

Meeting Summary
US 29 North Corridor Advisory Committee (CAC) Meeting #3
May 28, 2015, 6:30 p.m. – 8:45 p.m.
East County Regional Services Center
3300 Briggs Chaney Rd. Silver Spring, MD 20904

Attendees

Corridor Advisory Committee (CAC) Members			
Erik Amick	X	Matthew Koch	X
Carole Ann Barth	X	Peter Myo Khin	X
John Bowers	X	Rob Richardson	X
Brian Downie	X	Mike Rosenberg (Alternate Attended – Zella Shabasson)	X
Oladipo Famuyiwa	X	Ian Swain	
Johnathan M. Genn	X	Joseph Tahan	X
Latisha Johnson		Eric Wolvovsky	X
Bernadine Karns			
Project Team			
Facilitator – Alan Straus		Facilitator Assistant – Lauren Garrett	
Consultant Project Manager – Brian Lange		Consultant Project Engineer – Josh Crunkleton	
Lead Program Facilitator – Andrew Bing		County RTS Manager – Joana Conklin	
State Highway Administration (SHA) Representative – Tessa Young		SHA Representative – Joe Harrison	
SHA Traffic Engineer – Carole Delion		SHA Project Manager – Jamaica Arnold	
SHA Consultant – Feng Liu		MTA Representative – Kyle Nembhard	
County Project Engineer – Rafael Olarte		County Office Representative – Darcy Buckley	
County Staff			
County Regional Service Center Director – Jewru Bandeh		Maryland-National Capitol Park and Planning - Tom Autrey	
Public			
Harriett Quinn			
Sean Emmerson		James Zepp	

Handouts

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

- Meeting #2 Summary
- Meeting #3 Agenda
- Meeting #3 PowerPoint

Meeting materials will be posted on the project website: www.montgomerycountymd.gov/rts.

Introductions

Alan Straus, the facilitator, opened the meeting with introductions by the project team. Then the facilitator provided an overview of the meeting materials being distributed and the agenda for the meeting.

Project Update

The Planning and Environment Linkages (PEL) approach will be used for the BRT study. This approach considers the environmental, community, and economic goals early in the transportation planning process. The PEL will be used to guide any subsequent environmental review processes such as the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) or Maryland Environmental Policy Act (MEPA). For more information on PEL, visit: <http://environment.fhwa.dot.gov/integ/index.asp>.

The study team had been planning to host Informational Open House meetings in June. However, we determined that a better path forward would be to postpone the Informational Open House meetings until the fall in order to address a few project related issues and study details that will affect how the information is presented to the public. The study team will also use this additional time to work more closely with the CACs to get input from the members on project issues and concerns.

The study team updated the members on the status of the MD 650 (New Hampshire Avenue) BRT corridor study. On May 21, 2015, the Montgomery County Council approved an amendment to the Fiscal Year 2016 Capital Improvements Plan to include partial funding for a study of the MD 650 BRT corridor. Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) will be formally requesting that the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) initiate the study, and will request a scope of work, schedule, and budget for the study. The project scope will outline how the MD 650 study would interface with the US 29 planning study and the project team will share information on the status of the MD 650 study with CAC Members as it becomes available.

Project Update Questions/Comments and Responses

- A CAC member said the project team is not following the PEL process based on where we are in the study, and there should be more information provided on the project alternatives. The CAC members indicated that they would like the study team to provide greater detail on the study process as it unfolds.
- Question (Q): A member asked what the limits will be for the MD 650 study.
 - Response (R): The scope of the study hasn't yet been defined, but early analysis indicates the limits would run from White Oak to the DC line
 - R: It is worth noting that the funding support for the MD 650 Study is a direct response to feedback we heard from the CAC Members.
- A member expressed concern held among some members that they are not being given the opportunity to provide meaningful input on project-related issues. Experience has shown that this can lead to community opposition. An example of this was with the

Fairland Road Interchange Project – the community reacted negatively to what they thought was SHA dictating what would be built, rather than seeking input.

