Meeting Summary
US 29 North Corridor Advisory Committee (CAC) Meeting #8
September 22, 2016, 6:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
East County Regional Services Center
3300 Briggs Chaney Road, Silver Spring, MD 20904

Attendees

CAC Members ('X' for attendees, blank for apologies)			
Carole Ann Barth (alternate Harriet Quinn)	X	Bernadine Karns	
John Bowers		Matthew Koch	X
Brian Downie	X	Peter Myo Khin	X
Oladipo Famuyiwa	X	Rob Richardson	X
Adugna Fisseha	X	Julian Rosenberg	X
Jonathan M. Genn		Joseph Tahan	X
Kevin D. Gunthert	X	Eric Wolvovsky	X
Latisha Johnson	X		

Study Team	
Meeting Facilitator – Alan Straus	**Lead Project Facilitator** – Andrew Bing
MTA Program Manager – Jackie Seneschal	**Assistant Facilitator –** Lauren Michelotti
MTA Deputy Program Manager – Kyle Nembhard	**Montgomery County Rapid Transit System (RTS) Manager** – Joana Conklin
MTA Corridor Manager – Tamika Gauvin	**MCDOT Team Member** – Darcy Buckley
Consultant Engineer – Chris Bell	**MCDOT Team Member** – Rick Kiegel
Consultant Engineer – Feng Liu	**MCDOT Team Member** – Rafael Olarte
Consultant Engineer – Brian Lange	**SHA Team Member –** Carole Delion
	WMATA – Jamaica Arnold

Handouts

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

- Meeting #8 Agenda
- Meeting #8 PowerPoint Presentation
- Meeting #7 Meeting Summary

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

Introductions

Alan Straus, the meeting facilitator, opened the meeting by providing an overview of the meeting materials distributed and reviewing the agenda for the meeting. He said there would be a question and answer period following each section of the presentation and there would be an

open house-style tabletop discussion session for members to speak directly with study team representatives following the completion of the full presentation.

Progress Update and Upcoming Milestones

Study Team Member Brian Lange reviewed the project schedule. He stated the study team would begin to report out the preliminary data gathered and emphasized that the main points of interest for tonight's meeting are potential physical impacts of the alternatives and anticipated transit ridership.

The October CAC meeting will focus on traffic operations. The study team plans to have a draft corridor study report submitted by mid-October. In November, public workshops will be held that focus on alternatives and analysis results. In December or January, the team expects to hold briefings to local officials on the analysis results and public input collected. By winter 2017, the study team hopes to recommend an alternative.

Update: The October CAC meetings, the draft corridor study report and the public workshops have been postponed. New dates will be provided soon.

Alternatives Review

Brian reviewed the alternatives for the proposed project. He explained that the No-Build Alternative serves as a baseline for comparison of the two Build Alternatives. He stated that **Alternative A** involves repurposing existing curbside lanes into peak direction Business Access Transit (BAT) lanes in the south portion of the corridor. BAT lanes would be utilized by BRT buses, local buses, and all right turning traffic. In the north portion of the corridor, Alternative A proposes an all-day dedicated median shoulder lane for BRT buses.

Alternative B involves repurposing existing curbside lanes into peak direction managed lanes in the south. Managed lanes would be utilized by BRT buses, HOV2+ vehicles, local buses and all right turning traffic. In the north portion of the corridor, Alternative B proposes BRT and local buses utilize the outside shoulder as a bypass lane during periods of traffic congestion.

Alternative A and B both contain segments where buses would travel in mixed traffic. The limits of these segments vary between the two alternatives in order to help the study team better understand how traffic would function under different conditions. In some cases, longer segments of mixed traffic were used to facilitate transition areas or were included due to design or impact constraints.

