Budget Office.

⁴ (moveDC, page F-7):

“The Maryland Avenue SW Small Area Plan (2012), led by the D.C. Office of Planning (OP), evaluated the feasibility of constructing a structure over the existing rail corridor that follows the alignment of Maryland Avenue SW. One of the goals of the study was to identify a preferred approach to permit Maryland Avenue SW and other connecting local streets to be restored to the city's network of streets. The study recommended that a four-track system along Maryland Avenue would be optimal for passenger and freight rail operations. The National Capital Planning Commission (NCPCC) completed the Southwest Ecodistrict Plan (2013) to envision how federal properties in the area could contribute to the same goals. DDOT is currently studying transportation improvements in more detail in the ongoing Maryland Avenue SW Study.”

current study of Long Bridge is a good example of the District's ongoing commitment to rail capacity expansion.⁵

The plan contains an expanded and sympathetic discussion of freight rail, compared to the discussion of commuter rail. That is misleading when freight rail in fact supplies only 6 percent of the freight deliveries to DC, but commuter rail has the capability of moving as many commuters as five Metro Silver Lines. It underscores the biased treatment of commuter rail throughout the Plan.

Funding the Plan

The cost of the Plan (in 2014 dollars) is \$54 billion over 25 years. Only 40% of that amount will be available from DC committed funds (page 104). To fund about \$6 billion of the difference, the Plan "hopes" for a 1.5% annual increase in federal funds, a 0.25% increase in the DC sales tax, and increased bus shelter advertising (page 105). That still leaves a gap of over \$27 billion. The moveDC Plan offers the following wishful thinking about how the gap can be bridged (page 107):

With much of the future need for transportation improvements in the District driven by demand generated outside the District's borders, regional collaboration will be necessary in order to increase local funding to meet regional demands.

In other words, half the cost of the moveDC Plan is proposed to be funded by the hoped-for generosity of our neighboring jurisdictions. If that gap cannot be bridged the Plan explains (page 106):

traffic congestion would increase significantly, crowding on key transit services would worsen, and system reliability would suffer.

Conclusion

DDOT has proposed a Plan that should be designed to address congestion, transit crowding and declining transportation reliability but is in fact a Plan that can only be half funded by DC resources, and predicts that congestion, crowding, and declining reliability will continue unless neighboring jurisdictions allocate their budget dollars to solve our transportation problems.

The new administration needs to develop a comprehensive transportation plan that objectively evaluates all modes of moving people and goods and specifically includes commuter rail as an alternative to automobile commuting and freight rail as an alternative to moving freight by truck.

⁵ Amtrak has recently filed a complaint with the Surface Transportation Board about CSX and Norfolk Southern providing preference to their freight operations, resulting in greatly reduced on-time performance of the Washington D.C.-Chicago Capitol Limited, which operates over right-of-way owned by NS and CSX. <http://blogs.rollcall.com/the-container/amtrak-files-complaint-against-its-two-of-its-hosts/?dcz=>