



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

NEWS

URBAN MASS TRANSPORTATION ADMINISTRATION

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20590

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December 16, 1975

UMTA 75-114
Phone: (202) 426-4043

Urban Mass Transportation Administrator Robert E. Patricelli today released a policy statement regarding Federal support for light rail transit. Patricelli announced that UMTA will look for a promising opportunity in some city over the coming months to make a grant for deployment of a light rail system.

Noting that no new light rail lines have been built in this country in recent years, Patricelli said that UMTA wanted to encourage at least one light rail development as an up-to-date demonstration of how this technology can perform. He described light rail transit as "a potentially attractive concept" because of the flexibility with which it can be adapted to a variety of urban settings, and its potentially lower cost.

Patricelli stressed, however, that UMTA will not prescribe light rail in any specific local area. "UMTA has no modal favorites," he said, and noted that grants would be made only where a local analysis of alternatives indicated that light rail was the best approach.

UMTA also released today a letter to the Miami Valley Regional Transit Authority of Dayton, Ohio, which had applied for funds for construction of a light rail system. Patricelli said that the Dayton proposal was being removed from the active file because of certain deficiencies which had to be overcome before the proposal could be placed in competition with applications from other cities. Those deficiencies were the lack of assurance of a local financial share, and the lack of a review of transit alternatives involving bus operations on

existing streets and freeways. The letter to the Dayton authorities noted that the Federal action was being taken "without prejudice to the merits" of any proposal Dayton would later want to submit which corrected these deficiencies.

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

UMTA POLICY STATEMENT
ON LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT

During the past year light rail transit has come to be viewed as a serious alternative to buses and rapid transit in meeting the transportation needs of our metropolitan areas. Several cities with existing light rail systems are taking steps to modernize their vehicle fleets and upgrade service. A number of other cities are contemplating the possibility of introducing light rail to supplement existing bus service. However, no new light rail lines have been built in recent years in this country, with the result that capital and operating data on modern light rail technology is not available.

In light of the growing interest in light rail transit and in answer to numerous requests the Urban Mass Transportation Administration is issuing this statement of policy in order to provide the clearest possible expression of its position toward light rail transit.

UMTA considers light rail transit as a potentially attractive concept for many urban areas. The features that distinguish it most strongly from conventional rapid transit are the flexibility with which it can be adapted to a variety of urban settings, and its potentially lower cost. In congested downtown areas light rail transit can be operated in underground subways. In lower density areas it can be operated at grade in existing roadway medians, reserved freeway lanes, and in abandoned rail and other exclusive rights-of-way. At heavily traveled intersections and in busy arterials grade separation can be achieved through underpasses or elevated structures. However, with preemptive signals and barriers, surface grade crossings and operation in mixed traffic might be tolerated in some situations. Because much of the track can be built at surface level, the need for costly tunneling and elevated guideways can be minimized and substantial economies in capital expenditure can potentially be achieved.

Light rail transit has also other merits. It is a technologically proven concept that requires no costly development program. It can be introduced into a community with a minimum of disruption and can be operated with minimum intrusion in residential areas. It may offer

a capability for conversion to higher capacity service, thus allowing a city to match its initial investment to existing and near-term demand and to stage subsequent investment as and when it is required. Because light rail transit holds promise of an economic, versatile and environmentally attractive form of mass transportation, the Urban Mass Transportation Administration believes that it deserves serious consideration by localities bent on improving the quality of their transportation service.

This is not to say that light rail transit will be prescribed as a preferred alternative in any specific local situation. UMTA has no preferences among mass transit technologies and will continue to support the choice of system and mode which emerges as the right transportation solution from the locally conducted alternatives analysis.

But while UMTA has no modal favorites, the burgeoning demand for mass transit assistance, together with the escalating costs of transit construction and operation, has put a serious strain on the available public resources, making it essential to fully explore any cost effective approaches. Therefore, the Urban Mass Transportation Administration announces its intention to assist in the deployment of modern light rail transit in a city or cities where proper conditions for this type of service are found to exist. In pursuit of this objective UMTA will carefully review all alternatives analyses and capital grant applications which are pending or which will be submitted in the coming months to determine which urban area or areas can make a convincing case for Federal support of light rail projects.



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
URBAN MASS TRANSPORTATION ADMINISTRATION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20590

THE ADMINISTRATOR

December 15, 1975

Mr. Asher Bogin
President, Board of Trustees
Miami Valley Regional
Transit Authority
333 West First Street
Suite 500
Dayton, Ohio 45402

Dear Mr. Bogin:

This letter responds to the preliminary capital grant application of the Miami Valley Regional Transit Authority for assistance in financing the construction of a light rail transit line from Dayton to Centerville.

As you know, the Urban Mass Transportation Administration is making special efforts to encourage local authorities to consider the full range of public transportation modes available to provide service in their urban areas, the idea being to fit the solutions more closely to the problems. In particular, we have been suggesting a close look at the possibilities of neglected modes such as light rail and paratransit, and at the full possibilities of bus systems on existing street and highway networks. We were therefore particularly interested in your proposed use of light rail technology in a 12.2 mile railway line in the south-central portion of the Montgomery-Green County region.

I believe that we need an example of modern light rail development in this country as an up-to-date test of cost and performance. In this regard, I am today issuing the attached Statement of Policy on Light Rail Development announcing UMTA's intention to fund the development of such a system in some appropriate case or cases in the coming months.

I must inform you, however, that we have found that Dayton cannot now be considered for such a capital grant. Your application and its supporting materials are deficient in two respects, both of which would have to be corrected before you can be considered to be in competition with other cities for capital grant assistance for a light rail system.

The first problem has to do with the omission of an important option in your planning process. Your analysis covered an exclusive busway system and the light rail line on the railroad right-

of-way, but did not review those transit alternatives involving bus operations on existing streets and freeways. These alternatives would include the "null" hypothesis (i.e., no change in the existing bus service), as well as improved peak hour or daily express bus service on reserved lanes or in mixed traffic on freeways and arterials, perhaps with preferential signalling. We recognize that some operational alternatives are not feasible with the existing trolley bus operations, but some improvements are possible. It may be desirable to test the market response to higher quality transit service before committing to a significantly more expensive alternative mode such as light rail. The dramatic increases you anticipate in modal split and transit patronage in a relatively uncongested corridor would seem, on the face of it, to warrant some such market testing.

We believe that an appropriate analysis of bus service options could be conducted in approximately three months, once begun. We would be amenable to revising your planning work program for the current year, and, if necessary, providing supplementary funds from the technical studies grant program. This may be worked out with our Region V staff through Mr. Thomas Harvey, our Regional Chief in Chicago.

Second, your application is currently incomplete in that it does not include a definite assurance of the availability of the local share of the estimated net project cost of the capital project, and a local commitment to financing any operating costs not covered by fares.

Until these two deficiencies are corrected, we will remove the Authority's capital grant proposal from active consideration. This action is taken without prejudice to the merits of any proposal which you may wish to submit later which corrects the above deficiencies. Only once these threshold problems are corrected can your application be placed in competition with other cities for UMTA's limited funds.

My staff has made an extensive review of your project, and will be in touch with you at the technical level to convey our further impressions. If you have questions about this response, I would be glad to hear from you.

Sincerely,



Robert E. Patricelli

Attachment..

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