

**Meeting Summary**  
**US 29 North Corridor Advisory Committee (CAC) Meeting #9**  
**February 2, 2017, 6:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.**  
**East County Regional Services Center**  
**3300 Briggs Chaney Road, Silver Spring, MD 20904**

**Attendees**

<b>CAC Members ('X' for attendees, blank for apologies)</b>			
Fisseha Adugna	X	Matthew Koch	X
Carole Ann Barth	X	Ayana Lambert	X
John Bowers	X	Peter Myo Khin	X
Brian Downie	X	Shane Pollin	
Oladipo Famuyiwa		Rob Richardson	X
Kevin D. Gunthert	X	Julian Rosenberg	X
Latisha Johnson		Joseph Tahan	
Bernadine Karns	X	Eric Wolvovsky	X
<b>Study Team</b>			
<b>Meeting Facilitator</b> – Alan Straus		<b>Lead Project Facilitator</b> – Andrew Bing	
<b>MTA Program Manager</b> – Jackie Seneschal		<b>Montgomery County Rapid Transit System (RTS) Manager</b> – Joana Conklin	
<b>MTA Corridor Manager</b> – Tamika Gauvin		<b>MCDOT Team Member</b> – Darcy Buckley	
<b>Consultant Engineer</b> – Brian Lange		<b>MCDOT Consultant</b> – Rick Kiegel	
<b>Consultant Engineer</b> – Dennis Simpson		<b>MCDOT Team Member</b> – Rafael Olarte	
<b>Facilitator Assistant</b> – Lauren Michelotti		<b>M-NCPPC</b> – Thomas Autrey	
<b>SHA BRT Coordinator</b> – Scott Holcomb			
<b>Public</b>			
Harriet Quinn		Jewru Bandeh – Montgomery County RSC	
Peter Fosselman – County Executive's Office		Dan Wilhelm	

**Handouts**

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

- Meeting #9 Agenda
- Meeting #9 PowerPoint Presentation
- Meeting #8 Meeting Summary
- CAC Binder Tabs (Meetings 8 through 11)

Meeting materials, including a video recording of the meeting, will be posted on the County's BRT website: [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/brt](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/brt) .

## **Introduction and Project Update**

Alan Straus, the meeting facilitator, opened with a review of the meeting agenda and an overview of the materials distributed. Alan noted that there would be a question and answer period following each segment of the presentation.

MTA Program Manager Jackie Seneschal discussed the transition of the project from the State to the County. Jackie noted that MTA would be completing its study of BRT design alternatives, which is based upon the analysis timeframe of meeting service demand needs for 2040. All study findings are documented in the Draft Corridor Study Report, available for review and comment through February 27<sup>th</sup>.

**CAC Member Question:** Member asked if further studies would be “shelved” until funding was provided.

- **Study Team Response:** The current MTA alternatives and 2040 analysis will be completed at this time. It is not known if, or when, the MDOT study will be revisited. In the meantime, the County is utilizing the findings from this study to proceed with short term transit improvements based on 2020 travel demand and needs. The County will continue to work with the community on their 2020 improvements at subsequent CAC and public meetings.

**Question:** Member asked what is being done in terms of planning and process. Member expressed concern that the process is not full, robust, or comparable with other corridor studies.

- **Response:** MTA is closing this particular study and is not recommending any of the 2040 alternatives to move forward at this time. In the future, if an additional study is initiated, that team could learn from our analyses, data, and general findings.

## **2040 Traffic Analysis and Cost Results**

Brian reviewed Alternative A and Alternative B, which have been presented to CAC members previously. Brian also presented the new alternative analyzed by the study team, Alternative B Modified. This new alternative serves as a hybrid of Alternative A and Alternative B. Specifically, Alternative B Modified includes dedicated median shoulder BRT lanes in the northern section, peak direction curbside managed lanes in the southern section, and intermittent segments of mixed traffic operation throughout the central and southern sections.

**Question:** Member asked the distance of the “blue” segment between Sligo Creek Parkway and Hastings Drive.

- **Response:** It is just under half of a mile, 0.4 miles to be exact.

**Question:** Member questioned if both Business Access Transit (BAT) lanes will head in the peak direction during peak hours.

- **Response:** No, only the one curbside lane, in the peak direction, would be repurposed as a BAT lane during the peak hours. Specifically, the southbound curbside lane would be repurposed to a BAT lane in the AM peak period and the northbound curbside lane would be repurposed to a BAT lane in the PM peak period.

