Meeting Summary

US 29 North Corridor Advisory Committee
Meeting #14
Wednesday, November 8, 2017, 6:30pm – 8:30pm
East County Regional Services Center
330 Briggs Chaney Road, Silver Spring, MD

Participants

CAC Members *(X for in attendance, blank for regrets)*			
Fisseha Adugna	X	Peter Myo Khin	X
Carole Ann Barth		Shane Pollin	
John Bowers		Rob Richardson	
Brian Downie	X	Julian Rosenberg	
Oladipo Famuyiwa	X	Sebastian Smoot	
Kevin Gunthert		Joseph Tahan	
Latisha Johnson	X	Dan Wilhelm	X
Bernadine Karns		Eric Wolvovsky	
Matthew Koch	**X**	Ayana Lambert	

Staff

Michael Weinberger, Meeting Facilitator
Joana Conklin, MCDOT
Corey Pitts, Project Manager, MCDOT
Dan Hibbert, MCDOT
William Shuldiner, Facilitator Assistant
Allison Scott, Engineer, RK&K
Raulf Cheng, Engineer, RK&K

Welcome

The meeting commenced at 6:45 pm.

Michael Weinberger, the meeting facilitator from Foursquare ITP, welcomed the CAC members and thanked them for attending the meeting. He explained that the meeting would address the preliminary design of potential BRT stations, also referred to as the 35 percent design. He gave a brief update on the public outreach efforts for the project and informed CAC members about two community roundtable events that had taken place in October. At these meetings, the US 29 BRT Project team engaged with the public to better understand how best to improve the

local bus service connecting to and operating along US 29 once BRT service begins on the corridor.

Questions:

Question (Q): CAC member asked where the project's 10 new bikeshare stations would be located.
Response (R): Joana Conklin explained that bikeshare stations located near the BRT Stations are identified in the preliminary designs. Locations for the remaining bikeshare stations have not yet been identified.

Q: CAC member asked about the data and models for bikeshare ridership.
R: Corey Pitts responded that that models for pedestrian and bike travel patterns and demand are relatively limited by the data available. Capital Bikeshare does collect information about how their bikes are used and the information is available for others to analyze. Bikeshare station locations for this project were determined by analyzing trip generators and destinations. Right-of-way also factored into the decision to place stations at certain locations. However, the docks are very mobile and can be moved if needed.

Preliminary Station Design Update

Michael introduced Allison Scott, part of the US 29 BRT Consultant team from RK&K, to give updates on the preliminary station design. Allison informed the CAC members that the preliminary design was due to be completed at the end of November and that this phase includes the civil design and stormwater management measures. The project will then move on to final design, which is scheduled for completion in Fall 2018.

Allison introduced the activity and invited the group to view aerial images of each station location. The project team had iPads equipped with Google Earth and pictures of the stations from the ground to supplement the aerial images. CAC members were invited to ask the project team any questions or provide them with comments on the preliminary design.

Questions:

Q: CAC members asked when the feedback that MCDOT collected from local bus riders would be made available and how this was being used.
R: Feedback collected during this phase will be summarized in an outreach report at the end of the year. Joana said that the project team is currently developing preliminary recommendations for local bus service based on feedback and analysis. These recommendations will be shared in the Spring of 2018. Any recommended changes would need to go through processes with the respective agency (Ride On or WMATA),

meaning they will not be adopted instantaneously. BRT service is not dependent on these recommendations being passed.

Preliminary Station Design Activity

Burtonsville Park and Ride

The Burtonsville Park and Ride Station will be located directly in front of the local bus stops. This station is also a terminal for a BRT service pattern, meaning buses will remain here (or "layover") between their operations. To ensure that these buses do not block traffic or other access to the Park and Ride, the station platforms will be built in a "sawtooth" pattern, with two platforms angled inward so that buses have a place to stop that is not in the roadway. This will require National Drive to be widened on one side so that there is enough space for BRT vehicles to pull in to the station and out of the roadway. The station will also feature a new pedestrian walkway between the BRT station and local bus stop, as well as new landscaping, a bikeshare station, and operator comfort station. Once the buses leave the station, they will make a right turn onto the US 29 entrance ramp and begin service.

