## U.S. Department of Transportation
### Federal Transit Administration

# Paul S. Sarbanes Transit in Parks Program (Transit in the Parks Program)
**Implementation Project - Proposal for Fiscal Year 2012 Funds**

| **BASIC PROJECT INFORMATION** | |
|---|---|
| Project Name: **NPS National Capital Region Alternative Transportation Information Website and Smartphone App**<br>On-line web site and responsive web design for smart phone application which will provide transportation information to the underserved citizens, active transportation community, and visitors seeking to access National Parks in the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board's (TPB) planning area | |
| Proposed Funding Recipient: Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments | |
| Public land unit(s) involved:<br>National Park Service | Location of Project<br>City: Washington DC metropolitan region<br>County: Washington, DC, Calvert, Frederick, Montgomery, and Prince George's counties in Maryland. City of Alexandria, Arlington, Loudoun, Fairfax, Prince William counties in Virginia<br>State: DC, MD, VA<br>Congressional District(s): DC -1 (At Large),MD – 1,5,6,8 VA – 8, 10, 11 |
| Federal Land Management Agencies managing the above unit(s):<br>☐ Bureau of Land Management<br>☐ Fish and Wildlife Service<br>☐ Forest Service<br>**X**☐ National Park Service<br>☐ Other (e.g. BOR, Federal Trust)<br><br>If Other, describe: | Type of Implementation Project:<br>(Planning projects, please use the alternate form)<br>☐ Bus<br>☐ Tram/Trolley<br>☐ Boat/Ferry/Dock<br>☐ Rail<br>☐ Non-motorized (e.g., bicycling/pedestrian trail)<br>**X**☐ Other (e.g., Intermodal facility, ITS)<br>If Other, describe: Alternative Transportation Information Web Site and Smart Phone Application for the Washington Region |
| **x**☐ Proposal is for a new alternative transportation system where none currently exists.<br>☐ Proposal is for an expansion or enhancement of an existing alternative transportation system.<br>☐ Proposal is for rehabilitation of or replacement of vehicles or facilities for an existing alternative transportation system. | |
| **Transit in Parks Program Funding Requested**<br>$410,000 | **Total** Capital Cost of Project at Completion (All sources)<br>$410,000 |
| Were you awarded Transit in Parks Program funds for this project in the past? ☐ Yes **X**☐ No<br>If answer "Yes," please provide years and amounts awarded: $ | |
| Is the project or amount of funding requested scalable? ☐ Yes **X**☐ No<br><br>If "Yes," please enter the minimum amount of funding required and any project components that would be affected by a reduced award: | |

| Is funding available from sources other than Transit in Parks Program funds? ☐ Yes **X**☐ No<br>If answer "Yes," please specify funding levels per source below: | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| State $ | Local $ | Federal (other sources) $ | Private sources $ |

| **CONTACT PERSON** | |
|---|---|
| Name: Nicholas W. Ramfos | Phone: 202-962-3313 |
| Position: Director, Alternative Commute Programs | E-mail: nramfos@mwcog.org |
| Address: 777 North Capitol Street NE, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20002 | |

**OTHER PROJECT SPONSORS (in addition to funding recipient)**

The National Capital Region National Park Service. For on-going project maintenance of the system it will include the District Department of Transportation (DDOT), Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT), and Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT

**REQUIREMENTS**

**X**☐ If a State, Tribal, or local government entity is proposing the project, the applicant is submitting a letter of support from the Federal land management agency or agencies affected.
☐ The project is consistent with the metropolitan and statewide planning process.
☐ The project is consistent with agency plans.
☐ If this is an implementation project, all reasonable alternatives, including a non-construction option, were analyzed before proposing this project.