**Question:** Member asked if High Occupancy Vehicles (HOV) were taken into consideration.

- **Response:** Yes, this was taken into consideration in Alternative B and Alternative B Modified.

**Question:** Member asked what width the study team used for its analyses.

- **Response:** For the majority of the alternatives, the existing roadway widths would remain unchanged. Where new or reconstructed pavement is proposed, the team assumed lane widths of 12 to 13 feet.

**Question:** Member questioned if the median shoulder lane was extended farther down to Tech Road in Alternative B Modified than in Alternative B.

- **Response:** Yes, it was. The proposed median lanes in Alternative B Modified match the limits proposed in Alternative A – from Stewart Lane to just south of MD 198.

Brian reviewed 2040 projections for total daily boardings and travel demand for the proposed BRT alternatives, noting total daily transit boardings are projected to increase between 18 percent and 22 percent over No-Build conditions. Brian also noted that vehicle miles traveled are reduced and person miles traveled are increased with all three alternatives. In addition, the HOV conditions proposed as part of Alternatives B and B Modified are expected to increase HOV volumes by 60 percent or more during peak hours.

**Question:** Member asked what the current ridership numbers are. Member expressed concern that if we don't have the current numbers, we can't gauge how realistic the future projections are.

- **Response:** The comparison of existing transit numbers are in the Draft Corridor Study Report. Specifically, the existing bus ridership is approximately 11,000 riders on a combination of MTA, Metrobus, and Ride On services.

**Question:** Member asked if the study took into account the five other major projects and development plans that are planned between now and 2040.

- **Response:** Yes, all of the future development and future project assumptions used in the modeling are documented in the Draft Corridor Study Report.

**Question:** Did you use growth projections from the White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan?

- **Response:** The study team used the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOCG) model, which is the regionally agreed upon model that every agency uses when modeling traffic. These models are revised on a regular basis (annually) to be sure they are keeping current with proposed developments. In this case, the model used does include the anticipated growth associated with the improvements prescribed in the White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan.

Brian reviewed the projected AM peak hour corridor travel times for vehicles traveling southbound between 8:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. He pointed out "weighted person travel time" shows the combined average of all vehicle types utilizing the corridor.

He then reviewed the projected PM peak hour corridor travel times for vehicles traveling northbound between 5:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. The study team found that Alternatives B and B Modified allow for the shortest weighted person travel times as compared to the No-Build and Alternative A.

Brian reviewed the projected AM peak hour person throughput at the selected locations the study team sampled along the corridor. He noted each grouping of bar charts presented represents a

snapshot of roughly how many people are traveling southbound through the given point between 8:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m.

He then reviewed the projected PM peak hour person throughput at the selected locations the study team sampled along the corridor. He noted each grouping of bar charts represents a snapshot of roughly how many people are traveling northbound through the given point between 5:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

Brian reviewed traffic performance. Overall, traffic analysis indicates improved transit travel time and person throughput for all three alternatives as compared to the No-Build condition. However, there are some impacts to car and truck traffic operations that result from proposed peak period lane repurposing.

**Question:** Member asked why projections for Alternatives B and B Modified consistently showed them to be faster options than Alternative A, the only option with BRT-exclusive lanes.

- **Response:** In Alternative A, we found that when we introduced BAT lanes through lane repurposing, it ended up creating congestion conditions severe enough that it prevented vehicles from clearing out of the curb lanes. The result was that the overall BRT/transit travel time did not improve as much.

**Question:** Member suggested that 2040 data be presented alongside current data to put it into perspective. Member also suggested the study team list the options they chose not to study, for future study purposes.

- **Response:** The study team will take that into consideration. The Draft Corridor Study Report contains this information.

**Question:** What is the distance between Burtonsville and Silver Spring?

- **Response:** There are about 10 miles between Burtonsville and Silver Spring, and the corridor spurs along Lockwood Drive/Stewart Lane and Briggs Chaney Road/Castle Boulevard are about 2 miles each. Total length of bus routes is 14 miles.