Brian then moved on to the presentation of the preliminary alternatives analysis results. He said that in terms of potential physical impacts of the alternatives, the three main elements analyzed were:

1. Range of impacts to natural resources
2. Range of impacts to socioeconomic and cultural resources
3. Range of impacts to properties

Regarding potential impacts to natural resources, Brian said that Alternative B has the potential to have a greater number of impacts than Alternative A, as a result of potential shoulder reconstruction. He explained that shoulders are generally constructed with less pavement depth than the main roadway; therefore, the use of an outside shoulder lane in Alternative B has the potential to cause pavement degradation if precautions are not taken to reconstruct the shoulder to accommodate the higher volumes and associated loads. Once the study team determines which areas of the shoulder do not have a sustainable pavement depth, they'll determine which parts need reconstruction. Given the preliminary status of this planning-level study, the team assumed a range of potential impacts associated with a "best-case" minimal shoulder reconstruction and a "worst-case" full shoulder reconstruction. Even under the worst-case full reconstruction scenario, the data analysis results of potential impacts to natural resources indicates that impacts are anticipated to be relatively minimal as compared to larger roadway widening projects.

Potential impacts to socioeconomic and cultural resources, possible Environmental Justice communities, parks, and historic properties have been taken into account. The study team's goal is to minimize or avoid impacts in these areas. They hope to create a system where the benefits of efficient transit outweigh any minor impacts on property in these areas. Overall, data analysis found that neither alternative is anticipated to have significant impacts, although Alternative B has the potential to create more impact than Alternative A, as a result of potential shoulder reconstruction.

Regarding potential impacts to properties, Brian stated that part of the study team's goal is to stay within the existing right-of-way to the extent practicable. In a few instances, the proposed improvements might edge onto properties for shoulder reconstruction, or as a result of station element placement. As there are no anticipated displacements at this time, the study team expects the proposed project to have little impact on properties as compared to larger roadway widening projects.

CAC Member Question: Member questioned how reversible lanes would function in Alternative B.

- **Study Team Response:** In both alternatives, the study team would only repurpose the peak direction curb lane and intend for the reversible lanes to function with three general travel lanes.

Question: Member expressed desire for the study team to present an alternative for the Four Corners area.

- **Response:** Right now, the study team is only looking at putting BRT buses in mixed traffic in the Four Corners area. This is because there are so many varied traffic movements in this area. The study team is also looking into some potential signal modifications and station placement options which may prove to be beneficial at that location.

Question: Member questioned what BAT stands for.

- **Response:** BAT lanes are Business Access Transit lanes, but can also be referred to as Bus-And-Turn lanes. The lanes are primarily reserved for transit vehicles, but they allow motorists to use them for short distances when trying to reach a business located next to the right lane and which requires access from that lane.

Question: Regarding impacts, member questioned if the potential impact of station placements was considered.

- **Response:** The potential impact of station placements is being considered. The study team is aiming to avoid impacts to natural resources as much as possible. The team also recognizes stations may have some impact on socioeconomic resources and properties.

Question: Member questioned if the brown line that borders the road [in the images used to display examples of potential impacts] is the right-of-way limit.

- **Response:** Yes, the brown lines roughly show the existing property boundaries. It is important to note these lines are based on tax map information, not field survey. They're not perfectly accurate but are a good source for the study team's planning level evaluation.

Question: Member questioned where the environmental justice population data came from. Regarding low-income data, he felt there were discrepancies in how certain areas were characterized.

- **Response:** Most of the data comes from the 2010 Census. It's important to note the shaded areas are not all low-income areas, but may also indicate minority population areas, too.

Question: Member questioned if stops will have buses pull off the road completely or stop in the roadway.

- **Response:** Currently, we are not planning to have any bus pull off the road entirely, except at Burtonsville Park and Ride, Briggs Chaney Park and Ride, and the Silver Spring Transit Center.

Question: Regarding the Alternative A example given for potential impacts to an historic property, member questioned the station placement near Fenton Street.

- **Response:** In Alternative B, the study team created a different station configuration, specifically to try to avoid the potential impact to the historic property. Avoidance and minimization options are being considered.

Question: Member questioned the definition of the word "historic" in reference to the proposed project.