| **BASIC PROJECT DATA** | |
|---|---|
| Number of Visitors (Annual): 10,220,000 | Daily Number of Visitors (Peak season): 10,989 |
| Average Number of Vehicles per Day at Peak Visitation: NPS traffic data is only collected at five parks. There is no data source to approximate the vehicles per day at all parks in region. | |
| Current Road Level of Service at Peak Visitation: N/A<br>(Please consult guidance where available on determining this variable. You may use observational accounts or pictures to provide an assessment of this datum for FY 2011 proposals). | |
| What time of the year does your land unit experience Peak Visitation?<br>☐ Spring **X**☐ Summer ☐ Fall ☐ Winter | |
| Current Carrying Capacity of Existing Roads (if known): (vehicles/day) | |
| What percent of that capacity is the site operating at during peak periods? % | |

| |
|---|
| Current parking shortages during peak visitation: Most NCR parks are in urban areas and parking is very limited. |
| Current Number of Persons who use the alternative transportation system (if one already exists): (average number of visitors/daily at peak) OR (annual number of users/riders) |
| Estimated Annual Number of Persons who will use the alternative transportation system at project completion: 150,000 (average number of visitors/daily at peak) OR (annual number of users/riders) |
| Is there an anticipated reduction in auto collisions with large animals with this project?<br>☐ Yes **X**☐ No<br>If "Yes," please provide anticipated reduction: collisions/year |
| **BASIC PROJECT DATA (CONTINUED)** |
| Is there an anticipated increase in porous surface with this project? ☐ Yes **X**☐ No<br><br>If "Yes," please provide anticipated area of increase: square feet |
| Is there an anticipated increase in wildlife habitat connectivity? ☐ Yes **X**☐ No<br><br>If "Yes," how many acres would be connected by the project? |
| Is there an anticipated increase in air clarity measures (e.g., visitors' visual experience) for the land unit as a result of this project? ☐ Yes **X**☐ No<br><br>If "Yes," please explain: |
| Is there an anticipated reduction of visual impact of parking and roads on visitor experience?<br>**X**☐ Yes ☐ No<br><br>If "Yes," please explain: The project will allow access to transportation information that will lead to a reduction in the number of vehicles accessing the National Parks in the region. This will result in reduced transportation congestion and air quality impacts |
| Is there an anticipated reduction of visual or noise impacts of transportation facilities on visitor experience? **X**☐ Yes ☐ No |

# Executive Summary

**Please provide an executive summary that introduces the public land unit and/or applicant and summarizes the need for the proposed alternative transportation project. Please identify the findings of previous planning studies, provide a description of the proposed project, and include any other information essential to the application. (500 words)**

This Transit in Parks project would be developed by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments' National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board's (TPB's) Commuter Connections program. The TPB is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Washington DC metropolitan region. Commuter Connections is a network of organizations that provides information on commute options to the general public and business community, special event ridematching, and coordinates special regional events such as Bike to Work Day and Car Free Day.

The Washington metropolitan region has over 16 million visitors each year with over 1 million international visitors. It is home to more National Park units than any other metropolitan area. There are approximately 90,000 weekday bicycle trips in the region and 1.5 million weekday walk trips with 500,000 of those trips to and from Metro stations. In addition, the American Community Survey's 2005-2009 five year aggregates indicate that 12% of the population in the region is in the low-income population group. There is a need to increase access to the parks for low income residents and urban communities due to health benefits and the opportunity to provide information on multi-modal travel options for this underserved population.

The purpose of this project is to provide a one-stop seamless regional web site along with a responsive web design for smart phones that will provide access to transportation information related to the National Parks in the Metropolitan Washington planning area. The project's purpose is twofold:

1) to provide information to three distinct target markets (visitors, underserved residents of the region, and those interested in active transportation) to allow for alternative transportation access to the National Parks, and

2) to alleviate traffic congestion in and around National Parks through the promotion of alternative modes.

The information on the web site will include transit, bicycling, pedestrian, and ridesharing options. The web design interface would allow users to enter their origin and destination and will include a GIS based mapping component that would provide visual options to the user. A responsive web design application would accompany the web site and be built and deployed to allow for access to the information through any smart phone device including an iPhone, Android, or Blackberry.

COG/TPB staff will coordinate the project's effort with the National Park Service and collaborate on obtaining existing GIS bicycle and pedestrian data related to access in and around National Parks in the region, and concessionaire information on park transit providers. Additionally, coordination would occur with Capital Bikeshare on station locations in and around National Parks. COG/TPB staff will also coordinate with its jurisdictional members to reach community groups to provide the underserved population with information on how to access National Parks through the use of alternative modes.

A contractor will be used to develop the search technology, database, web page interface and responsive web page design for smart phone applications. A contractor will also be used to gather database inputs. COG/TPB staff will be responsible for project development, management and implementation. Collateral materials will be developed in conjunction with the National Park Service and TPB stakeholders.

