

**Friendship Heights
Transportation Management District
Advisory Committee
September 10, 2013**

Voting Members

Aurelio Baca-Asher
James Calderwood
Barbara Condos
Tiffany Gee (Chair)
Cobey R. Kuff
Allison Lazare (Vice Chair)
John Mertens
Rachael Schacherer

The JBG Companies
Chevy Chase Village Board of Managers
Town of Somerset
Chevy Chase Land Company
WP Project Developer, LLC
United Educators Insurance
Friendship Heights Village
Friendship Heights Village

Non-voting Members

Matthew Folden

M-NCPPC

TMD Staff

Nakengi Byrd
Jim Carlson
Sheila Wilson

MCDOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services
MCDOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services
MCDOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services

Absent

Sandra L. Brecher
-Representing DOT Director
Capt. David Falcinelli
Campbell Graeub
Kenneth Hartman

MCDOT/Transit Services Division-Commuter Services

Montgomery County Police
Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights
B-CC Services Center

Guests

Larry Cole
Bob Joiner
Tom Quinn
Jeffrey Slavin

M-NCPPC
The Agenda News
ANC 3E
Town of Somerset

Abbreviations:

BRT = Bus Rapid Transit
CCT = Corridor Cities Transitway
M-NCPPC = Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
SHA = State Highway Administration
T&E = Transportation, Infrastructure, Energy and Environment Committee

Introductions/Minutes/Chair Comment's: Vice Chair Allison Lazare called the meeting to order. Members and guest introduced themselves.

Jim Carlson said that the Committee received a response to the letter sent to the County Executive expressing concerns about the planned median lane on Wisconsin Avenue for the bus rapid transit (BRT) system, from Bradley Boulevard to Western Avenue. The County Executive's response, contained in the meeting packet,

states that the proposed use of the median lane (under “Phase 2” recommendations) has been removed from the final draft sent to Council. Instead, it has been inserted into the appendix for “future consideration in conjunction with potential land use changes in future area master plan or sector plan updates.”

BRT Update: M-NCPPC Project Manager **Larry Cole** explained features of the BRT system that were recommended by the Planning Board to the County Council. As it is currently proposed, the system is an 81-mile network of 10 corridors utilizing a mix of treatments:

- Georgia Ave. North – north of Wheaton to Olney
- Georgia Ave. South – south of Wheaton to the District line
- 355 N. Rockville to Clarksburg
- 355 S. Rockville to the District line
- New Hampshire Ave. – District line to Colesville Park & Ride
- North Bethesda Transitway - slight alignment from Master Plan to Grosvenor Metro station
- US 29 Randolph Road to 355
- University Blvd. to New Hampshire Ave.
- US 29 Silver Spring to Burtonsville
- Veirs Mill Rd.
- Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) – not part of project but treated as bus rapid system

The focus of the plan is to determine future corridor rights of way, looking first at BRT and then dedicated lanes shared by buses. Transportation modeling was based on the 2040 forecasting year. **Mr. Cole** explained that the BRT project developed by Councilmember **Marc Elrich** in 2008 was analyzed by Montgomery County Dept. of Transportation (MCDOT). **Mr. Cole’s** team also included recommendations made by the County’s Transit Task Force and considered additional corridors. The planners looked at:

- 152-mile median bus way system – highest level of treatment & ridership.
- 152-mile median bus way system with some curb lanes
- 87-mile network with mixed treatments such as two and one lane median bus ways, curbed lanes and mixed traffic.

The planning team looked at the purpose of the corridors in determining the type of treatment used for the BRT network:

- Activity Centers – no set commuter pattern or rush hour peak with activity all times of day (Route 355)
- Express Corridor – heavy directional peak hour activity with few stops (US 29)
- Commuter Corridor – same as express corridor but with more stops and intersections (Georgia Ave. North)

The types of treatments for each corridor were determined based on the peak ridership in the 2040 forecast. If ridership is above 1,600 on a particular corridor segment, the treatment is a median bus way; between 1,600-1,000 warrant curbed lanes; below 1,000 has mixed traffic. **Mr. Cole** explained that corridor treatments consist of:

- One or two median bus way lanes
- Curbed or managed reversible / lanes – for example Colesville Road
- Mixed traffic – as roads are now, but with enhancements like raised platforms for off-boarding collection

Mr. Cole also discussed the factors in deciding BRT network treatments:

- Local bus demands
- Impacts on traffic – repurposing traffic for ease of BRT system buses, County Executive decision regarding whether buses will operate in exclusive lanes at peak hour or all day

- Property impacts
- Bus speed – median bus way provides the highest speed
- Network integrity – some corridors independent and others highly dependent on the network

Maryland State Highway Administration (MSHA) is working on a rapid transit for Veirs Mill Road in advance of the BRT study completion and found that the margin of error for forecast ridership is 30 percent; this was incorporated into the treatment thresholds.