- **Response:** The study team uses the word historic to denote some sort of historical significance, whether it be architectural or because an important historical event took place there. These designations are determined by the Maryland Historical Trust.

Question: Member questioned if the study team will, at some point, consolidate the range of impacts into a list format, rather than a map.

- **Response:** Yes, the study team will eventually create a list. For the purposes of tonight, we want to keep information general. We will be in a position to create such a list when we are closer to a 30 percent design level of detail. At that point, we are able to be more specific.

Question: Member questioned what the study team is referring to when they use the phrase "right-of-way" – the right-of-way conditions as they currently are, or the right-of-way conditions as they would be with potential curb reconstruction factored in.

- **Response:** What we are calling right-of-way ultimately includes any potential curb reconstruction. We will be making our improvements within the existing right-of-way and existing pavement to the extent possible.

Question: Member questioned why all of the potential impacts are greater in Alternative B than in Alternative A.

- **Response:** In Alternative B, the study team is looking to reconstruct the outside shoulders. Because the Alternative B work is occurring along the outside edge of the existing pavement, the work will be occurring much closer to existing natural resources and property boundaries than in Alternative A where the lanes would be constructed in the median area.

Question: Member questioned if tonight's discussion is in any way referring directly to NEPA, as he felt that some NEPA-related language was used.

- **Response:** No, the study team is not discussing NEPA-specific information with the CAC yet, although it is preparing to enter into the NEPA process.

Question: Member questioned how the No-Build Alternative will be represented in the NEPA process and asked if it will be directly analyzed as an alternative.

- **Response:** Typically, the No-Build Alternative is a fully analyzed alternative in the NEPA Process.

Question: Member expressed concern that some of the areas labeled low-income on the environmental justice population map are incorrect. Member suggested the study team rethink labeling the area between Kemp Mill and Wheaton-Glenmont as a low-income area.

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

Question: Regarding selection criteria, member questioned what is meant by "efficient enhanced bus transit." Member asked if the study team will reach a point in this meeting where they determine that one alternative is more efficient than another.

- **Response:** For the purposes of tonight's discussion, the study team is referring to efficiency in terms of ridership. By definition, both alternatives are more efficient than the existing transit services. Once the study team has completed all of the analyses and the public has had time to review and comment on the findings, we will then reach a point where we can say which alternative is the most efficient overall.

Question: Member suggested that in the future, such as at the public workshops, the study team define what is meant by "efficient," that way there's no room for misinterpretation.

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

Comment: On behalf of the Montgomery County Civic Federation, member expressed concern the study team has not taken the Metro Extra study done by WMATA into account. Member requested that Option #2 in the Metro Extra study be added to the BRT study for comparative purposes, as it was in the Veirs Mill Road study.

- **Response:** The study team will not be adding another alternative to the BRT study at this time. As has been stated previously, the MetroExtra service is a non-BRT option available to WMATA to implement at any time.

Question: Member questioned when the CAC will receive information about potential traffic impacts.

- **Response:** Traffic impacts are the main focus of our next meeting. The study team is aiming to distribute the presentation information for review as soon as possible.

Ridership Analysis Review

Brian reviewed the ridership analysis, explaining that the results are meant to be comparable to the No-Build Alternative, against which the study team can evaluate the proposed build elements. He reviewed the BRT ridership modeling assumptions, which include the headway times (6 minutes during peak periods, 10 minutes during off-peak periods) as well as the three BRT route patterns which were previously presented.

Brian went on to discuss the ridership analysis results. Based on 2040 projections of daily boardings data, the study team predicts there would be a 22 percent increase in daily ridership with Alternative A and an 18 percent increase in daily ridership with Alternative B.

Another element the study team focused on while reviewing the screening criteria was the number of jobs that can be reached within 45 and 60 minutes via transit for people living within the corridor. Brian pointed out that the study team's projections show an increase in transit accessibility for each alternative compared to the future No-Build condition.