The National Park Service has provided a letter of support for this project.

# Project Description

**Please provide a detailed description of the proposed activities that would be funded with a Transit in Parks grant. This description must include cost estimates for each project component. You may attach additional maps, tables or illustrations. (500 words)**

The project will include the following elements:

1. Development of functional specifications document and Systems Analysis and Design

   This activity will include compiling functional technical specifications for the web site as well as determining the database structure and design. A Geographical Information System web service will also be determined along with report functionality that would be needed from the system. Other features which will be determined include search functionality and site language translation. The site specifications and functionality will comply with ADA and Title VI requirements.

   Cost: $45,000
   Timeline: 1-2 months

2. Data collection for database input and use

   This activity will include the collection of transportation data in and around National Parks in the region such as bicycle trails, pedestrian access, transit access, transit concessionaires, Capital Bikeshare stations, and any other public or private sector transit provider information that would be available through either the National Park Service, the state Department's of transportation, other federal government agencies

   Cost: $40,000
   Timeline: 3-4 months

3. Database and web site design development

   This activity will include the development of the database based on the final functional specifications document. The software code will also be programmed for the web interface and responsive web design for the smart phone application. This will include detailed page templates, development of a feedback mechanism, search function, and compliance with ADA requirements. Testing of the database, web site, and smart phone applications would include focus groups from the distinct target markets.

   Cost: $250,000
   Timeline: 8-9 months

4. Database, Web Site, Smart Phone Testing

This activity will include robust internal testing of the database structure and web site pages as well as the smart phone application. Testing will include the addition, deletion and modification of transportation provider and/or transportation options records and web site functionality.

Cost: $35,000
Timeline: 1 month

5. Branding and Collateral Materials

   This activity will include determining a name for the service, designing a logo and developing collateral materials for the promotion of the service as well as reaching out to organizations such as the hospitality industry, active transportation organizations, community groups, local jurisdictions and National Park Service partners to promote the service. The long term goal will also be to work with local governments and expand the program to state and local parks and perhaps other visitor centers. The overall program aim would be to support economic growth by making information readily available to access parks that will in turn increase visitor travel and extend the health benefits of the region's already active populations as well as the region's underserved populations. Long term funding for the upkeep of the service and information would be provided through the MPO's Commuter Connections program.

   Cost: $40,000
   Timeline: 1 month

# Transit in Parks Program Capital Project Proposal Justification

This form is for capital projects only. Please use the planning project template for planning proposals.

## Implementation Evaluation Factors:

### 1. Demonstration of Need

Please describe the current and/or anticipated transportation concerns or opportunities for improvement that will be addressed by this project. Please identify issues that this project will address, relating to visitor mobility and access, visitor experience, and the protection of environmental and/or cultural resources. (250 words)

Forecasts for the Washington metropolitan region indicate that by 2040 the region will include 6.8 million people and 4.5 million jobs which equates to a 28% increase in population and a 37% increase in employment. As the region grows to accommodate more jobs and more people, greater demands will be placed on the transportation system. Funding for additional capacity and maintenance will continue to remain in short supply. The result will be additional traffic congestion and unhealthy air quality. These statistics do not include the number of visitor's in the region which is currently over 16 million and will more than likely increase.

Many tourists will be visiting National Parks in the region along with local residents. Given the current number of bicycling and walking trips in the region along with the percentage of the regional population that are low income, the Alternative Transportation Information Web Site and Smart Phone Application for the Washington Region will help get information to these individuals, which in turn can lessen the demand on the roadway infrastructure and improve air quality in the region.
Cell phone usage is increasing in households of all income levels in the Washington Region. There are nearly 630,000 households in the region (or 32%) that are "cell-phone" only households. This service can potentially make National Parks more accessible to traditionally underserved communities given that approximately 35% of low income households have smart phones and in some cases no land line or internet access. Microsoft Tag reports that 50% of cell phone users currently use their device to search for maps which demonstrates the need for such a service in the region to reach the underserved, active transportation community, and visitors.

In addition to serving visitors, the service also address the growing interest from local residents, including low income community residents to bicycle and walk and will provide information on bike and pedestrian access to National Parks.

