

MD 355 South Corridor Advisory Committee Meeting #12

February 13, 2018

6:30pm – 8:30pm

Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Service Center

4805 Edgemoor Lane #100

Bethesda, MD 20814

CAC members in attendance:

CAC members (marked with an "X" if Present)			
Nancy Abeles	X	Damon Luciano	
Barbara Moir Condos	X	Deborah Michaels	
Ryan Emery		Sasha Page	
Greg Ford		D. Todd Pearson	
Matt Gordon		Caleb Hartsfield (for Susan Roberts of NIH)	X
Celesta Jurkovich		Ralph Schofer	
Sylke Knuppel		David Sears	
Richard Levine	X	Anne White (Jan)	
Todd Lewers	X	Steven Wilcox	

Stakeholders and members of the public in attendance:

Other attendees	
Steve Aldrich, Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission	Aaron Kraut, Office of Montgomery Council Councilmember Roger Berliner

Staff in attendance:

MCDOT staff	Consultant team members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Darcy Buckley, Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) Director's Office Corey Pitts, MCDOT Division of Transportation Engineering, MD 355 BRT Project Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steve Hawtof, Gannett Fleming (GF) Dan Lovas, VHB Drew Morrison, VHB Christine Potocki, VHB Josh Diamond, Foursquare Integrated Transportation Planning (Foursquare ITP) Alanna McKeeman, Foursquare ITP William Shuldiner, Foursquare ITP

Introductions, Project Update, Overview of Agenda

Alanna McKeeman, facilitator, and the participants all introduced themselves. MCDOT staff announced that Corey Pitts, the MD 355 Project Manager would be the new point of contact for CAC members, as Darcy Buckley will be on leave for the next few months. Alanna gave the CAC members an update on the three recent open houses that occurred in January and early February, explaining that there were approximately 170 total attendees and roughly 70 comment cards submitted, which allowed the project staff to gather valuable feedback on the various aspects of the project. She concluded the introduction by informing the CAC members that the next round of open houses for the project would take place in the fall of 2018, but that MCDOT would continue other outreach efforts including stakeholder meetings, pop-up events, and community updates throughout the spring and summer.

Question (Q): The Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments (MWCOG) has put the Bethesda Mall (Bethesda) Transit Way back on the transit map. Will that project soon have CACs? Will the MD 355 BRT project be affected by this?

Answer (A): The county has decided that it is time to advance the Bethesda Transit Way project into planning so it has been placed into the latest version of the region's Financially Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan (CLRP). This project will have CACs once it enters the planning phase and the MD 355 BRT project will not be affected.

Q: How many people attended each open house?

A: There were approximately 35 attendees at the first open house in Clarksburg, 55 attendees at the second open house in Gaithersburg, and 75 attendees at the third open house in Bethesda.

Meeting Activity

Alanna then introduced the activity for the meeting. During this activity, CAC members would visit three stations to learn more about service planning, engineering, and station locations, respectively. The CAC members were separated into two groups, which visited each station for 25 minutes. At each station, they discussed the relevant topic with project team staff.

Meeting Activity Feedback

Service Planning Station

CAC members emphasized that boarding, fare collection, and operator etiquette are all important components of bus operations. They also explained that traffic signals and cycle times can have a negative effect on bus service on MD 355, especially when traveling northbound in the evening. In general, CAC members agreed that the on-time performance of a bus is more important than additional bus features. There were also some questions about the level of bus service in the Bethesda area and questions regarding the changes that will be made to local bus. Other CAC members discussed the trade-off regarding the BRT station at Bethesda Metro Station, saying that the underground portion where local bus routes presently stop may be too hidden from MD 355 and discourage people from using the BRT service if the station is located there. Finally, CAC members identified questions that will be helpful for the project team to consider during the service planning process: How will local stops be integrated with

BRT stations? Will the service lose riders if people are required to transfer and cross busy streets? And Can BRT become as attractive as Metrorail to maximize riders?

Engineering Station

CAC members discussed lane widths, specifically how buses and trucks need wider lanes when they are using through lanes. Other comments addressed White Flint, saying that the median BRT-only lane may need to be in peak direction by Woodmont County Club. Other comments addressed pedestrian safety in the median. CAC members explained that better enforcement is needed to prevent people from jay walking, which can cause incidents. Another area of discussion was access management, especially how access to certain properties may change as redevelopment continues. Finally, other CAC members discussed how the BRT would affect the Rockville Plan, as well as how the project may be affected if Amazon relocates to White Flint.

Q: Is it possible to have BRT express service at peak times?

A: The goal of the MD 355 BRT project is to maintain standard headways and reliability, so this may be harder to achieve with express service at peak times.

Q: If there is no one at a BRT station trying to board the bus, does the bus need to stop?

A: No, the bus will only stop if passengers are trying to board or exit the vehicle.

Station Locations Station

During the presentation about station locations, CAC members discussed the connection between the Bethesda Metro BRT Station and the future Purple Line station. The project team should examine if a direct connection should be built, or if the BRT station should be located farther away to take advantage of existing infrastructure. Other CAC members asked if it is reasonable to ask riders to walk between the two stations? Others commented that Cedar Lane is not a strong place for a BRT station, and the location would likely be better served as an infill station since there is not much development on the north side of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) campus. There were also comments that addressed the station at Pooks Hill Road. There is potential for high ridership in this area because of new development, however pedestrian safety concerns will need to be considered.

Q: Is there a preferred number of stops?

A: No, MCDOT is more concerned about having the correct number of stops to serve the need along the corridor.

Q: Is existing and future transit service considered in station location considerations?

A: Yes, these will continue to be considered as the BRT project team analyzes and finalizes station locations.

Conclusion

Alanna thanked the CAC members for attending the meeting and providing constructive feedback. She informed them that the next CAC meetings will take place in June, at which there will be information on preliminary modeling results, detailed engineering including stormwater management, bicycle and pedestrian accommodations, and environmental considerations.