Brian then reviewed the third element of screening criteria – population accessibility within 45 minutes and 60 minutes via transit. This data determined the number of people who live outside the immediate US 29 area, who would have access to businesses and jobs in the area as a result of transit enhancements. Brian pointed out that the study team's projections show an increase in transit accessibility for each alternative compared to the future No-Build condition.

It was noted that the measurement of jobs and households within 45 and 60 minutes were calculated for two different geographic units - corridor segments and Regional Activity Centers (RACs). For the corridor segments, all Transportation Analysis Zones (TAZs) that are within ½ mile of the BRT corridor were identified, and all TAZs falling within the radial 45 minute or 60 minute transit shed of each segment TAZ were identified. Households and employment for all the transit shed TAZs were summed to determine the actual number of jobs and households within the 45 minute and 60 minute shed. A similar process was used for the Regional Activity Centers (Silver Spring and White Oak) located along the corridor as defined by the MWCOG. Once tabulated, the engineers used the population information contained in each TAZ "hit" and the job information from the RACs "hit" to calculate how many of each could be accessed via transit in 45 minutes and 60 minutes, based on the proposed improvements in alternatives A and B. These numbers were then presented as they compare to the future no-build condition.

Brian reviewed the ridership project goals and pointed out that the significant increase in total transit ridership in both Alternative A and Alternative B is an important takeaway. He reminded members to keep in mind that there is more work to be done and more information to come related to the traffic operations. He also stressed that there may be other alternative configurations that could be evaluated during subsequent phases of the study.

CAC Member Question: Member questioned why the baseline for ridership employment accessibility was not given. He felt those numbers would be helpful in order compare differences between the build alternatives and the No-Build. Specifically, he requested to know how many jobs were available in the No-Build Alternative.

- **Study Team Response:** The study team presented the data in this way as a means of simplifying it. The numbers given for Alternative A and Alternative B represent the increase over the No-Build Alternative. The baseline for jobs in the No-Build Alternative is about 4 million. Because that number is based on a regional model, it dilutes the more localized enhancements provided by transit improvements along US 29. By showing the increase over the No-Build specific to the US 29 corridor, we hope to give a better

understanding of the difference BRT could make for the people who live and work in the area.

Question: Member questioned if the ridership numbers used consider people traveling from the north.

- **Response:** Yes, the data was based on a radial capture so it considers commuters from all directions.

Question: Regarding the 2040 employment accessibility data, member questioned if the study team assumed the same amount of development in White Oak in the No-Build Alternative as they did in Alternative A and Alternative B.

- **Response:** Yes, the jobs considered across the region are the same in the No-Build as they are in Alternative A and Alternative B. The factor that is changing is the circle of reach, which would grow as a result of implementing Alternative A or Alternative B.

Question: Member questioned if data regarding zoning from the County has been taken into account.

- **Response:** Yes, we used as much information as we were given regarding current zoning and proposed developments to compile this data.

Question: Member questioned if BRT prices (fares) will be comparable to WMATA and other existing transit's prices for the user.

- **Response:** Yes.

Question: Member questioned if there were any plans to link BRT to the hospital.

- **Response:** Currently the study team is not planning to link directly to the hospital, but the Tech Road Park and Ride station is close and accessible by local bus service.

Wrap-up

The facilitator explained that the purpose of these presentations is to provide a high level overview of the study, what the study team has accomplished, and what work has yet to be done. Our goal is to allow for as much time for the tabletop session so CAC members can have the time to get into as much detail as they would like. He encouraged everyone to interact with the study team and ask any questions they may have. He also stated that Meeting #9 will be held in the same location on October 6*. At that point, the formal portion of the meeting adjourned.

Discussions between staff and members included topics such as:

- Ridership assumptions and preliminary results
- Preliminary station locations and ridership effects
- Potential impacts to properties and resources
- Next steps in the planning process.

*Note: Since this meeting, the study team has postponed the October 6th CAC meeting #9. A new date will be provided soon.