

**MD 586/Veirs Mill Road Corridor Advisory Committee Meeting #2 Summary**  
**Wednesday, March 25, 2015, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.**  
**Montgomery County Executive Office Building, Auditorium**  
**101 Monroe Street, Rockville, MD 20850**

**Attendees:**

<b>Members</b>	
Messanvi Richard Adjogah	Kathleen Hume
James Agliata	Sara Moline
Mirza Donegan	Jessica Reynolds
D. Jonathan Fink	Mike Stein
Larry Finkelberg	Thomas M. Strawbridge
Ethan Goffman	Michael A. Staiano
Jared Hautamaki	
<b>Apologies</b>	
Michael Audigé	Mary Means
Galo A. Correa, Sr.	Philip C. Sossou
Timothy Crawford	Stacy L. Spann
<b>Staff</b>	
<b>Facilitator</b> – Denise Watkins, RK&K	<b>Consultant Project Manager</b> – Karen Kahl, RK&K
<b>State Highway Administration Project Manager</b> – Jamaica Arnold	<b>Project Engineer</b> – Dave Roberts, RK&K
<b>State Highway Administration Community Outreach</b> – Joe Harrison	<b>Lead Facilitator</b> – Andrew Bing, Kramer and Associates
<b>Montgomery County DOT</b> – Joana Conklin, Tom Pogue, Ligia Moss, Raphael Olarte	<b>Outreach Support/Scribe</b> – Teri Moss, Remline, Corp.
<b>Public</b>	
Kelly Blynn, Coalition for Smarter Growth	Barry Gore, City of Rockville Planning

**Handouts:**

- CAC Member List – revised with affiliations
- Meeting #1 Summary
- Exercise #1 Summary of Comments
- Exercise #1 Map
- Meeting #2 Agenda
- Meeting #2 Presentation
- Existing Conditions Map: Typical Sections

**Introductions:**

Denise Watkins, MD 586 CAC facilitator, welcomed everyone to CAC Meeting #2 for the MD 586 Veirs Mill Road Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Study.

Denise reviewed the meeting format and agenda and told the group there will be an opportunity to ask questions during the summary at the end of the meeting. However, questions may be asked at any time during the presentation. She explained that questions from the general public may be asked at the end of the meeting if time permits. If there is no time at the end of the meeting for questions from the general public, a comment card may be filled out and submitted to Denise.

Following Denise’s introduction, the Staff members introduced themselves and explained their roles on the project. The general public then introduced themselves.

**Purpose of the Meeting:**

Denise explained that the purpose of the meeting was to review background information on the project development process and to present some of the work that has been completed to date, including the identification of the existing conditions and development of the Purpose and Need. Denise gave a brief description of the items on the agenda:

- Review Meeting #1
- Discuss upcoming CAC meeting topics
- Review the Project Development Process
- Review the existing conditions
- Brainstorm our “Values and Concerns”
- Review the Purpose and Need
- Have an open discussion

Denise began the presentation by reviewing the Meeting #1 summary. She noted that no major comments were received from the CAC members on the Meeting #1 summary.

Denise then reviewed the topics that are anticipated to be discussed in the future CAC meetings. She also listed some topics that are not likely to be covered in the CAC meetings because they are topics that will be discussed in a later stage of the project.

**Project Development Process:**

Karen Kahl then gave an overview of the project development process. Some of the topics that Karen presented included: the local planning process, the transit project planning process, and the statewide project development process. Karen also explained how the *Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan* recommends implementing a 102-mile BRT network that includes BRT along Veirs Mill Road. Finally, Karen explained the tasks that have been completed on the Veirs Mill Road BRT planning project and presented some anticipated dates of completion for future tasks.

During the presentation on the project development process, the following topics and questions were discussed:

- Transit Project Planning Process (Slide 7) – Is the planning project being run by the executive branch of Montgomery County? When does the County Council get involved with the project? Karen replied that this project is following the State planning process. Joana added that from the County’s perspective, the Council’s role is to prioritize the projects and determine what projects are to be funded. Once a county transportation project is funded, it goes to the Department of Transportation to be implemented. The Veirs Mill Road BRT project was selected to be funded

by the County Council and is being implemented by the Maryland State Highway Administration (because it would be constructed on a State roadway) in close coordination with the Montgomery County Department of Transportation.

