



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

URBAN MASS TRANSPORTATION ADMINISTRATION

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Additional use of existing railroad tracks by commuter trains going to and from Washington would be practicable if financing problems could be solved, according to a consultant's report released today by the U.S.

Department of Transportation.

The Department's Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA) said the consultant's study concluded that, although three proposed commuter rail routes could draw more than 13,000 riders, the new service would not bring in enough money to pay its own way. Neither would the ridership be able to pay for an estimated \$10 to \$15 million in equipment and building costs necessary just to get the commuter rail operation started, the report said.

The three rail routes, which could link Northern Virginia and suburban Maryland with downtown Washington, would terminate in the District, Gaithersburg, Quantico and Baltimore.

Federal funds could be available to cover up to two-thirds the \$10 to \$15 million initial costs if matching local money could be found, but neither Federal or local funds are available to support operating deficits which are expected to exceed \$300,000 a year, UMTA said.

The \$17,000 study was made for UMTA by Carl R. Englund, Jr., a nationally-known transportation consultant of Pleasantville, New York. Known as the Washington Metropolitan Area Rail Commuter Feasibility Study, the report recommends that:

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* The Baltimore & Ohio Railroad concentrate on providing weekday commuter service between Gaithersburg and Washington, a distance of 21 miles, instead of on their present Brunswick-Washington runs.

* The Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac Railroad handle a 35-mile Quantico-Washington route and,

* The Penn Central Railroad expand its 40-mile Baltimore-Washington commuter runs to serve Southwest Washington, allowing the B&O to drop their current commuter service between the two cities.

At present, there is limited commuter rail service between Washington and Baltimore and between the District and Brunswick, Maryland. The B&O operates three daily round-trip commuter trains between Washington and Baltimore and between the District and Brunswick. In addition, the Penn Central runs two daily round-trip commuter trains between Washington and Baltimore, making intermediate local stops. Currently, there is no commuter rail service between Washington and Northern Virginia.

The Englund study suggests that the B&O cut back their present 49-mile Brunswick-Washington service to a "higher volume potential Gaithersburg- Washington 21-mile segment." The report also recommends that the B&O eliminate its present Baltimore-Washington commuter runs in favor of "improved Penn Central service" between the two cities.

The 91-page report states at the outset that the study was not designed to find a substitute for present or proposed close-in mass transit routes. The study deals with finding high-speed public transportation for those who travel to or from communities well beyond the end of current and planned bus or rapid transit lines. None of Englund's recommendations compete with or detract from the Metro system currently under construction.

The three proposed commuter rail routes would cost about \$2.6 million to operate once they got started, but the service would bring in an estimated \$2.3 million a year, leaving an operating deficit in excess of \$300,000, the report says. Current law prohibits Federal operating subsidies.

A \$10 million "start-up" figure would provide satisfactory commuter rail service using rehabilitated main-line equipment. If new rolling stock is desired, an additional \$5 million will be necessary. Both figures include station facilities, adjoining parking lots and upgraded rail tracks, according to the report.

One of the suggested new stations would be in Washington on the Penn Central tracks opposite L'Enfant Plaza, one of the fastest growing employment centers in the Metropolitan area. Additional new stations would be at the Crystal City complex in nearby Virginia and near the new Health, Education and Welfare building on Randolph Road in Rockville.

Englund's preliminary report also suggests that the Gaithersburg-Washington run go through Union Station and continue on to Quantico, Virginia, then turn around for a reverse run. However, complex union jurisdictional rights and station service fees currently prevent such service, UMTA noted.

Non-rush hour service to match mid-day commuter rail demands also is envisioned in the study.

For further information contact the UMTA Office of Public Affairs, (202) 426-4043.

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