Brian then reviewed the estimated project costs. He explained right-of-way expenses reflect the right-of-way acquisitions required for new pavement, shoulder reconstruction, stations, and storm water management facilities. Bus procurement expenses reflect the total for the number of buses the study team anticipates purchasing. As the proposed project is still in the beginning stages of design, it's hard to narrow down construction costs. A lot of variables would affect the construction needs and corresponding costs which is why each element has a large potential range for cost.

**Question:** Member asked if a new maintenance facility was included in any of the estimated project costs.

- **Response:** The new buses would be maintained and operated out of the current facility so no new facility costs would be incurred.

**Question:** Member questioned what the financing costs are and if they're included in the estimated project costs.

- **Response:** We're not sure that there would be financing costs associated, but the estimate does include a large contingency for additional costs. Financing costs are not typically estimated at this stage of project planning.

## **MCDOT 2020 Project**

MCDOT Rapid Transit System Manager Joana Conklin introduced Rick Kiegel, who will be working on behalf of the County as the US 29 BRT project manager. He will be overseeing the technical and engineering aspects of the project as it moves into the design phase. Joana then reviewed background information for the County's proposed project and current estimates for potential 2020 infrastructure improvement costs.

**Question:** Member asked what managed lanes are in the context of 2020.

- **Response:** The County's 2020 project does not include implementation of managed lanes. However, in general, if managed lanes were to be implemented at a later time, they would be actively monitored and managed, in that you're constantly monitoring the performance of the lane to make sure it's functioning in the most efficient way and that minimum travel speeds, according to previously agreed upon standards, are being maintained. An example of this would be changing an HOV2 lane into an HOV3 lane if we found the lane under HOV2 restrictions was becoming so full that it was no longer functioning as efficiently as intended.

Moving forward, the State/MDOT will continue to welcome comments from the CAC members through February 27<sup>th</sup>, and will update their report as necessary. MDOT will finalize the Corridor Study Report, and the County/MCDOT will advance a shorter-term project into the design phase. The CAC will therefore have a new facilitation team since continuation of the project will be managed by the County going forward.

MCDOT will hold a project introduction open house for its short-term transit improvements on March 7 at the Civic Center in Silver Spring and another on March 15 at the White Oak Community Center. [Note: a third open house was subsequently scheduled after this meeting. It will be on March 13 at the Montgomery Blair High School in the Four Corners vicinity.] Rick Kiegel confirmed the same information will be shared at both [all three] open house meetings, so CAC members will only need to attend one. He also explained that since the County is moving into preliminary design, future CAC meetings will be more focused on design.

Joana Conklin reviewed the project schedule and noted the proposed project is expected to begin operation in late 2019 or early 2020. She stressed that although the State's study is coming to a close, the County will benefit greatly from the studies completed thus far, and from the feedback and participation of the CAC. She encouraged everyone to continue to stay involved.

**Question:** Member asked about the TIGER Grant funding.

- **Response:** The TIGER Grant proposal originally included funding for stations, transit signal priority, pedestrian/bike improvements, roadway construction and managed lanes, and bus procurement. Since the County's project doesn't include roadway improvement elements, we anticipate the TIGER funds will be used for the stations and pedestrian/bike improvements.

**Question:** Member thanked the engineering and consulting teams. Member asked how the County's project will be "rapid" using existing lanes and regular traffic lanes.

- **Response:** Service changes (such as limited stops) and other elements of BRT will result in a service that is faster than local bus travel times. The BRT will be able to use shoulders to bypass traffic in the northern portion, and the boarding process will be much more efficient since riders will have paid their fare before they board. We're also anticipating bikes will be allowed on the vehicle, so that will shorten the dwell time of mounting the bike to the front of the bus.

**Question:** Member asked if there's still a BRT component within the CIP.

- **Response:** Yes, there is.

**Question:** Member asked how the County is coordinating with the team developing Burtonsville Crossing, near MD 198. Member expressed concern about how BRT will take the new Burtonsville community plan into account.

- **Response:** We're coordinating with Montgomery County staff who are working on the Burtonsville Crossing project so that our BRT plans work with the planned development.

**Question:** Member asked where Transit Signal Priority (TSP) would be along the corridor.

- **Response:** We're going to examine each intersection to determine which ones have the capacity available for TSP element integration.

**Question:** Member asked about bike share stations.

- **Response:** We accounted for 10 new bike share stations in our TIGER Grant application, but we're not sure where they'll be. We're working to determine how to best place bike share stations to create a network that would serve BRT users.