Comments:

- CAC members asked if this plan is consistent with the Burtonsville Revitalization Plan. MCDOT staff explained that it is consistent with the current Burtonsville Revitalization Plan, but if the plan changes, the BRT station design could change.
- CAC member raised concerns about the new landscaping and whether would it hinder cars' ability to back out of spaces in the northern parking lot. They suggested that the spaces in this lot be restriped to put them at an angle and avoid this problem.
- CAC member suggested exploring using the space in the bus loop as a BRT layover area to avoid the potential for BRT vehicle congestion.
- CAC members asked where bikes could be parked near the stations. MCDOT staff replied that there will be bike racks for bike parking and riders can also bring their bikes onboard BRT.
- CAC members had multiple suggestions on how to improve the aerial images of the potential BRT stations, including:
  - Adding graphic representation of the bus was included for spatial reference.
  - Clearly labeling stairs leading up to the platform to help viewers understand where ADA access would be;
  - Adding a smaller map showing the larger geographic area and highlighting the area shown in the larger map;
  - Adding a local bus stop icon on each side of National Drive to reflect both MTA commuter bus and Ride On bus stops.

Briggs Chaney Park and Ride

This station will be the terminal BRT station for one of the BRT service patterns and will be used as a layover location. To accommodate this, the BRT project team will expand the bus portion of the Briggs Chaney Park and Ride to house multiple BRT vehicles at one time. This includes relocating the existing bus entrance slightly farther north in to what is currently landscaping. Some of this existing landscaping will remain, and new landscaping and stormwater management will be added to the area where the previous bus entrance was located. Additionally, a new sidewalk will be built along Gateshead Manor Way, behind the BRT station plaza, and a new bikeshare station will be installed between this sidewalk and the road. This sidewalk will be connected to the station platform by two other sidewalks. However, most of the land between the sidewalk and platform will remain designated for landscaping and stormwater management.

Because it is a layover station at the end of one of the BRT lines, the Briggs Chaney Park and Ride station will also feature an operator comfort station. This will be located at one end of the platform and will allow the operators to take bathroom breaks between operations.

Comments:

- CAC members remarked that it is important to maintain pedestrian access between the shopping center and the new BRT station.
- CAC member recommended moving the BRT station across the driveway from its current proposed location and installing a “buses only” entrance to the park and ride separate from the driveway in front of the East County Regional Services Center.

Castle Boulevard

This BRT station will be located at the intersection of Castle Boulevard and Castle Ridge Circle, on the west side of Castle Boulevard. MCDOT has decided to remove a curbside parking lane from this area to build the BRT station platform. However, there is a parking lot directly behind the new station which will provide options for vehicles wishing to park in the area. There will be only one station platform in this location and it will serve BRTs traveling in both directions. The bikeshare station at Castle Boulevard will be larger than those in other locations and will include 23 docks. MCDOT is considering this location for a floating bus stop, much like the BRT station at April Lane and Stewart Lane.

Comments:

- CAC members commented that the Montgomery County Council has expressed a desire for a shared use path in the area.

Tech Road

Unlike the previous stops in this summary, both BRT service patterns will serve this station.

Southbound Platform: The BRT vehicle will have the option to travel along the shoulder, allowing it to bypass traffic. The sidewalk will be built up to the BRT platform, to connect the platform with the intersection of Tech Road and US 29. There will also be a larger sidewalk that connects the station to the parking lot on the northwest corner of the intersection and to the new bikeshare station that will be installed.

Northbound Platform: This platform will include new landscaping behind the platform. A new sidewalk will also be built, connecting the station to Prosperity Drive and the new bikeshare station.

Comments:

- CAC members recommended widening the median to provide a safer spot for pedestrians attempting to cross US 29, since cars travel along US 29 at such high speed.
- CAC members remarked that it is important to connect the BRT stations to the existing local bus service on Tech Road.

Stewart Lane

The two station platforms at April Lane and Stewart Lane are uniquely designed to provide access for bicycles using the bike lane along Stewart Lane. These station platforms will be located between the curbside bicycle lane and the roadway, creating a "floating bus stop" to avoid conflicts between buses and bikes. After gathering community feedback on the floating bus stops constructed along Spring Street, MCDOT has designed the station with designated crossing points. There will also be railing and new landscaping at the rear of each platform to prevent people from crossing the bike lane at locations other than designated crossing points. The roadway between the two new station platforms will be resurfaced to reflect the new lane patterns and the installation of a new pedestrian island at the intersection of April Lane and Stewart Lane. One existing local bus stop on the southbound side of Lockwood Drive will be moved to accommodate the new bike lane and bikeshare station.