Transit Ridership

The study team presented Existing and Future No-build transit data (No-Build refers to the assumption that no improvements would be made beyond those currently included in the statewide Fiscally Constrained Long Range Plan (CLRP), which means they have funding or are anticipated to be funded) in the context of both regional travel patterns and travel along the corridor. The study team is using the regional Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOC) model for this analysis.

The Existing and Future (2040) No-Build Regional Travel Demand presentation included the following topics (more detail is provided in the presentation handouts posted online):

- Study Area Overview
- Traffic Analysis Zones
- TPB Traffic Analysis Zones
- Existing Transit Routes.

Highlights included a discussion on regional growth and activity centers, household and employment growth, future trips within the study area, trips between the study area and the district, and trips through the study area to the district.

The analysis shows evidence of a strong existing transit market in the corridor and output data that supports the County's growth visions and regional transit priorities for the future.

Transit Ridership Questions/Comments and Responses

- Q: Why isn't the Randolph Road and Fairland Road intersection included in the study area?
 - R: Project team members Feng Liu and Carole Delion clarified that trips originating from locations outside of the study area are still captured in the calculations. Although the Randolph/Fairland intersection and surrounding areas are not included within the study area boundary, the team is still tracking those trips along US 29 that originated from regions outside the delineated study area. The boundary serves as a means to show a differentiation in trips between:
 - Trips that begin and end within the study area;
 - Trips that begin outside of and end within the study area; and
 - Trips that begin outside and continue through the study area.
- Q: Could more specifics be provided about how trips originating from specific areas outside of the study area and travelling along US 29 are being accounted for?
 - R: This is a regional model that captures those trips that will be using this portion of US 29. Those trips can come from anywhere in the region, both outside of and within the study area. The model gives us outputs that confirm the number of trips that originate within the study area and those that originate outside of the study area.

- Q: Could the project team please provide us with a write-up on the modeling process that is used? We really want to understand where the input data came from and what the output data tell us.
 - R: Yes, the project team will be providing additional information on the modeling process in the near future.
- Q: What accounts for the big employment growth that is projected east of US 29?
 - R: The model takes into account anticipated employment growth provided by the County. The County Planning Board has its own separate process for determining anticipated employment and household growth based on future land use projections and regional population growth trends.
- Q: Has the MWCOG model been updated to reflect the new master plan?
 - R: The MWCOG model was recently updated in October. SHA then refined the model to more accurately account for the projected land use provided by the County.
- Q: In discussions about the study area, there are big landmasses identified. Maybe those are Konterra and University of Maryland? To what extent are others being reflected?
 - R: All anticipated developments are reflected in the land use projections based on the master plan data provided by the County.
- Q: For the 2014 bus ridership data, are those average daily totals originating in and passing through the study area? Does it include every rider within that study area or do we know what percentage of the rider numbers account for those originating in the study area?
 - R: The ridership data reflect only those riders boarding and travelling along US 29. They do not include riders originating outside the study area. If an existing line runs outside study area, we didn't include those numbers in the model runs. At this time the analysis only includes boarding activity within the study area.
- Q: The Purple Line was referenced in the numbers above, is that assuming the Purple Line will get built?
 - R: Yes. The regional model still has the Purple Line in the plan, so the study team is assuming the Purple Line will get built.
- Q: There are three park and ride locations listed. Are those the existing locations? What calculation are you using for accessibility?
 - R: Yes, the three park and ride locations identified are the existing locations that may be upgraded or redeveloped (the team acknowledges there is a fourth park and ride off Greencastle Road, however that location was not recommended by the Master Plan as a proposed BRT Station. It may be considered in the future).
 - R: The current qualitative approach to accessibility considers quarter mile and one mile buffers as being theoretically accessible to the stops via walking or biking. The figure provided is intended to illustrate the potential coverage residents will have for accessing these potential BRT stations without the use of automobile. However, the study team has not looked into detail as to how accessible the specific routes are for pedestrian and bicyclists to get to stations; that will be analyzed in later stages of study.

Traffic Operations

The study team presented a summary of the traffic analysis results for existing and 2040 No-build operations for the corridor. In general, the data show that conditions will get worse under the 2040 No-build scenario. There is evidence of a network-wide degradation in traffic operations.

