



## Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority – SmarTrip®

The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) operates the second largest rail transit system and the fifth largest bus network in the United States. The Authority was created in 1967 by an interstate compact to plan, develop, build, finance and operate a balanced regional transportation system in the National Capital area. Construction of the Metrorail system began in 1969. Four area bus systems were acquired in 1973. The first phase of Metrorail began operation in 1976. The final leg of the original 103-mile rail network was completed in early 2001. Metrorail operates 83 stations.



Metrorail and Metrobus serve a population of 3.5 million within a 1,500 square mile area. The transit zone consists of the District of Columbia, the suburban Maryland counties of Montgomery and Prince George's, the Northern Virginia counties of Arlington, Fairfax and Loudoun, and the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax and Falls Church. Overall, 41 percent of those working in the center core, Washington and parts of Arlington County, use mass transit.

WMATA launched a contactless smart card called SmarTrip® in May 1999, with the broad objective of making transit travel easy, simple, and attractive for the customer. Just over five years later, approximately 650,000 SmarTrip cards are in circulation and are currently used to pay fares throughout the MetroRail and MetroBus systems and fees for Metro-operated parking lots. From the customer perspective, SmarTrip's success can be credited to the convenience of the card in terms of transaction speed, durability, reload capability, and ease of replacement if the card is lost, stolen, or damaged.

In the long term, WMATA is focusing on moving away from being a card-issuing organization to a card-accepting organization. In the short term, WMATA is the lead agency in promoting contactless smart cards as the payment tool for transit in the National Capital region. The largest functioning contactless transportation application in the U.S. is SmarTrip, which operates in metropolitan Washington, D.C. In a move to eliminate cash from the system in mid-2004, SmarTrip is now the only form of payment accepted in Metro-operated parking lots. Program improvements completed in mid-2004 include fleetwide installation of SmarTrip-accepting fareboxes in buses, and smart card vending devices have been deployed in one-third of the rail stations to allow riders to more easily purchase SmarTrip cards.

Contracts are in place throughout Washington, D.C., Northern Virginia, and the state of Maryland to populate 15 additional operators with SmarTrip-accepting infrastructure.

Since the introduction of the SmarTrip card, several pilot projects have been initiated to test multi-application cards that include transit fare payment. WMATA and Citibank are involved in a pilot program to offer a co-branded card that can be used both as a contactless transit payment card in the WMATA system and as a magnetic stripe payment card for credit card transactions. WMATA reports that the pilot will involve approximately 10,000 participants, with first cards available to the public in November 2004.

WMATA has also entered into pilot projects with the U.S. General Services Administration and U.S. Department of Education for a co-branded combination transit-building access card. These projects were initiated in 2000 and 2002, respectively. They include approximately 2,000 cardholders between the two agencies and continue to operate today.

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*This profile was developed by the Smart Card Alliance Terminal and eTransaction Infrastructure Task Force with the assistance of Greg Garback, WMATA, for the report, "Transit and Retail Payment: Opportunities for Collaboration and Convergence" (available at [http://www.smartcardalliance.org/alliance\\_activities/transit\\_retail\\_payment\\_report.cfm](http://www.smartcardalliance.org/alliance_activities/transit_retail_payment_report.cfm)) and updated for the September 2004 Smart Card Talk article, "Transit Smart Cards: Paying on the Go" (available at [http://www.smartcardalliance.org/newsletter/september\\_04/feature\\_0904.html](http://www.smartcardalliance.org/newsletter/september_04/feature_0904.html)). For more information about how smart cards are used for transit and retail payment, visit the Alliance web site at <http://www.smartcardalliance.org>.*

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