

Meeting Summary
US 29 North Corridor Advisory Committee (CAC) Meeting #6
May 18, 2016, 6:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
East County Regional Services Center
3300 Briggs Chaney Rd. Silver Spring, MD 20904

Attendees

CAC Members ('X' for meeting attendees)			
Erik Amick		Matthew Koch	X
Carole Ann Barth	X	Peter Myo Khin	X
John Bowers	X	Rob Richardson	
Brian Downie	X	Julian Rosenberg	
Oladipo Famuyiwa	X	Ian Swain	
Johnathan M. Genn		Joseph Tahan	
Latisha Johnson		Eric Wolvovsky	X
Bernadine Karns	X		
Study Team			
Meeting Facilitator – Alan Straus		Lead Public Facilitator – Andrew Bing	
Montgomery County Rapid Transit System (RTS) Manager – Joana Conklin		Maryland Transportation Administration (MTA) Planning Director – Kevin Quinn	
Consultant Project Manager – Brian Lange		MTA Corridor Manager – Tamika Gauvin	
MTA Program Manager – Jackie Seneschal		SHA BRT Coordinator – Laura Barcena	
MCDOT Team Member – Darcy Buckley		Facilitator Assistant – Lauren Michelotti	
MTA Deputy Program Manager – Kyle Nembhard		Montgomery County Department of Transportation Director – Al Roshdieh	
MCDOT Team Member – Rafael Olarte			
Public			
Dan Wilhelm		Jim Bunch	
David Ashe		Harriet Quinn	
Drew Morrison - Councilman Berliner's Office		Pete Fosselman – County Executive's Office	

Handouts

Handouts to add to CAC Members' study binders were distributed, which included the following:

- Meeting #6 Agenda
- Meeting #6 PowerPoint
- Meeting #6 Question & Comment Sheet
- Map of US 29 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Study Preliminary Service Plan BRT Route Patterns

Meeting materials, including a video recording of the meeting, will be posted on the county's RTS website: www.montgomerycountymd.gov/rts.

Introductions

Alan Straus, the meeting facilitator, opened the meeting by providing an overview of the meeting materials being distributed and the agenda for the meeting. After a presentation, there was a question and answer period, followed by open house-style tabletop discussions.

CAC Member Question: Member acknowledged that many CAC members are not present.

- **Study Team Response:** The Study Team acknowledged lack of attendance and will follow up with individual members to encourage engagement.

Question: Member noted that the process is moving along although members still have not been provided with all of the data requested. Member questioned how purposeful the meetings are toward affecting change.

- **Response:** Team said that following the presentation this evening, members would have more clarity and renewed assurance that this is a purposeful process and that their input is meaningful to the project.

BRT Project Management Team Update

Montgomery County RTS Manager Joana Conklin gave an overview of the County Executive's BRT Proposal. She announced that MCDOT was awarded an \$80,000 Transportation Planning Board Grant to develop a BRT station prototype design. Additionally, the County applied for a Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) Program Grant, which, if awarded, would partially fund final design, vehicle procurement, and construction for the US 29 BRT. Currently, there is no money allotted for construction in the County's Capital Improvement Program; the funding currently being requested in the County budget is solely for the completion of project planning and preliminary design. The Study Team is also working to get State funding for the project, and hopes to partner with Howard County, who submitted a letter of support for the TIGER Grant – these discussions are ongoing.

Joana presented the US 29 BRT preliminary roadway configurations and proposed station locations, emphasizing that the proposed plans are not set in stone. She noted that the study team is conducting ongoing traffic and operational analyses, and assessing potential effects of alternatives. The alternatives will be within the existing pavement and right-of-way to the extent possible; however, some impacts may be unavoidable for stations and other necessary design elements. Joana emphasized that the County expects that the BRT system will be operational by 2020. There is still planning to be done and NEPA requirements to meet. Although the level of detail needed for NEPA documentation approval will need to be evaluated, the BRT aims to run within existing lanes and is therefore projected to have a minimal environmental impact.

Joana discussed how CAC member's comments influenced the County Executive's US 29 BRT proposal. She touched on the positive recommendations that members have brought to light, such as the ways in which CAC members have suggested that the project can be less costly, the feedback that they've received about the need for improved transit, and the idea of allowing high-occupancy vehicles to use BRT infrastructure.

MTA Project Manager Jackie Seneschal explained that the overarching Draft Preliminary Purpose & Need Statement is currently being revised and the refined draft is slated to be released

during the summer of 2016. CAC comments and feedback have been very important throughout this process.

Al Roshdih, Director of the Montgomery County Department of Transportation, reviewed the role of the CAC. He acknowledged that while the CAC's feedback and opinions are important in shaping what the study team does, it is ultimately an advisory committee, not a decision-making body.

