

MD 586/Veirs Mill Road Corridor Advisory Committee Meeting #5 Summary
Wednesday, January 20, 2016, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
Montgomery County Executive Office Building, Auditorium
101 Monroe Street, Rockville, MD 20850

Attendees:

Members	
Messanvi Richard Adjogah	Michael A. Staiano
James Agliata	Mike Stein
Kathleen Hume	Thomas M. Strawbridge
Sara Moline	
Apologies	
Michel Audigé	Ethan Goffman
Galo A. Correa, Sr.	Jared Hautamaki
Timothy Crawford	Mary Means
Mirza Donegan	Jessica Reynolds
D. Jonathan Fink	Philip C. Sossou
Larry Finkelberg	Stacy L. Spann
Staff	
Facilitator – Denise Watkins	Consultant Project Manager – Karen Kahl, RK&K
State Highway Administration – Laura Barcena	Project Engineer – Dave Roberts, RK&K
Maryland Transit Administration Program Director – Jackie Seneschal	Lead Facilitator – Andrew Bing, Kramer and Associates
Maryland Transit Administration Deputy Program Director – Kyle Nembhard	Outreach Support/Scribe – Danielle Lloyd, Linda Moreland, Remline, Corp.
Montgomery County DOT – Joana Conklin, Tom Pogue, Ligia Moss, Raphael Olarte	
Public/Non-CAC Members	
Barry Gore, City of Rockville	Matthew Crooks, WMATA
Jamaica Arnold, WMATA	Julie Hershorn – WMATA
Andre Stafford, WMATA	

Handouts:

- Revised MD 586 CAC Staff Directory
- Meeting #4 Summary
- Meeting #5 Agenda
- Meeting #5 Presentation
- Overview Maps for Alternatives 1, 2, 3, and 5B

Introductions:

Denise Watkins, the MD 586 CAC facilitator, introduced herself and welcomed everyone to MD 586 Veirs Mill Road CAC Meeting #5. Following Denise's introduction, the Staff members introduced themselves and explained their roles on the project. Each CAC member then gave a brief introduction in which they described their interest in the project and if they were affiliated with an organization.

Denise gave a brief overview of the meeting's agenda and timeline for the evening.

BRT Project Management Update:

Joana Conklin, RTS Development Manager for Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT), briefed the group on the County Executive's decision to not go forward this year with creating an independent transit authority. There was not enough public support at this time for the initiative. However, MCDOT has been tasked to continue working with the state on all of the BRT study corridors. The County Executive also asked MCDOT to look at possible less expensive options that could be phased into operation over the short term with the intent to build up to the ultimate vision of BRT when the studies were completed and construction was authorized. Joana said that they will be making these recommendations to the County Executive in the next couple of months.

Joana was asked what the short-term options would consist of, and how much they would cost. She responded that they are just starting planning work, but options could possibly include priority transit service, traffic signal priority or other elements of BRT that can be implemented quickly at a low cost.

Goals and Objectives Presentation:

Joana Conklin briefly described the development of a series of goals and objectives for use in evaluating design alternatives associated with the County's Bus Rapid Transit System. She explained that the objectives should be measureable in order to determine how well the goals are met. Joana asked that CAC members submit any comments they have on these goals and objectives.

Recap of Meeting #4 / Update of WMATA Q9:

Denise Watkins, meeting facilitator, provided a brief recap of meeting #4. Julie Hershorn, WMATA/Metro, then brought the group up-to-date on the outcome of the Q9 MetroExtra Service Public Hearing. After extensive public outreach and comments, the Metro's State of Good Operations recommendations are to:

- Implement free Q line rail transfer as a 6-month pilot program. If it is successful, it will become permanent.
- Do not introduce MetroExtra Q9 service at this time because it could jeopardize the full BRT concept for the corridor.
- Do not truncate Q lines at Wheaton. Customer opposition was vocal and abundant. This was a component of the MetroExtra Q9 service proposal.

The following question was asked by a CAC member during this part of the presentation:

- *What are the differences between each Q line? Which stop is each number going to?* Andre Stafford, WMATA, explained that Q1 is basically the early morning service pattern; it operates between Silver Spring, Wheaton, through to Shady Grove, but not Montgomery College. Q2 is the same as Q1, except that it goes to the college. Q4 is a short pattern between Rockville and Silver Spring. Q5 runs between

Wheaton and Shady Grove, but does not serve the college. Q6 runs between Wheaton and Shady Grove and does serve the college.

Alternatives Retained for Detailed Study:

Denise Watkins explained that over the next three meetings the group will discuss the four alternatives that have been retained for detailed study (Alternative 1: No-Build; Alternative 2: Enhanced bus service with queue jumps; Alternative 3: New BRT service in dedicated curb lanes; and Alternative 5B: New BRT service in one bi-directional median lane or two dedicated median lanes). At tonight's meeting, the group would be reviewing Alternatives 1 and 2.

Karen Kahl, consultant project manager, provided a brief description of Alternative 1, the No-Build Alternative. Dave Roberts, project engineer, gave an overview of Alternative 2: Enhanced bus service with queue jumps.

