



## **Commission on People with Disabilities**

November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018

### **Welcome and Approval of October 2018 Meeting Summary Minutes:**

Seth Morgan, Chair, convened the meeting. A motion was made to approve the October 2018 Meeting Summary Minutes. The motion was seconded. A vote was taken, and the October 2018 Meeting Summary Minutes were unanimously approved as written. Approved minutes are available online at [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cpwd](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cpwd).

### **Feedback on the Construction of the 14 Mile Bus Rapid Transit Line – Corey Pitts, AICP, Montgomery County Department of Transportation, and Shawn Brennan, Transportation Community Outreach Manager, Aging & Disability Services**

BRT Website: <https://www.flashbrt.com/>

Floating Bus Stops and Bike Lanes: <https://montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/A&D%20Docs/CPWD/BikeLanesFloatingBusStops.pdf>

Shawn Brennan introduced Tino Calabria, a member of the WMATA's Accessibility Advisory Committee. The Committee has been discussing the accessibility issues of BRT for over a year now. He noted the importance of persons with disabilities advising the construction to avoid retroactively making things compliant. Tino noted that the new Metrorail Series 7000 rail cars are not fully accessible, and they have until October 2019 to fix the issues. Shawn suggested Corey Pitts attend future Commission meetings to gain more feedback.

Corey reported that while the BRT has broken ground the majority of construction will not take place until early next year. All BRT stations will be standard in terms of general design and locations of various elements within each station, although each site will be specific due to site constraints. The placement of the ticket vending machines and the validator tap poles will be in the same general location. The BRT buses will be articulated buses and slightly longer than regular Ride On buses. Riders will be paying their fare off the vehicle. Riders can board at any door which will help speed up the boarding process. The front of the bus will have the standard tie downs and other equipment. Riders needed a tie down should still enter through the front door of the bus.

Bus station platform height is 12 inches with current curb height at six inches. The bus will dock at the station and a bridge plate will extend to cover any gap between the bus and the platform. Ramps are available if they need to be deployed.

DOT is also focusing on improving the surrounding environments of the station. All existing curb cuts and ramps around any of the stations being upgraded will be upgraded to the current standards. DOT will also be upgrading some of the paths that lead to and from the stations. In some cases, sidewalks may be enlarged or a shared-use path will be installed.

Regarding fare payment, all activity will now occur on the station platform. A ticket vending machine, which looks like a parking meter, will allow riders to pay with cash and receive a ticket. The machine will be 36

inches tall, ADA compliant and offer audio options as well as various language functions, if needed. Riders paying by SmarTrip card will use the ticket validator poles on either end of the platform by tapping their SmarTrip card. Once the rider has paid, they can board the bus. Random fare inspectors will board buses to make sure riders have paid their fare.

Digital screens will be embedded into the stations that will show when the next bus is arriving. Audio announcements will also be made. DOT is trying to incorporate as many different ways for riders to access information. Corey noted that many stations are in urban environments so there is limited space. Most stations will have benches and leaning rails. Truncated domes will be at the front of the platforms to make the curb edge. Any step down or ramp will be marked either through a hand rail or tactile device.

The floor was opened to questions.

**How will sidewalks be upgraded for high volume intersections where ramps are facing a 45-degree angle?** Ramps will be expanded the length of the crosswalk.

**Will the current MetroAccess payment system work with the BRT payment system?** DOT does not envision it changing with BRT. If MetroAccess users board a bus a certain way, they should continue to do so with the BRT. Corey noted he is on the design side of the process and will bring this issue up with the other DOT individuals working on the project.

**What are floating bus stops and how are they used?** There is a floating bus stop in Silver Spring on Spring Street. The bus stop is essentially pulled off of the curb edge and the bike lane runs next to it with the sidewalk on the right of the bike lane. There is a ramp that connects the sidewalk to the floating bus stop and there is only one point of entry and exit. The Spring Street floating bus stop narrowed down the travel lane and the sidewalk size was left in place. Corey said that the DOT employee that design the floating bus stop had met with individuals in the disability community to receive feedback. Betsy noted that this Commission was never included in the discussions. She also noted there have been several instances of individuals who are blind being hit by cyclists in the bike lane or crosswalk.