### 2. Visitor Mobility & Experience Benefits

Please describe how the proposed project will reduce traffic congestion; enhance visitor mobility, accessibility, and safety; and provide visitors with enhanced educational, scenic, and/or healthy recreation opportunities. Include the estimated number of visitors who will use the proposed alternative transportation system at completion. (250 words)

The National Parks Alternative Transportation Web Site and Smart Phone Application will help contribute to reduction in the number of vehicle trips and vehicle miles of travel in and around National parks by giving alternative forms of transportation access and visibility through a National Parks alternative travel information system. According to the US Public Interest Research Group, young people are driving less and those who lived in households with annual incomes of over $70,000 increased their use of public transit by 100%, biking by 122%, and walking by 37%.

The Washington metropolitan region's transportation system Vision includes the provision of reasonable access at a reasonable cost to everyone in the region. One of the strategies is to provide

accurate, up-to-date and understandable transportation system information available to in real time, and user-friendly for, regardless of mode of travel or language of the traveler. This vision is aligned with the President's America's Great Outdoors (AGO) initiative. One of the AGO goals is to enhance recreational access and opportunities by helping communities access, improve, and benefit from their urban waters and adjacent lands. Both the web site and smart phone interaction will allow for individuals to access the parks or team up with friends through the use of social media from either the web or their smart phone based on information in the proposed system's database.

Additionally, this project will address the National Park Service's Call to Action goals by improving urban residents' awareness of and access to outdoor and cultural experiences close to home and by promoting National Parks in urban areas and ensuring safe and enjoyable physical connections from parks to a variety of sustainable transportation options aligned with urban populations' needs.

**3. Environmental Benefits**

Please describe how this project will contribute to the protection of specific natural, cultural, historic, and/or scenic resources. Your response should also address whether the project has the potential to reduce air, water, noise, and/or visual pollution, such as through reduced motor vehicle use. You may also include other environmental benefits that fit within the relevant land unit's resource protection goals. (250 words)

This project has the potential of reducing traffic congestion and harmful air emissions by providing alternative transportation information for transit, ridesharing, bicycling and walking to national park visitors. This project also serves as a strategy to increase the visibility of the National Parks in the National Capital region as well as cultural and recreational opportunities for the active transportation community, the low income population and visitors. Increasing the awareness of urban populations can also serve to create additional interest in preservation and conservation of these national treasures.

By implementing this project in the Washington metropolitan region COG/TPB will team up with federal agencies, state agencies and local jurisdictions for better integration and coordination on the provision of information for outdoor recreation which is part of the AGO goals. The Washington Metropolitan region is currently a non-attainment region for air quality and has been ranked as one of the top urban areas for congestion. The National Parks alternative transportation information program will contribute regionally to both transportation and emission impacts.

**4. Operational Efficiency and Financial Sustainability**

Please describe how the proposed project will contribute to the operational efficiency of the existing transportation system, or how the proposed system will operate once implemented. In your response, please describe how the project and resulting alternative transportation system will be funded for a period of at least five years. Please also identify any commitments of financial support by project partners* and other future sources of capital and operational funding. (250 words)

An additional transportation Vision goal for the region includes the Washington metropolitan region using the best available technology to maximize system effectiveness. One of the objectives of this goal is the full utilization of future advancements in transportation technology. By designing and implementing this national parks alternative travel information system the region will benefit by the reduction in vehicle trips and the enhancement and protection the region's natural environmental quality, cultural and historic resources, and linking communities to the national park system.

Attached to this application is a five year funding plan which will rely on the National Capital Region's Transportation Planning Board to continue program capital expenditures and operations through its

regional Commuter Connections Work program. The program is funded by the three State Department's of Transportation in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia. Once implemented, the project will be integrated into the Commuter Connections program services which currently include commuter ridematching, the provision of transit, Telework, bicycling and walking information. The Commuter Connections team recently launched a program called Reach-A-Ride which provides transportation information to the elderly, disabled, low income, and limited English proficiency communities. Collateral materials will be developed with the project grant and COG/TPB will team up with the National Park Service, National Parks in the region, state organizations, local jurisdictions, low income community groups, active transportation organizations such as the Washington Area Bicyclists Association, and the hospitality industry to promote the alternative travel information service. The goal would be to have links to the service from web sites, use social media to alert potential users that the system exists, and strategically place collateral materials that will reach the intended audiences.