The following CAC questions and comments arose in response to the presentation:

- *With Alternative 2 there is no investment in shelters, next bus information, etc.?* Dave responded that some enhanced bus stops, not necessarily full BRT platforms, are in the plan, as well as improved signage, larger shelters, next bus service information, and the possibility of off board fare collection.
- *By giving preference to the buses, wouldn't there be some loss for the automobiles/throughput?* Dave stated that a traffic analysis is underway that will analyze impacts to automobiles, traffic, throughput, and ridership.
- *Why is Alternative 2 so much more expensive than the WMATA Q9?* Dave responded that the team is looking for the best long-term solution. Karen stated that this project is different than WMATA's because it would involve new investments, whereas WMATA was looking to cut existing service to have money to reallocate to the new Q9 service. There is a possibility to overlay the funds with the Q9, with WMATA running the service. Additional capital would have to be contributed so the full Q service to Silver Spring would not be cut, as the public had recently indicated was important, and allow the project to be more than base level.
- *How will existing bike lanes be impacted?* Dave explained that right now there are no existing dedicated bike lanes. SHA's policy is to add a bike lane when the road is widened. With the queue jump lanes, the road is only widened for a short distance and providing a bike lane for that short distance does not always make sense. In Alternative 2, bike lanes were recommended wherever the roadway was widened and it was feasible to do so.

Review of Alternative 2 Maps

Karen and Dave sat down with the group and reviewed the plans for Alternative 2. Each map showed where the queue jump lanes would be implemented. Comments from CAC members were written on sticky notes and placed on the maps. The following comments/questions have been organized by intersection:

MD 28 (First Street) - A queue jump lane would be added westbound approaching MD 28.

- *What is the rule of thumb for travel time savings for each queue jump?* Based on experience with MetroExtra when designing the Q9, a 15 percent or six minute decrease in travel time in each direction is assumed. However, it would vary by trip and time of day.
- *Are there a lot of cars stopping at this intersection?* Traffic and turning movements will be evaluated at all intersections.

- *Add a bus shelter to improve stop, rather than queue jump.* Future meetings will have time dedicated to station prototypes and what elements are important.
- *At the next stop to the east, there are a lot of passengers so consider adding a bus shelter there.*
- *Need to provide heating/screening from elements and add shelters at all locations.*
- *How does signal priority work?* If the bus is sitting in the queue jump at a red light, the signal could give only that lane a green light so that the bus and right turning vehicles could pull out. If the light is green, then the bus makes its stop and continues. If the light is about to change to yellow as a bus is approaching, the signal could extend the green light to allow the bus to go through the intersection.
- *Need more protection - solar panels, tinted shelter glass.*

Edmonston Drive - Replace grass median in order to add queue jump lane on eastbound side.

- *Is there traffic progression along Veirs Mill Road? Are signal times today set by SHA?* The existing signals have likely already been optimized by SHA.
- *Heavy AM movement backs up; would these improvements be able to really help the bus?* The queue jump probably would not help at that location, but the traffic model would show whether it would or not.
- *Are the current signals smart signals?* Most signals are smart signals. They may not be at the more minor intersections, but most signals are timed differently for different points of the day to help effectively move traffic.
- *Has SHA evaluated timing in the corridor?* It is believed that SHA looks at all of the lights every two or three years, in an effort to optimize them.

Twinbrook Parkway - Both eastbound and westbound would have queue jumps. Eastbound would have its right lane remain the same width and be designated as a queue jump lane; westbound would need to be widened approaching the intersection in order to have a queue jump lane.

- *Safety concerns for bicyclists.* Bicyclists turning right would use the right lane; typically those going straight would remain adjacent to traffic.
- *Any discussion about adding a bike lane by apartments?* – Bike lanes are only added where improvements are being made.

Aspen Hill Road – There would be queue jump lanes both eastbound and westbound. The lanes are already there and they would just need to be restriped.

Parkland Drive – Widen to create a queue jump along westbound.

- *Turkey Branch Pedestrian Crossing - What is SHA doing?* Improving the pedestrian crossing is technically not part of this study. SHA will see if there are any proposed improvements at this location.
- *Montrose Parkway extended - when is it going to be built?* Joana stated that the project construction date is FY 2019 (which begins July of 2018).

Gridley Road and Randolph Road - Two consecutive queue jumps along westbound (at Randolph Road, then Gridley Road). There will need to be widening of the road to accommodate the queue jump lanes.

- *A lot of bus riders get on and off at the Randolph Road intersection. It is one of the biggest stops.*

MD 185 (Connecticut Avenue) - Queue jump lanes both eastbound and westbound. Along eastbound there would be widening into the grass median and along westbound there would be widening. The existing bus stop would be reconstructed.

- *Add shelters at the Connecticut Avenue bus stops north of Veirs Mill Road. There is a 1.5 mile stretch of Connecticut Avenue without one shelter.*

MD 193 (University Boulevard) – A small queue jump already exists today and it would be redesigned to be longer.

- *Add a second shelter – this is a very busy area.*

General Questions and Comments:

Some more general questions were asked over the course of the meeting without pertaining to specific agenda items:

- *It would help if you could quantify the benefits of each alternative and show how well they do or do not meet the goals and objectives.* Denise explained that at the third meeting, CAC Meeting #7, a lot of the impacts and benefits of the alternatives would be presented to the CAC members.
- *How is the final decision made?* Karen stated that the final decision is made by balancing all of the issues such as public input, costs, impacts and ridership projections, in order to select the best alternative.

Next Steps:

- The meeting summary will be posted to the website after it has been reviewed by the CAC members.
- Denise proposed an earlier start time and longer duration for Meeting #6 so all the information can be covered, since this meeting will be cover two BRT alternatives.
- Denise will send an email to the CAC members with links to all of the relevant information
- **Meeting #6 is scheduled for Wednesday, February 17th, 2016 (we are also setting a back-up snow date) from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. in the Auditorium on the Lobby level of the Executive Office Building. If a CAC member cannot attend they may send a designated alternate. Please let Denise know if you cannot attend and the name of your alternate.**