**Are considerations being made to keep station sidewalks clear of barriers such as giant planters?** While some stations will have plantings associated with them to curb storm water runoff, any planters will be placed alongside the platform station and will not extend or encroach into the pedestrian environment. The design will not cut into the sidewalk.

**What is the difference between BRT and local bus routes?** Traditional local buses stop every 1/10<sup>th</sup> to 1/4 of a mile increasing the time it takes to brake, board passengers, and accelerate again. Bus stops are also closer together and tend to pick up smaller loads of passengers at each stop. It also takes time for each rider to pay their fare at the front of the bus. The BRT spaces the stops further apart allowing the bus to move along the corridor more quickly. BRT also features technology including green light priority signaling that keeps the buses moving. Green light priority signaling allows a BRT bus and the traffic around it to keep moving by either keeping the light green or turning it green when the vehicle approaches.

**Would offering free public transportation help to get more cars off the road?** Corey explained that in an economically successful region comes congestion. In most regions where public transportation is free it is due to a high volume of college students and the universities pay into the system to offset the fares for the students. Montgomery College offers free public transportation to students. Corey does not think free public transportation would draw too many people out of their cars. Trish added that the Federal Government offers a

subsidy for employees to use Metro. Betsy Luecking, Staff, will research the number of certified MetroAccess users that use public transportation.

**How will bus riders, car drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians understand how to use the new BRT bus stops?** It was suggested that information should be included during driver exams at the Motor Vehicles Administration (MVA). An educational campaign needs to be developed so everyone knows how operate within the new bus stations and within the bike lanes. DOT does recognize this new BRT system will be markedly different from any other in the region in terms of how riders will pay their fare and interact with the system. DOT does have a marketing budget and the focus will be on teaching riders how to use the BRT system. It was suggested that agencies provide more travel training.

**Has DOT taken into consideration the safety of persons with disabilities? If a person with a disability requests a tie down, it will take longer for the bus to leave the station.** Corey said that if any rider with a disability requires a tie down then they should absolutely ask the driver as they are obligated to provide that accommodation. Corey added that the bridge plates will be extended every time the bus reaches the platform.

**Are the surrounding neighborhoods, including the several senior housing complexes, in the 29 corridor being taken into consideration for BRT ridership?** Ride On is reviewing how routes are structured in that area and developing different ways to serve the communities that could connect them to the BRT.

**Is DOT reviewing lawsuits regarding BRTs in different regions and other countries to assess those issues and potentially avoid similar problems?** One example that DOT is trying to correct from other examples of floating bus stops is the lack of vertical deflection or signage for bicyclists. DOT will be installing vertical deflection such as a change in pavement cover as well as visual cues to signal to bicyclists that they are entering an area where they are more likely to encounter more pedestrians. DOT is also limiting the number of ways pedestrians can access the stations to reduce or eliminate incidents. They have learned from the floating bus stop installed on Spring Street and will apply to future floating bus stops.

**There are concerns that bicyclists are not educated enough on pedestrians with disabilities due to recent accidents.** Corey said that while he does not work on bike projects, he will share those concerns with the bicycle and pedestrian group back at DOT.

How is DOT planning to accommodate vehicles that will be dropping off bus riders at the stations? All BRT stations will be near existing local bus stops that have a pull off area that drivers can use. Some stations will also be near Park & Rides and people are encouraged to use locations for pick-up and drop-off. Corey noted that there is only so much DOT can control especially when it comes to Uber and Lyft.