The study team analyzed 53 intersections along the US 29 corridor. Anticipated increases in regional growth are expected to lead to increased congestion throughout the corridor. Average speeds in the corridor are forecasted to be reduced between 3% to 50% from 2015 and 2040. Crash data for the corridor show approximately 1,088 crashes occurred between 2011 and 2013, including 24 pedestrian crashes and 3 fatalities. Under future No-build conditions, network-wide bus speeds are anticipated to decrease between 11% and 51%.

Traffic Operations Questions/Comments and Responses

- Q: A member noted that some of the numbers are hard to understand. Southbound a.m. gives the exact same numbers between cars and buses both now and in 2040. I would think buses would be slower on average. Why do cars and buses have the exact same travel time in 2040?
 - R: Carole Delion responded that the buses have a slight operational increase because of planned improvements to the WMATA Z-line.
- Q: What does the No-build model include?
 - R: Fairland Road/Musgrove Road interchange was included as an assumed improvement. It also assumes the planned bus line operational improvements that WMATA has introduced, and anticipates future signal optimization. The project team will make a specific list of assumptions and provide it to members in the near future.
- Q: When you look at what options we might have with improvements vs. the No-build, were the potential negative impacts that BRTs can have in certain places included?
 - R: That is a detailed analysis effort related to the proposed build conditions that we will be taking a closer look at in the next stage of this planning effort. The model only looks at the operational improvements related to projects that are included in the CLRP and are funded for further study or implementation. It doesn't take the potential effects of each BRT concept into account at this time. The operational effect of BRT improvements will be discussed at future meetings.
- Q: Is BRT able to promote additional development along US 29? Will BRT promote living and working within the study area or just address the commuter's travel time through the county? They are very different things with distinct goals.
 - R: The BRT projects are not just about addressing traffic congestion, they also are looking at person throughput, among other metrics. The study team is currently developing a broad range of metrics and evaluations that will extend beyond the typical analysis tools and metrics utilized as part of a traditional highway project. The study team will be reviewing the range of evaluation measures this study will incorporate for concept analysis at a future CAC meeting.

Alan noted that a lot of questions voiced are related to what is and isn't included in the forecasting models. The project team will provide these assumptions to the CAC members for further clarification and background and potentially discuss in greater detail at a future meeting.

Draft Purpose and Need Language

At the previous CAC meeting we spent time discussing purpose and need and how we intend to use the information the members provided to the project team. The bulleted lists of proposed purpose and needs summarize the study team's compilation of elements derived from the CAC member input as well as those suggestions from our partnering agencies. As it is currently drafted, the purpose of this study is to provide a higher speed, higher frequency, and all day transit service along the US 29 corridor between the Silver Spring Transit Center and the Burtonsville Park & Ride.

The study team requests that the members please take some time over the next week or two to review these items and let us know your thoughts on this draft language. If we have missed anything or if there are items or themes we could improve upon, please let us know. A lot of the language you see has been consistent with what you've provided to us through other meetings and reflects what the study team will be including in a draft document (the purpose and need document would be later finalized during subsequent NEPA/MEPA phase with regulatory agency concurrence).

Purpose and Need Questions/Comments and Responses

- Q: A member stated that they want to make sure the study team is taking into account the need for employment and activity centers to have easy access and visibility (maintaining and growing existing businesses) along the corridor. All of the purposes currently listed relate to transportation. Is there a larger context within the corridor that needs to be addressed (existing property owners and businesses need visibility and ease of access)?
 - R: The study team will be evaluating access and signage issues related to the improvements as the study progresses through the planning process.
- A member noted concerns with the purpose ("Continue previous Montgomery County studies which recommend Bus Rapid Transit along US 29"). Would like to see the team take a fresh approach to the evaluation of alternatives, rather than just focusing on what the County has already considered. They recommend that we cross off "new" from the statement; a "new" system may not be the only solution. It is important to have a defined purpose but we don't want it to hurt the ability to assess the different alternatives.
- A member stated that they believe the last bullet ("Improve person throughput on the US 29 corridor") is the real purpose of the study and the reason why we are spending time on this project. They noted that there is a need to increase person throughput and we have to figure out the most cost effective way to improve it.
- It was noted that while we don't have the ability to know what the future will hold, such as if the price of gas goes up. It would be good to understand how changes to transportation demand for various modes under various situations would affect ridership on bus systems.
- Q: A member suggested that based on their recent experiences there seems to be an increase in the number of people looking for permits for zoning changes. Are we paying

attention to growth that is actually happening now and how it can impact the area? Are we capturing the potential future development accurately?