Comments:

- CAC member commented that the two local bus stops on each side of Stewart Lane are very close together and suggested that it may be useful to consolidate these two stops if the same buses are serving each stop.

- CAC member noted that the Montgomery County Bicycle Toolkit has recommendations for floating bus stops.

White Oak Transit Center

The southbound platform will be built near two existing bus stops to create a continuous transit zone. This platform will also include a retaining wall. The northbound platform is 50 feet long, smaller than the standard length of 65 feet. This is to avoid blocking two driveways to the commercial buildings located at this part of Lockwood Drive.

Comments:

- CAC members suggested eliminating the local bus stops located to the west of the station area (off the aerial map) as they are likely redundant with those located in the immediate station vicinity.

Questions:

Q: CAC members asked why the bikeshare station was located so far from the potential BRT stations.

R: Bikeshare consultants recommended placing the new bikeshare station at this location to assist in the bike balancing that is necessary for bikeshare systems. Another location closer to the BRT station would have been more difficult for the vehicle to unload and load bicycles during the bike balancing process (adjusting the supply of bikes at any station to the demand at that location).

Oak Leaf Drive

For both Oak Leaf Drive station platforms, MCDOT is attempting to relocate a minimal amount of utilities. Some will need to be relocated, however, and this is included in the project budget.

Southbound Platform: This platform will be located adjacent to the intersection of Oak Leaf Drive and Lockwood Drive. It will include a new bikeshare station with accompanying sidewalk/bike path that will run behind the BRT station platform. There will also be stormwater management located along the southbound side of Lockwood Drive to reduce runoff from the concrete. Unlike other sidewalks that connect to the BRT station platform at a shallow incline, the sidewalk in this location will be 12 inches high, or the same height as the platform, meaning that users can walk directly onto the platform from the sidewalk along the back of the platform.

Northbound Platform: This platform will require an existing local bus stop to be located just north of the new BRT station. The relocated local bus stop will include a new sidewalk section for convenient boarding. The BRT station will be 50 feet in length and located farther south of

Oak Leaf Drive to avoid blocking the driveways of houses located along this section of the road. Many of the houses along Lockwood Drive in this location have driveways that would be affected by a new BRT station. The station will be located near a house at the corner of Northwest Drive and Lockwood Drive but, because this house faces Northwest Drive, it will not create a physical or visual barrier.

Comments:

- CAC members recommended that the new stations be moved closer to New Hampshire Avenue so that it is closer to the commercial area.
- CAC members suggested the northbound station could be moved farther south so that it would be closer to the corner of Lockwood Drive and Northwest Drive to provide room for a full length, 60-foot platform.
- CAC members said this area needs crosswalks, stop signs, or traffic signals to allow pedestrians to cross Lockwood Drive more safely.

Burnt Mills

Northbound Platform: Unlike other station locations, pedestrians will not walk across the station platform, but rather will be able to walk around it. The sidewalk will be located behind new landscaping and the station platform. This will not only be more convenient for pedestrians but will also provide more room for station amenities, such as benches and off-fare collection machines. Additionally, this station will have a bikeshare station. This station area will also include a relocated local bus stop, which will be moved just north of the BRT station. This relocation will also include a new, larger curbside boarding area.

Southbound Platform: Since there is a hill located behind the southbound Burnt Mills BRT platform location that limits the space for the sidewalk, the station platform will only be 13 feet wide. Like at many other stations in the system, pedestrians will have to walk through the platform if they use the sidewalk. However, the sidewalk connection will become narrower to align with the existing sidewalk. MCDOT has included substantial space at the rear of the platform for benches and off-board fare collection machines to ensure that BRT riders do not block the path of pedestrians. There is also one utility pole at this station that will be relocated.

Comments:

- CAC member noted the importance of using care when building the southbound station on the large embankment.

University Boulevard

The two BRT station platforms at the intersection of US 29 and University Boulevard will not be located directly across from each other because of physical constraints and traffic concerns. The northbound station will be located near the southeast corner of the intersection to avoid impacts to the Woodmoor Shopping Center and the United Methodist Church. The southbound station will be located on the northwest of the intersection to avoid delays caused by traffic waiting to access the Beltway ramp on the southern side of the intersection.