Shawn Brennan reported that the County has a [Vision Zero](#) initiative and has put resources in place to reduce severe and fatal collisions on County roads by 35 percent for vehicle occupants (drivers and passengers), pedestrians, and bicyclists by November 2019.

Any other comments regarding BRT can be shared with Betsy.

#### **Chair and Vice-Chair Report – Seth Morgan and Trish Gallalee**

Seth Morgan, Chair, reported that he along with staff Betsy Luecking and Carly Clem and several former and present Commissioners attended a proclamation at the County Council yesterday celebrating the Commission's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Proclamation: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/A%26D%20Docs/CPWD/Proclamation40thAnniversary.pdf>

Commission key advocacy and advisory highlights over the past 40 years:

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/A&D%20Docs/CPWD/CPWD40YearHighlights.pdf>

Tom Liniak, Jewish Social Services Agency (JSSA), was also given a proclamation declaring November 13<sup>th</sup> as JSSA Specialized Employment Awareness Day in Montgomery County. JSSA's Specialized Employment program was honored as the "Disability Employment Provider of the Year in the State of Maryland" by Maryland Works in November 2017. The Specialize Employment program has been in operation for four years. Tom noted that first year wages were over \$5,000,000 with continuing wages set to be over \$15,000,000 earned over the past four years.

Uma Ahluwalia, Director, Health and Human Services, rendered her resignation as Director and she will be leaving HHS at the end of County Executive Leggett's term. Commissioners will be notified when a new Director has been appointed.

Trish reported two weeks ago she met with members of the Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee near the NRC building in Rockville. They had a view of the Metro Station as well as traffic. The County is seeking to remove one lane of traffic and install a bike lane next to the existing bus stop. Trish informed the Committee members that due to the crosswalk being too narrow for the volume of traffic, she asked for a reasonable accommodation to be in her current building rather than risk crossing the street. The Committee members did not realize that the Metro Station does not have a drop-off area and vehicles, including MetroAccess, park on the side of the street to unload passengers. There is also a barrier in front of NRC that divides Marinelli in order to prevent vehicles from driving into the building. This barrier blocks the vision of vehicles that are making a right-hand turn. NIH and FDA will be taking over the old NRC building, which will increase the amount of traffic. These organizations also have shuttle buses. Trish suggested that the County improve the existing sidewalk by regrading it. She noted that St. Coletta of Greater Washington has an adult day program for people with disabilities located on this road. The Committee members noted that they did not realize how busy the area was or the existing issues, but that they were given this project by the County Council and County Executive. It was suggested that Trish write a letter to County Council President Hans Riemer and to the County Executive explaining the issues that were discussed. Seth will follow-up the letter with a meeting with Council President Riemer.

#### **Ex-Officio and Member Updates:**

Larry Bram, Commissioner, reported that Easterseals has held two work group meetings regarding the design of a MetroAccess mobile application. The group has generated a fantastic list of suggestions. MetroAccess has attended both meetings and is working on the project daily.

Charlie Butler, Department of Recreation, reported current Recreation Director Gabe Albornoz was recently elected as a County Councilmember at-large and will be sworn in on December 3<sup>rd</sup>. Any issues involving Recreation can be sent to Robin Riley, Division Chief.

Denise Isreal, DOT, reported there is a new taxi co-op called Anytime Taxi that is owned by taxi cab drivers. They have a fleet of eight wheelchair accessible paratransit vehicles. The vehicles are lime green in color and their office is located on Gude Drive.

**Announcements:** None.

**Next Full Commission Meeting:** Wednesday, December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018 from 6pm to 7:30pm at Executive Office Building, 101 Monroe Street, Lobby Auditorium, Rockille, MD 20850

**Steering Committee Meeting:** Wednesday, December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018 from 5:30pm to 7pm at Health & Human Services, 401 Hungerford Drive, Conference Rooms 1A/1B, Rockville, MD 20850

Submitted by: Carly Clem, Administrative Specialist I  
Betsy Tolbert Luecking, Community Outreach Manager