- R: The study team is working to incorporate all current and future planned development into what we are looking at for our traffic operational and ridership forecasts.
- Q: Have we taken into account DC's policies on parking and how it's now a disincentive to drive into DC? Have we looked at that in the long term and how it will affect traffic and ridership?
 - R: Yes, as long as that data has been planned, or in a plan to develop or change the zoning of an area, it has been reflected in the model and data outputs.
- Q: Where do we acknowledge that transit in the area is pretty good, even on weekends? They would like that mentioned somewhere in our documentation, for the record, so that someone else doesn't say that and use it against us. For a general network, it's pretty good, but there could be improvements made.
 - R: The purpose and need document will reflect the extent of the existing service.
- The purposes that have been listed are transit and movement of people related. Is there any way of putting into the purpose things like carbon footprints and improving the environment in which we are living? The current and future stop-and-go traffic impacts the environment, but focusing on making travel smoother and the idea of moving more people freely along US 29 shouldn't be the only focus. We need to address the potential effects to air quality for both the best case and worst case scenarios.
 - R: Air quality will be address along with other detailed environmental affects assessments as the project progresses.
- If this does move forward I hope we could focus on the type of buses that will be utilized. I recognize this is in the need, but somehow we should incorporate it in the purpose section.

BRT Running Way Options

Six BRT Running Way options have been identified by the study team for preliminary consideration. The proposed options can be mixed and matched along different segments of the corridor to best fit within the surrounding area and needs of the transportation system. The location and dimensions of the proposed options and their related roadway elements will vary throughout the corridor and will be determined as part of additional engineering analyses. The study team emphasized that **not every option is appropriate for implementation in every segment of the US 29 BRT corridor**. The Running Way Options include:

- Option 1 – BRT in Mixed Traffic (enhancing existing services or adding limited stop service)
- Option 2 – BRT Queue Jump Lanes (bus only lane at intersections to bypass traffic)
- Option 3 – One-Way, Reversible, Dedicated BRT Lane (adding one additional lane)
 - Type A: Additional lane is incorporated to accommodate the dedicated BRT lane
 - Type B: Existing travel lane is repurposed to accommodate the dedicated BRT lane

- Option 4 – Bi-Directional, Dedicated BRT Lane (dedicated BRT lane, with buses sharing a single lane through a constrained segment using coordinated signals to safely pass. (Transitions, signal coordination, and passing areas are very important with this option.)
 - Type A: Additional lane is incorporated to accommodate the dedicated BRT lane
 - Type B: Existing travel lane is repurposed to accommodate the dedicated BRT lane
- Option 5 – Dedicated BRT Median Lanes (The most traditional BRT system--would add additional lanes into the median area. Challenge here is putting stations in the median, having pedestrians crossing in the median)
 - Type A: Additional lanes are incorporated to accommodate the dedicated BRT lanes
 - Type B: Existing travel lanes are repurposed to accommodate the dedicated BRT lanes
- Option 6 – Dedicated BRT Curb Lanes
 - Type A: Additional lanes are incorporated to accommodate the dedicated BRT lanes
 - Type B: Existing travel lanes are repurposed to accommodate the dedicated BRT lanes

Options 1 and 2 are less impactful, providing benefit but not as many physical changes to the infrastructure. Options 3-6 are much more complex systems that will need more detailed study to understand operations, transition, and potential effects as the study progresses.