Question: Member acknowledged that the CAC knows it is not a decision-making body, but there is concern that their feedback isn't being considered and that the decisions are being made without their input. There's also concern about other long-term projects, such as Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Administration's (WMATA) MetroExtra bus service.

- **Response:** The Study Team is undoubtedly benefitting from CAC member input and the input most certainly is being considered in decision-making. The team clarified that when they referred to other long-term projects, they meant other projects in other areas; there are no other long-term transit projects in consideration for US 29. The Study Team stressed that the limited stop MetroExtra bus service proposed by WMATA is not currently funded for advancement. Moreover, the MetroExtra is not a BRT system and would not be considered a suitable replacement. Any long-term plans proposed by WMATA or other transportation agencies, like all long-term projects, would be coordinated with the BRT Study Team to be sure neither project is negatively affected.

Question: Member has concern about whether BRT is actually going to decrease travel time and be convenient.

- **Response:** This question can't be answered in detail yet, until a thorough operational analysis has been done. Performance forecasts should be ready by the fall of 2016.

Question: CAC member is concerned that the BRT isn't going to be the system they had envisioned; hopes the BRT satisfies most of the criteria of a traditional BRT service, since the current limited stop service doesn't seem to meet those criteria.

- **Response:** The Team acknowledged the concern, but reaffirmed the system, as currently envisioned meets the accepted definition of a BRT system.

Comment: CAC member said they are glad limited stop BRT service is being tested.

Question: CAC member is wondering who is responsible for the "robocalls". Member felt that there is a need to publicly clarify who is responsible for funding it. Member also requested a copy of the public outreach plan.

- **Response:** Study Team is not funding these calls.

Draft Preliminary Purpose & Need Status

MTA Consultant Corridor Manager Tamika Gauvin recapped the Purpose & Need Open House that was held Monday, February 1, 2016. Generally, the comments received were focused on concerns about Land Development, Environment, Connectivity, Economic Impact, and Traffic. The revised Draft Preliminary Purpose & Need Statement will be made available this summer. Analysis about alternatives will also be released to the public the summer/fall timeframe. In addition, there will be a CAC meeting held this summer to review and discuss the preliminary conceptual running way alternatives.

Tamika stressed that the Draft Preliminary Purpose & Need Statement will reflect the need for improvements to be implemented within existing right-of-way and pavement to the extent possible, and that the goal is to have service underway within four years – opening to customers in 2020.

Question: CAC member wanted to know if the revised document will be released with a reasonable amount of time before the meeting where it is to be addressed. Member expressed concern about the amount of time that they were given for the comment period the last time a large document was released.

- **Response:** The Study Team pointed out that the last time CAC members were given two months to review and prepare. Additionally, the Study Team's comment responses should be sent out very soon, so this will give CAC members an idea of some of the content in the refined Draft Preliminary Purpose & Need Statement.

Comment: CAC member is concerned that if the members are expected to continue with this pace of scheduling, the Study Team will miss out on the opportunity to get thorough, thoughtful feedback from them.

- **Response:** The Team noted this and will give adequate time for CAC members to review the revised Draft Preliminary Purpose & Need Statement. Moreover, this is a document that remains in draft form and will be subject to additional reviews and revisions until it is approved by the lead environmental regulatory agencies. This will not be the only opportunity the CAC members and public will have to comment on the Purpose & Need Statement.

Components of an Alternative

Study Team Member Brian Lange addressed the preliminary station locations and acknowledged that some tweaks and changes may need to be made. He reviewed the proposed changes the Study Team members are considering as a result of CAC members' comments. He pointed out that the station planning process is a three step process that involves determining the service area, reviewing the proposed locations, and designing the station layout. Understanding the urban analysis of an area and a station's connections to major generators plays a large part in this process.

Question: CAC member asked about the size of the stations and would like more specificity. She is also curious about how the Study Team will work with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOC) study and wants to know why the TPB grant is not mentioned again in the slides.

- **Response:** The dimensions of the stations are still a work in progress. Dimensions will depend on ridership and available space. The final stations may be an array of sizes, depending on what is necessary and where they are located. Once the County does their study with the TPB grant, they'll share that information. The Study Team also mentioned that the TPB grant was just awarded, which is why it hasn't been worked into the presentation or plan yet.

Preliminary Service Planning

MTA Representative Kyle Nembhard discussed the elements of service planning. He pointed out that the service plan is flexible and adjusted over time. The three main components are the

proposed BRT service plan, the existing WMATA and Ride On plans, and other existing services like MTA Commuter Bus, MARC, and Metrorail. Since the BRT is a new service, the Study Team has more flexibility to define all of the aspects of this service. The service plan is still preliminary and includes existing data from local buses, and modifications are made based on the results of on-going traffic operations and ridership analyses. Kyle reviewed the BRT's proposed service characteristics, as well as the ways in which other local services could change as a result of BRT. At this time any proposed changes to existing service are very preliminary and are likely to be adjusted once results from the traffic and ridership analyses are complete.