Mr. Cole explained that there was public confusion regarding the plan due to the Planning Board wanting BRT built beyond the current master plan forecast; however, the functional master plan defines land use. As a result, the BRT system was drafted in two phases: Phase 1 shows what is included in the plan, and phase 2 added as the appendix, covers aspirational treatments not in the actual plan. The County Council will adopt only the Master Plan and not the appendix. The plan currently calls for a two-median bus way from Rockville to Bradley Boulevard and curb lanes from Bradley to Western Avenue - in contrast to the dual lane median bus way from Bethesda to Friendship Heights that was originally proposed.

Mr. Cole discussed community concerns about BRT. He said right-of-way impacts on the “Green Mile” (north of Sachs Fifth Avenue store to Bradley Blvd.) are relatively small. All projects for the network will go through a facilities planning process which will look at property impacts of the BRT system, taking into account the environmental impact on the tree canopy and streetscape. There will be public outreach for community input during the planning of each corridor.

The purpose of Master Plans is to set public policy at the highest level and then focus on the details. Each section of the BRT project will take several years to develop.

Mr. Cole discussed the community concerns addressed in the planning of BRT:

- Tree removal on MD 355 for the median bus way - median will not be removed; however, discussed for future Master Plan development but not currently in place.
 - Median will provide ped refuges, sidewalk offset from curbs and traffic, trees between curb and sidewalk
- Recommendations require no traffic changes – right turns likely depending on MC DOT decision
- The redundancy of MD 355 and Metrorail – BRT provides more station stops allowing easier bus transfer. Reduces Metrorail cost, and local bus service is improved due to segregated lanes
- Speeding bus concerns – bus speeds average 25-30 mph due to frequent stops and sidewalks away from traffic.
- Study on signal priority for buses – used depending on corridor
- Safety concerns and queuing of buses and trucks – buses have low fatality rate (trucks and buses treated the same in Federal statistics)

Mr. Cole said that traffic signal prioritization and bus service plan are two studies in connection with BRT that the County Executive has in process. The bus service plan study will look closely at local bus service connections and their interaction with the BRT system.

The Planning Board sets a policy that provides rights of way for the BRT system, and the County Executive’s Office decides implementation and operation of the bus and facilities. Additional traffic signals and crosswalks decisions are made by Facilities Planning.

The BRT project planning process schedule:

- July 25th - Planning Board draft delivered to the County Council and Executive

- September 24th & 26th – County Council holds public hearings
- October 7th - mid Oct. – Transportation, Infrastructure, Energy and Environment Committee (T&E) will hold work sessions and make recommendations to Council
- Nov/Dec – Plan goes to full Council with T&E recommendations, work sessions to approve the Master Plan
- Plan then reviewed by full Planning Commission (Prince George’s & Montgomery County)
- Plan becomes policy

Plan implementation begins depending on budget approval.

Questions and concerns from the Committee regarding the BRT system:

- How funded? To be decided by the County Executive and Council, Task Force figures seem too low at \$1.8 billion.
- Planned sidewalk project on 355 to Bradley Blvd – State Highway Administration (SHA) is moving forward with the project.
- Discussion regarding a pilot of the BRT system where possible to work out issues before fully implementing the system.
- Who will operate the buses? - Not decided, may be determined by final BRT design.
- Suggestions to build an inter-jurisdictional system for connection between Counties – BRT not intended to be a single bus route but a bus system open to connection to other jurisdictions.
- Extend Metro service – Metro views BRT as complementary service.
- Examine how to extend current bus service between jurisdictions, not creating new service – bus routes too long to maintain a schedule. Express routes may offer a solution.

Mr. Cole will provide copies of his presentation to Committee members.

VOTE: The Committee approved April, May and June minutes.

Mr. Carlson welcomed **Ann Lewis’s** replacement, **Rachael Schacherer** to the Committee, representing Friendship Heights Village.

Proposed BRT Lanes: **Mr. Carlson** suggested writing a follow up letter expressing general support for the BRT project. As a result of the Committee’s July 1st letter, dedicated median lanes on MD 355 are no longer under consideration for BRT under the current plan. Curbside service will be provided for BRT instead of the two-lane median bus way.

Committee discussion:

- Members expressed concern about the eventual cost of the system.
- Planners should pilot certain corridors to work out any operation issues.
- BRT is duplicative with Metrorail

Jeffrey Slavin, Mayor of Somerset, noted that any action with BRT is years away. He said there was no need to take a position. **Mr. Carlson** said that with the Council public hearing on September 24th and 26th, timing will be important; plus commenting on the project is within the Committee’s mission.

VOTE: The Committee voted to submit a letter of general support of BRT for public hearing comment period taking place September 24th & 26th.

Commuter Services Updates:

- Walk and Ride Campaign began September 9th

- Receiving Bikeshare stations this month

Adjourn: Next meeting October 8, 2013