**Existing Conditions:**

Dave Roberts then gave an overview of the existing conditions along the corridor. The topics that Dave covered included: existing roadway conditions, existing and projected no-build traffic conditions, existing transit service, and existing environmental resources.

During the presentation on the existing conditions, the following topics and questions were discussed:

- Traffic, Average Daily Traffic (ADT) (Slide 21) – What’s driving the large increase in ADT (44-52%) from Aspen Rd. to MD 185? Karen stated that it is a large regional model that examines all traffic in the Washington, D.C. area. Factors in the model include: new development, new trips generated from existing development, changes in existing development and general growth based on historical trends. For this study, the model was used for a large regional analysis, which was then narrowed down to focus on our corridor. Karen added that it is difficult to know exactly why one segment is projected to increase by 50 % and another segment only by 30 %.
- Traffic: Roadway Level of Service (LOS) (Slide 23) – Is the LOS on Randolph Road one of the major considerations for MD 586 being the furthest along (compared to the other corridor studies)? Dave responded that the traffic is expected to increase along all corridors and that specific traffic issues did not drive the Veirs Mill project to start ahead of the other projects. Dave added that the LOS will also be projected for the BRT alternatives and the future no-build LOS is important because it will serve as the baseline condition for comparing the alternatives.
- Why is there demand for a BRT along MD 586? Karen responded that the Veirs Mill Road corridor has some of the highest bus ridership routes in State. She added that there are many residents in the corridor that rely on transit because they do not own vehicles, and that linking the two ends of the Red Line would be beneficial because it is a critical east/west movement.
- Traffic: Roadway (LOS) (Slide 23) – There is a 44% increase in ADT from Randolph Road to MD 185 but the eastbound LOS does not worsen? Dave replied this is a three-lane section so it could be that the roadway can handle the increase in traffic. Another point to note is that the westbound LOS does worsen so it could be that the majority of the increase in ADT is not occurring along eastbound.
- Typical Sections/Service Roads – Are service roads potential sites of BRT Routes? Dave and Karen explained that Veirs Mill Road is the preferred route and that none of the concepts have the BRT on the service roads. The service roads do not provide a continuous connection so the bus would have to wait to re-enter MD 586 many times along the corridor. In addition, the service roads are narrow and are used for parking, and people entering and exiting their cars could be a safety hazard. Karen added that the buses would need to stop for pedestrians and vehicles at all cross streets which would increase the travel time of the BRT.
- Service Roads/City of Rockville – What jurisdiction maintains the service roads? Karen stated that the State maintains and owns the service roads within the State and County limits. Barry (City of Rockville) indicated that Rockville maintains the service roads within the city limits. He also explained that if buses run on service roads, they would be closer to the homes. The service roads create a buffer, the lanes are narrow, and there also could be a lot of crossing traffic, which could be problematic if the BRT was in the service roads. For these reasons, the City would not

want buses in the service lanes. However, the City of Rockville would like the State to consider placing bicycle facilities on the service roads instead of on Veirs Mill Road.

- BRT lanes – Would the BRT lanes be for local bus use? Karen responded if the BRT lanes are on the outside, they would be shared with the local buses so that the local buses can access the bus stops along Veirs Mill Road. If the BRT lanes are in the median, they would not be shared with the local buses. Lane use will be part of the evaluation of the alternatives.
- Service Roads/elimination/other uses for service roads – It seems that part of the roadway would be valuable for other alternatives. Is there still opportunity to discuss those options? Karen stated that when alternatives were examined, there was consideration of eliminating service roads for use of BRT. If the service roads are removed due to widening, parking spaces would be lost and residents may need to walk a block or two to get their second parking space. Rockville and the County did not think it was acceptable to remove the service roads. An option was considered that provided parallel parking on Veirs Mill Road in place of the service roads, but it was not acceptable to SHA because of the number of lanes and speeds that are along Veirs Mill Road. SHA does not generally support parallel parking along state highways. A detailed evaluation of the service roads concluded that the service roads must remain with any BRT alternative.
- Lane use – if a BRT lane is added, would it reduce the median? Karen responded it would take from the median, the service road or a portion of each. More information will be provided at the next meeting.