BRT Running Way Questions/Comments and Responses

- Q: In some of the options listed, such as bi-directional and dedicated curb, it would appear the median is not really necessary. Why were medians included in the diagram?
 - R: Brian Lange responded that for the purposes of this presentation, medians were included for illustration purposes; we would look to utilize existing medians to the extent practicable for implementation. But that's also not to say that all medians would be eliminated. The study team will look to balance the use of medians throughout the corridor.
- The first two options do not conform to the functional master plan definitions of a BRT, but from Option 3 on, it's listed as a "new" service. Either they are all new or not. Suggest we take "new" out of the descriptions.
- Q: What kind of variance could there be at different stops based on connecting bus services? If you have a bus coming from east to west, would that boarding area be different? How would transfers occur?
 - R: In the example discussed, you could see a north/south running median BRT system with median stop locations. There may be variations on that, but it would require transfer efforts to get riders from the median stop over to local services with curbside stops.
- Q: Option 3, where buses are going the wrong way with respect to car traffic going another way (contra-flow), the same condition can be found outside of Lincoln tunnel. I believe it works pretty well. One thing they do insist upon is that the buses not exceed 35 mph. Is that something we would consider here to not scare drivers nearby? Does limiting bus service to 35 mph limit transportation time?

- R: The details of the physical improvements and bus operations (such as speed) will be determined during later stages of study. Bus speeds and BRT lanes will be designed to reflect industry standards for safe operating conditions.
- Q: Do the build options have a variation of abilities to expand existing bus options?
 - R: The project’s goal is to provide an appropriate transit solution for the corridor. These possible solutions may come in the form of an exclusive BRT lane, BRT in mixed traffic, or a system that runs concurrently with existing bus services. Additional evaluations will be conducted as part of this study to determine the appropriate way to provide enhanced transit service.
- Q: If BRT has a higher price [fare], does that create a two tier transit option?
 - R: We haven’t gotten into the issue of pricing and fare collection planning. That will be examined during later stages of study.
- Q: With Option 4, what is the rule of thumb for the distance between the passing areas?
 - R: There would likely be no more than 3 traffic signals between designated BRT pull off areas.
- Q: How does signal priority impact the different transit lines? If one bus is approaching from the north and one from the east, how does the signal determine which gets the priority?
 - R: Typically the bus with the current green phase would receive the priority. The buses and traffic signals will be outfitted with a coordinated system of transponders and receivers allowing them to communicate to determine when signal prioritization should be applied. Signal prioritization is only used when a bus is running behind schedule and needs the benefit of an extended green phase or other signal phase timing modification.
- Q: Is there any possibility the BRT-only lanes can be combined with HOV lanes and school bus lanes?
 - R: It is certainly an option; these are issues the study team will address as we progress through more detailed phases of the study.
- Q: Has the project gotten very far in with station planning?
 - R: Not at this point. Stations will be looked at in greater detail later in the study process.
- Q: What criteria will be used to decide what option will be utilized in what road segment? My instinct is that options 5 and 6 are best and option 1 is the worst.
 - R: The study team will be presenting proposed evaluation criteria at later meetings. Several categories directly related to the purpose and need will be used to make recommendations on which conceptual improvement options should be carried forward as part of subsequent studies.

General Public Comments

- A CAC South member stated that the north end of the corridor has it pretty easy; north of Stewart lane has a 40 foot median, but the south doesn’t have that kind of space.
- Q: A public attendee said it would be helpful to have the assumptions the project team made for the traffic and ridership models in the presentation. There are three park and rides listed, but there are actually currently four. Was one eliminated? There has been discussion on redeveloping the park and ride in Burtonsville.

- R: Brian Lange responded that the three park and ride locations were based on Master Plan recommendations. The fourth exiting park and ride lot is located off of Greencastle and will be looked at for potential inclusion during later phases of study.
- Another CAC South member said they would like to see running way options with distances listed for rights of way for these options.

Logistics

Based on feedback received from the CAC members, there will be another CAC meeting scheduled for July or early August as an opportunity to dive deeper into technical aspects of the topics covered during this meeting. Once the meeting date has been determined, the facilitator will provide the date, location, and materials in advance of the meeting.

Next Steps

Alan will communicate with the group via email regarding the next meeting date once it has been determined.

Following review by the internal project team, the meeting summary will be circulated to the members for feedback before being finalized and posted online.