Question: Member asked whether or not it would make sense to enact this service plan to an extent now, to see how it works and if they can build a market for ridership.

- **Response:** This is a strategy that's been done before, however the proposed BRT system is not yet at the point. The Study Team also pointed out that it's harder to remove service than to add it, so this is a system too complex to jump into right away. Instead, these new service plans will be tested using mathematical models and analyses.

Question: Member pointed out that there is a County Bicycle Master Plan and wanted to know if this has been taken into consideration.

- **Response:** Yes. Bicycle accommodation is a key feature the Study Team will focus on in an effort to enhance multi-modal access and connectivity.

Additional Comments

Member pointed out concerns over service to White Oak area, including the Stewart Lane and April Lane apartments during non-peak rush hour times and weekends. Member showed concern that these communities may not be properly served outside of rush-hour times.

Member stressed the importance for station locations to be near large populations. Member agreed that White Oak shouldn't be bypassed, except possibly during peak hours, when there's additional service. Members further expressed concern that unless a median station is built on Briggs Chaney, a service might not be able to stop anywhere near Briggs Chaney Shopping Center. Member was concerned that the current proposal of the Orange Service Pattern (Briggs Chaney P&R to Silver Spring via Stewart Lane/Lockwood Drive), and the hours in which there is no Orange Service, might lead to several apartment complexes being bypassed.

Update: The Study Team has made clarifying revisions to the meeting materials to reflect that the proposed service plan does maintain off-peak service to the White Oak area with a service pattern that runs from Burtonsville to Silver Spring via Stewart Ln/Lockwood Dr. The revised meeting materials have been posted to the county website: www.montgomerycountymd.gov/rts.

Wrap-up

Alan reviewed the ways in which the CAC members can leave a comment or ask a question. He encouraged everyone to participate in the table top exercise and thanked everyone for attending.

Summary of Comments Received During Tabletop Discussions

The following is a summary of the comments received during the discussions and interactive tabletop review of proposed stations and service operations plans.

Map		CAC North Comments											
Central Map	Location	Prelude Drive	Oak Leaf at Lockwood Dr	New Hampshire Avenue	New Hampshire Avenue	New Hampshire Avenue	White Oak Transit Center	Stewart Lane/US 29 Intersection	New Hampshire Avenue/Stewart Lane	Industrial Parkway	Randolph Road at US 29	Randolph Road	Musgrove Road
	Comment	Restructure Local Routes (Ride On 21). Ride On 21 and 22 stop at Oak Leaf	Oak Leaf too close to White Oak Transit Center	HOV proposed at New Hampshire where southbound direction goes from 3 lanes to 2 lanes.	Would be helpful to see feeder routes w/catchment area for entire corridor	What are plans for redevelopment of White Oak Shopping Center? Will the transit center sops be affected long-term?	Z13 (White Oak South). Missing Frequent Local Service BRT. Z8/Z2 more than every 30 minutes.	Pedestrian Safety Concerns. No crosswalk. Regular accidents. Consider station or ped improvements. April Lane station may increase ped crossings.	Senior Complex - Mid-rise building off Sherbrooke Woods Lane.	Locate bus - more frequent & connective with BRT. Possible long waits with connections.	Signal timing is at capacity. Lots of new development in this area with new Hospital off Cherry Hill Road.	Traffic Impacts due to White Oak Development at Randolph/Industrial Parkway. Consider other BRT routes included in Master Plan	Consider Musgrove Road for a station in the future. Some workers in the area. Design for future station here.
North Map	Location	Briggs Chaney Rd at US 29	Castle Blvd	Robey Rd & Greencastle Rd	Randolph Rd/Cherry Hill Rd to MD 198	Old Columbia Pike	Old Columbia Pike	Burtonsville Crossing Shopping Center					
	Comment	Station at intersection of US 29 and Briggs Chaney Road overpass should be maintained	Are Stations on Castle Blvd too close together? Are both locations needed?	Provide BRT Service for Robey Rd and Greencastle Rd Communities	US 29 North of Randolph/Cherry Hill needs a new bicycle path up to MD 198	Pedestrian Crossings needed at Old Columbia Pike at MD 198	Old Columbia Pike north of MD 198 could be narrowed to remove impervious surfaces and improve pedestrian safety.	Burtonsville Crossing Shopping Center Redevelopment: Coordinate BRT into proposed improvements for true TOD.					