Northbound Platform: This station will include landscaping improvements behind the platform. Like the stations in downtown Silver Spring, pedestrians will walk across the station while traveling on the sidewalk in this area. Unlike the southbound Fenton Street platform, there will be fare-collection machines and benches located toward the rear of the station, since this location has ample room to accommodate these amenities without impacting pedestrian access. This station will be in front of the local bus stop to place it closer to the signalized intersection to facilitate transfers to east-west bus routes and crossing US 29.

Southbound Platform: Four of the five businesses on the northwest corner of University Boulevard and US 29 are set below the grade of the existing sidewalk, making it difficult to construct a BRT station there and causing the station to be built farther north. The station will be in front of a parking lot that does not have access to US 29. However, the project team has heard that many people mistakenly exit the parking lot by driving over the sidewalk and onto US 29. For this reason, the BRT station will not only include landscaping but also a guardrail, to deter any drivers attempting to exit the parking lot in this way. This will potentially impact two informal (unmarked) spaces in the parking lot. The benches and fare-collection machines will be located at the rear of the station to ensure that passengers do not need to wait for the bus near the roadway, although they will have the option if they chose to do so.

Fenton Street

Southbound Platform: This platform will be located at the northwest corner of US 29 and Fenton Street where the sidewalk widens to approximately 15 feet. The platform will be constructed of concrete and will be integrated with the sidewalk with ramps to facilitate the transition from the sidewalk up to the platform. The station will be built in front of an existing retaining wall, but will not include a canopy because of the limited amount of space, leaving the BRT station marker as the only vertical element of the station. This station will be the only station in the system that does not have fare collection machines, so those wanting to board at Fenton Street going southbound will be able to travel to the SSTC for free.

Northbound Platform: This platform will be at the northeast corner of US 29 and Fenton Street. Since a full-length platform (65 feet) would block access to the businesses in this area and may cause drainage problems, this platform will be shortened to a length of 25 feet. Located in the public right of way, this station will offer level boarding at the back two doors of a BRT vehicle. The front door of the vehicle will still open, providing customers with the opportunity to board and alight in a non-level manner, meaning they would have to step up to the bus floor as they would on a typical local bus. The decision to serve the rear doors was made so that BRT vehicles did not block the intersection when stopping, as they would if the front doors aligned with the platform. The station will have two off-board fare collection machines and a marker. These elements will be located close to the roadway so they do not cause pedestrian congestion. No decision has been made regarding the installation of a small canopy.

Comments:

- CAC members suggested that the northbound station platform could stop could be located farther south on US 29, across Fenton Street at the existing local bus location. These members explained that the two local bus routes that stop at this location turn right on Fenton Street and stop immediately at another existing bus stop, making it possible to remove the local bus stop on US 29 and have the local buses use the stop on Fenton Street.

Silver Spring Transit Center

Although the Silver Spring Transit Center (SSTC) is the southernmost BRT station, it will not be a location where BRT vehicles remain between routes (a "layover" location), since the BRT service is intended to begin and end in Burtonsville or Briggs Chaney respectively. BRT buses will enter the Silver Spring Transit Center from Ramsey Avenue and stop at platforms 229 and 230 (which will be combined to accommodate the larger BRT vehicles). The new BRT station within the SSTC may include a 12-inch-high platform. Benches and three off-board fare collection machines would be located behind the platform.

Questions:

Q: CAC member asked why level two was chosen for BRT service.
R: All existing articulated buses use level two. This level is also the easiest level for buses to exit, as it is often difficult to make a right turn onto US 29 from level one.

Q: CAC member asked about transfers between the Purple Line and BRT.
R: An elevator and stairway would connect the new Purple Line Station on level three with the second and first levels, providing an easy transfer to BRT.

Conclusion and Next Steps

Michael thanked the group for their participation in the meeting and invited the CAC members to attend the US 29 Open Houses on November 15, 16, and 20. He also explained that MCDOT staff would continue reviewing the BRT station preliminary design. Staff would be available to answer questions if people wanted to stay after the meeting. He concluded by reminding the CAC members that the next round of CAC meetings would likely take place in January and explained that MCDOT will get in touch with members closer to the next meeting. The meeting adjourned at 8:10 PM.