**Question:** Member asked about the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process and whether the County is assuming they'll have a Categorical Exclusion.

- **Response:** Yes, since we're not anticipating large impacts to natural resources and very minimal impacts to the social and cultural environment, we're expecting to have a Categorical Exclusion. Ultimately the determination on what type of document is required will be directed by the lead federal agency (in this case, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA)).

**Question:** Member suggested the County look at some of the ideas that were taken off the table early on in the State's study, such as free Ride On or Metro Extra. Member feels that if we moved forward with those kinds of options, we would have the ability to look at New Hampshire Avenue.

- **Response:** We appreciate your input. If we were to go that route, we would lose TIGER funding entirely. We are anticipating one of the highest BRT ridership numbers in the country and this project has a 4:1 cost benefit ratio. Since we stand to benefit greatly from having a quality service, we feel it's worth investing in.

**Question:** Member asked if the parameters of the proposed projects are considered BRT by industry standards.

- **Response:** It would be difficult to make space for a dedicated lane in such a built out area, which is why part of our corridor is in mixed traffic. The majority of BRT systems in the U.S. have at least part of their alignment in mixed traffic, so this isn't unusual. We also have existing infrastructure we can use to make it much faster than local buses on the corridor.

**Question:** Member asked if station platforms will be any different in the County's version of the project than the State's.

- **Response:** The State was considering 2040 projections, so the stations and their capacities are aligned with those projections in the corridor report. The County is

considering 2020 projections, so our stations align to that and are anticipated to be smaller. We want to design modular stations that can grow as ridership on the system grows. We also recognize some stations aren't going to have the same footprint as others so they'll be designed accordingly.

**Question:** Member asked if there's need for additional analysis regarding throughputs and vehicle miles traveled.

- **Response:** We may do additional work on travel times because we'll have to build schedules for the BRT routes. We ran new ridership and cost benefit analyses for FTA (as part of the TIGER Grant application modification), based on the revised project. Vehicle miles traveled is included in that and we're happy to share that data.

**Question:** Member asked if it's possible to build the roughly 20 platforms needed for the proposed project in a year.

- **Response:** Since none of them are anticipated to require complex construction we're confident it can be done.

**Question:** Member asked where information can be found on the County's current proposed project.

- **Response:** We encourage you all to come to the open houses and follow the council sessions, since that's where we'll be sharing that information. [Project Information is available here: <http://getonboardbrt.com/us29/>]

**Question:** Member expressed concern about funding and questioned if the County anticipates funding sources other than the TIGER Grant or its own money.

- **Response:** Currently, there aren't other funding sources. The County was working under the assumption that any roadwork would be paid for by the State. Since there are funding issues at the state level and the project's been taken over by the County, the State will not be contributing to the project.

**Question:** Member expressed frustration that this portion of eastern Montgomery County has not been served on par with other parts of the county in terms of funding and project implementation. Member asked if there are alternatives that might better serve this portion of the County while they look for a more comprehensive approach.

- **Response:** We can work on the transit piece and talk to State Highway about whether or not they'd consider managed lanes, but since US 29 is a State roadway, it's ultimately their decision. If we can get this project, as currently conceived, off the ground and model its benefit and success to the State, it could have the ability to grow.

**Question:** Member expressed that it would be beneficial for the County to put emphasis on the fact that this project is modular and can be built on and expanded in the future. Member suggested the County look into putting money toward analyzing managed lanes.

- **Response:** The study team will take this into account.

**Question:** Member asked whether the State is backing away from the Howard County BRT project as well. Member stated much of the Montgomery County congestion is caused by Howard County residents. It seems unfair for the State to relinquish its role in the Montgomery County project since the congestion is due to Maryland state residents, not simply Montgomery County residents.

- **Response:** The State is still participating in the Howard County BRT project, but it's not going to be managed by the State. It's going to be managed by Howard County with the State's money. We realize it doesn't make sense to have two separate BRT systems for each county and are working with the State and Howard County to discuss the potential

of it being a bi-county service. [Note: the county executives of Montgomery and Howards counties held a joint press event on February 23<sup>rd</sup> in which they discussed the importance of BRT on US 29 serving both jurisdictions.]

### **Wrap-up**

The facilitator asked members to proceed to the one-on-one question and answer portion. Alan encouraged everyone to use this opportunity to interact with the study team and ask any questions they may have.