

WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSIT COMMISSION

WASHINGTON, D. C.

ORDER NO. 1143

IN THE MATTER OF:

Served May 27, 1971

Application of D. C. Transit)
System, Inc., to Add Route)
M-3.)

Application No. 675

Application of D. C. Transit)
System, Inc., to Abandon Its)
D. C. Downtowner Minibus)
Service.)

Application No. 676

Docket No. 228

In Order No. 1131, issued April 16, 1971, we granted D. C. Transit System, Inc. (Transit) authority to discontinue its Downtowner Minibus service. In its place, Transit was authorized to operate the M-3 Shoppers' Special between the Southwest employment area and the Connecticut Avenue employment area, via the main downtown shopping area on F Street. The Shoppers' Special was to have a unique fare zone structure designed to generate new ridership from the employment areas into the F Street shopping area while maintaining the existing Minibus fare along the Minibus route.

In granting the authority, we noted that revenues from the Downtowner Minibus have not even covered operators wages. Further, the existing Minibuses have become increasingly difficult and expensive to maintain and are in need of replacement. However, we were aware of a strong interest in the community for the maintenance of some kind of downtown shoppers' service. Moreover, we had had indications from various private and government groups that some financial support might be available to support such a service. Therefore, our grant of authority was provisional. We indicated that we might suspend or withdraw the authority granted if a "reasonable and substantial proposal for maintaining a viable Minibus service is presented to the Commission."

The staff then undertook to bring together the various parties who had expressed an interest in supporting the Minibus service in order to ascertain if, in fact, outside support could be provided.

As a result of several meetings, the Government of the District of Columbia submitted to the United States Department of Transportation a preliminary proposal calling for a five-year demonstration program to be funded by the Urban Mass Transportation Administration. The Secretary of Transportation responded in a letter, which has been forwarded to us, indicating that his department is favorably inclined toward a project supporting a new downtown shoppers' service. If the proposal submitted originally by the District Government is not accepted, then some variation of it apparently will be. The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments joined the District Government in the appeal to DOT for assistance and this offer also received a favorable response from the Secretary.

We are encouraged by the positive response to the appeal in our order of April 16, 1971, for support for a shoppers' service. It appears to us that the scheduled June 1 discontinuance of the Downtowner Minibus should be extended to allow those involved in the new proposal additional time to develop and explore that proposal more fully. Therefore, the effective date for discontinuance of the Downtowner Minibus and the substitution of the M-3 service will be postponed from June 1, 1971 until August 1, 1971.

However, this action does not indicate a willingness on our part to require operation of the Downtowner Minibus for an indefinite period while the planning process for a substitute service goes on. In Order No. 1131 we pointed out the maintenance difficulties which the company has experienced with the deteriorating Minibus fleet. We also discussed the problem of insufficient revenues to support the service. These problems have not abated. Therefore, we can offer no assurance that the effective date for the discontinuance of the Downtowner Minibus and the institution of the M-3 service will be extended beyond August 1, 1971. We could not take such action without a very firm indication that support for a new service does, in fact, exist and without a very firm estimate of the time at which

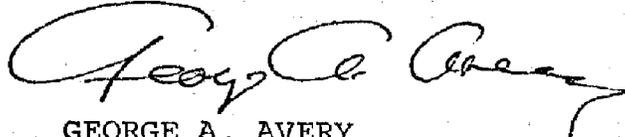
the new service will commence. Furthermore, even if such firm commitments are made but the time for inauguration of the new service is too distant, there may have to be a hiatus between the existing service and the new service.

THEREFORE, IT IS ORDERED:

1. That the effective date for discontinuance of the Downtowner Minibus and the inauguration of the M-3 Shoppers' Special of D. C. Transit System, Inc., authorized in Order No. 1131, be, and it is hereby, postponed to August 1, 1971.

2. That any person proposing a new downtown shoppers' service and who would, on the basis of such proposal, petition this Commission to further delay the effective date of the discontinuance of the Downtowner Minibus and the inauguration of the M-3 Shoppers' Special, should present that proposal to us by July 20, 1971.

BY DIRECTION OF THE COMMISSION:



GEORGE A. AVERY
Chairman