

WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSIT COMMISSION

WASHINGTON, D. C.

ORDER NO. 1192

IN THE MATTER OF:

Served January 13, 1972

Application of Washington, )  
Virginia, and Maryland Coach )  
Company, Inc., for Authority )  
to Discontinue Regular Route )  
Bus Service on Routes 1, 2, 3, )  
4, 5, 8, and 10 on Weekdays )  
After 8:00 p.m., and All )  
Service All Day Saturday and )  
All Day Sunday. )

Application No. 731

Docket No. 238

On November 3, 1971, Washington, Virginia, and Maryland Coach Company, Inc. (W. V. & M.) filed Application No. 731 for authority to discontinue all regular route bus service after 8:00 p.m. weekdays and all regular route bus service on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays. Order No. 1180, issued November 19, 1971, suspended the effective date of the proposed schedule changes and set the matter for public hearings as Docket No. 238.

Seven parties appeared as formal protestants: Donald Shaw, pro se, the Board of Supervisors of Fairfax County, the County Board of Arlington County, the Arlington County Civic Association, David A. Sutherland, pro se, the Northern Virginia Federation of the National Federation of the Blind, and Harold O. Miller, pro se; and the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission appeared as an intervenor. Formal hearings were held for receipt of the applicant's direct case on December 20 and 21, 1971, and an informal evening hearing was held in W. V. & M.'s service area on December 22, 1971, at which forty (40) members of the public testified against the proposed reductions in service.

At the close of hearings on December 21st, we set January 27 and 28, 1972, as dates for the presentation of evidence by the staff, protestants, and the intervenor. However, upon examination of the case presented by the applicant, we believe the applicant has failed to make a record

which would support the wholesale service reductions applied for, and we shall, without further proceedings, deny its application.

The application sought to discontinue all service on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays. This request was, according to company testimony, based solely on the fact that revenues on Saturdays and Sundays did not equal the total avoidable cost of Saturday and Sunday service. No testimony and no exhibit dealt with revenues or patronage for holiday service. No analysis was presented of ridership or revenue per trip of Saturday and Sunday service. Further, applicant presented no evidence that total elimination of service would result in a greater cost saving than selective reductions of unprofitable trips. Applicant alleged that it was necessary to eliminate both Saturday and Sunday service in order to achieve two consecutive days off for its drivers as required by its union contract. No cost analysis was presented to verify this claim or to show the results of retention of a reduced amount of weekend regular route service. According to the record in this proceeding, W. V. & M. transports nearly 8,000 patrons on a Saturday and well over 2,000 patrons on a Sunday. We cannot conceive of the elimination of service for this number of persons without complete route-by-route passenger and cost analysis.

On weekdays, W. V. & M. seeks authority to discontinue all service after 8:00 p.m. Again, the company's presentation is devoid of proper analysis. No analysis of ridership or costs after 8:00 p.m. was presented, nor was there any evidence on which to base testimony that it was economic to cut off schedules on all routes at exactly the same time. Applicant's president testified that he chose to cut all service at 8:00 p.m. because an examination of traffic surveys showed that to be the point when patronage dropped from rush-hour levels. He further testified that no alternative reductions to the proposed cuts in service were considered by the company. No examination of the feasibility of such alternatives as lengthening of headways, redesigning of routes, or cutting other unproductive service, was conducted by the company. In view of the magnitude of cuts requested, and the serious disruptive impact they would have on a significant portion of the bus-riding public, we find such a presentation to be deficient and unacceptable.

Even had W. V. & M. presented an appealing rationale strictly from the point of view of more efficient bus operations, other factors would dictate that the application not be granted:

1. As one of the four regular route bus operators certificated by this Commission to serve the mass transit needs of the Washington Metropolitan area, W. V. & M. Coach Company is required to provide a system of routes in the general area covered by its certificate. For the area of Northern Virginia served by W. V. & M., parts of which are highly urbanized, and considering their population density and their growth, we consider that a bus system that would provide no service on Saturdays, Sundays, holidays, or after 8:00 P.M. on weekdays to be less than an adequate system. That the company should propose, or that we should contemplate, eliminating Saturday service when it is financially near break even, is to us totally inappropriate. We would note parenthetically that if the requirements of the company's union contract are such that in order to eliminate unproductive services we must necessarily eliminate some productive services, that will have to be a matter to be corrected between the company and the union. The public should not be asked to suffer the consequences of an agreement between the company and its employees which destroys necessary flexibility in bus operations.

2. Even if we were to allow this drastic step of eliminating all Saturday, Sunday, holiday, and weeknight service, the company predicts that it will still need a fare increase of something in the neighborhood of seven cents per rider, and if the application is not granted, it will require a fare increase of ten cents per rider. Without ourselves concluding what, if any, fare increase would be appropriate, and using the company's estimates for this discussion only, it seems to us that if the fare is to be increased whether this application is granted or not and if what will be needed if the application is not granted is not substantially higher than what would be needed if it were, then granting the application makes little sense. The slightly higher fare that would be required, weighed against the considerable impact on the patrons of the company who use this service during Saturdays, Sundays, and evenings, and the impact on the community, leads us to the conclusion that the curtailment of service in this degree would be ill advised.

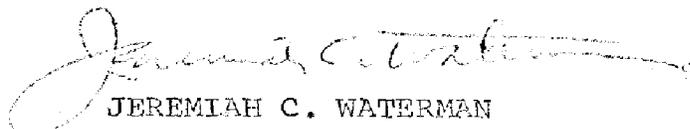
For all these reasons we will deny this application. In doing so, however, we do not lose sight of the fact that the basic circumstances that led the W. V. & M. Coach Company to suggest the elimination of Saturday, Sunday, holiday, and weeknight service, i.e. the inability to produce sufficient revenues through the farebox to provide a full level of services at present fares, is a problem that remains. We should not delude ourselves that the action we are taking today does anything other than intensify the need for better solutions to this problem than cutting services and increasing fares. Those approaches, while they may provide some temporary relief, are in the long run self-defeating. The long run, in the case of this company, as in the case of the other companies in the area, has become the short run. It is obvious to us that without some substantial and immediate relief, we will be forced to drastic curtailment of service and not only for Saturday, Sunday, holiday, and weeknight. We, therefore, appeal with an urgency that simply cannot be overemphasized, to the public officials in this community and to each private citizen, for support for a public subsidy for bus operations. In this regard, we are encouraged by the present efforts of the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission to develop means of public assistance.

In rejecting this application for reduction of Saturday, Sunday, holiday, and weeknight service, we specifically are not reaching a conclusion that no reductions in service would be appropriate. It may be that some service, particularly that which is grossly underused, should be eliminated. We will not, however, attempt to discern what those cuts might be from the record now before us.

THEREFORE, IT IS ORDERED:

1. That Application No. 731 of W. V. & M. Coach Company for the elimination of all Saturday, Sunday, holiday, and evening service after 8:00 P.M. be, and it is hereby, denied.
2. That further hearings and other matters in this proceeding, be, and they are hereby, cancelled.

BY DIRECTION OF THE COMMISSION:

  
JEREMIAH C. WATERMAN  
Chairman