*In order to demonstrate financial sustainability, all applicants must provide a detailed budget representing the proposed system's capital and operating costs and proposed revenue sources over a period of at least five years. This may be attached in a separate table.*

*In order to demonstrate cost-effectiveness, all applicants must provide an estimate of the annual number of users of the proposed system, the annual cost of operations and maintenance, the anticipated annual farebox revenues (if any), and the proposed useful life of the system's assets (if known). This may be attached in a separate table.*

*Any offers of financial support indicated in the proposed project or operational budget must be documented in a letter of support attached to this application.

Five Year Capital and Operating Costs
National Capital Region
Alternative Transportation Information Web Site and Smart Phone Application

| | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 | Year 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Capital | $410,000 | $0 | $0 | $25,000 | $0 |
| Operating | $0 | $25,000 | $25,000 | $30,000 | $35,000 |
| | Will include the development, design, and implementation of the system. Costs are broken down by tasks in the application. | Includes COG/TPB staff time to maintain, and update provider information and items such as new bikeshare locations, bike and pedestrian trails. Work with hospitality community, active transportation groups and community groups for underserved citizens as well as the National Park Service on promoting the service. Produce monthly reports of service usage from the web site and smart phone application. Make updates to the GIS application and any techincal corrections needed to the database structure and web pages to address feedback received. Funding will be provided through the TPB's Commuter Connections Work Program which is fundded by DDOT, MDOT, and VDOT. | Includes COG/TPB staff time to maintain, and update provider information and items such as new bikeshare locations, bike and pedestrian trails. Work with hospitality community, active transportation groups and community groups for underserved citizens as well as the National Park Service on promoting the service. Produce monthly reports of service usage from the web site and smart phone application. Make updates to the GIS application and any techincal corrections needed to the database structure and web pages to address feedback received. Funding will be provided through the TPB's Commuter Connections Work Program which is fundded by DDOT, MDOT, and VDOT. | Includes COG/TPB staff time to maintain, and update provider information and items such as new bikeshare locations, bike and pedestrian trails. Work with hospitality community, active transportation groups and community groups for underserved citizens as well as the National Park Service on promoting the service. Produce monthly reports of service usage from the web site and smart phone application. Make updates to the GIS application and any techincal corrections needed to the database structure and web pages to address feedback received. Upgrade hardware and/or software as needed. This will fall under Capital Expenditures. Also update any collateral materials and begin to examine expansion of the program to state and local parks in the region. Funding will be provided through the TPB's Commuter Connections Work Program which is fundded by DDOT, MDOT, and VDOT. | Includes COG/TPB staff time to maintain, and update provider information and items such as new bikeshare locations, bike and pedestrian trails. Work with hospitality community, active transportation groups and community groups for underserved citizens as well as the National Park Service on promoting the service. Produce monthly reports of service usage from the web site and smart phone application. Make updates to the GIS application and any techincal corrections needed to the database structure and web pages to address feedback received. Expand program to state and local parks and any additional visitor centers, as needed. Funding will be provided through the TPB's Commuter Connections Work Program which is fundded by DDOT, MDOT, and VDOT. |

# United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
National Capital Region
1100 Ohio Drive, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20242

IN REPLY REFER TO:

September 28, 2012

To Whom It May Concern:

The National Park Service is pleased to support the FY 2012 Discretionary Paul S. Sarbanes Transit in Parks application for grant funding by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. This application is being submitted on behalf of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB), the metropolitan planning organization for the Washington region, which will serve as the lead agency for this application.

The proposed project in this application, *Alternative Transportation Information Web Site and Smart Phone Application for the Washington Region*, is the development and implementation of a web site and smart phone application that will allow for access to transportation information for the national parks in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area. The provision of this information will enhance non-motorized access as well as reduce congestion through ridesharing options to the region's park system for visitors, the underserved population in the region, and bicyclists and pedestrians. This project exemplifies the Washington metropolitan area's commitment to enhancing the livability, sustainability, and economic competitiveness of the region.

The National Park Service looks forward to work collaboratively with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments to develop, implement, and promote this service.

Sincerely,

David Hayes
Regional Transportation Liaison