**General Discussion:**

Denise reviewed summary of comments that were made in the previous exercises. She stated that most comments were focused on one of five major themes: destinations, routes, existing bus service, proposed BRT service, and pedestrians and bicycles. Denise stated that the CAC members should take the summary of comments to their communities to obtain feedback because the members are ambassadors of the project.

**Exercise:**

Denise then began an exercise in which the CAC members expressed their “Values and Concerns” for the project and the corridor. The following values and concerns were made by the CAC members:

Values:

- Existing service roads – help neighborhood feel protected, contribute to feeling of homes protected from highway, and helps residents feel safe
- Need more walkable environment, want to preserve neighborhood, make sidewalks more interesting
- Improve/renovate/redevelop strip malls
- Land development
- Maintain/ Improve sense of identity and sense of place along the corridor
- Fewer cars, more sustainable, attracting different population

One CAC member commented that the Willard Road/Connecticut Avenue intersection could be good area for a bus kiosk. That person also commented that they liked the idea of bike lanes in service road.

Concerns:

- Make area walkable, more pedestrian connectivity; Sidewalks are not continuous along the corridor and some are very close to the road or narrow
- Existing service roads; can they be used for BRT lanes?
- Concern that the new BRT will only add to sea of concrete and will not maintain or improve the sense of place
- Safety
- Greenspace - keep character, landscaping, aesthetically pleasing
- BRT's impact on current/local bus system.
- Zoning; Land Development
- Concern that there will not be enough demand for BRT
- Concerned that the current study does not connect to Montgomery College
- Cost to rider
- Construction sequencing; Will the 355 and 586 corridors be under construction at the same time?
- Concern that parking will not be provided for the BRT system on the corridor
- Need to reduce carbon emission
- Impact to nearby residents
- How is the existing transit service evaluated; what are the criteria?
- BRT is a "short term" solution (should be looking at heavy rail for the future)
- Is BRT the right solution? Is express bus a better solution?
- Loss of median/character

**Open Discussion on Values and Concerns:**

- Will the recommendations in this project address all of the roadway issues, or will it just focus on the BRT lanes? Karen responded that all roadway elements along the corridor would be included in the project. Denise added that concerns one or two blocks off the corridor may not be included in this project, but they could inform the State, County, and/or City of other issues.
- A CAC member commented that the strip malls could be potential smart growth areas and asked if the County is looking at zoning changes to coincide with the BRT. Joana responded that she does not believe there are current plans to change the zoning in the County portion of the project, but Park & Planning can always re-evaluate the zoning. Barry told the group that the City adopted a master plan a few years ago and he believes the Twinbrook shopping center was rezoned to be mixed-use. Barry stated that he is intrigued with the notion of combining a mixed-use development with a BRT station adjacent to the Twinbrook shopping centers. Joana added that there are redevelopment plans for the Wheaton triangle area at the east end of the corridor.
- How will BRT affect the current/local bus system? What happens to Q buses? What will be the frequency of the BRT service?  
 Karen responded that the BRT service would be headway based rather than schedule based. The current service plan for the BRT includes a headway of six minutes, meaning that a bus would be arriving at a station every six minutes. The local bus network would be evaluated as the project moves forward. For now, no changes to local service are being assumed, but as the project moves forward into more detail, a transit service analysis could identify where there is excessively redundant service and where local service could be removed without impact.
- Joana stated the discussion about Montgomery College is important because while this study is looking at service between the Rockville and Wheaton Metro Stations, the County has insisted

that the service should extend to Montgomery College, even if that means the BRT would be running in mixed traffic along MD 355. There is high ridership to Montgomery College and those riders should not have to transfer to a local service at the Rockville Station. The County envisions that if dedicated lanes were added along MD 355 as part of the MD 355 BRT project, the Veirs Mill Road BRT vehicles would be able to use those lanes up to Montgomery College.

**Purpose and Need:**

Karen then gave a presentation on the Purpose and Need of the project that was developed in 2012.

During the presentation on the Purpose and Need, the following topics and questions were discussed:

- Ridership – How many riders do you anticipate? Is there a design criteria for certain number of riders? What are the parameters that you focused on?  
 Karen responded that there is no ‘target’ ridership number that the Veirs Mill BRT is trying to reach. Once the alternatives are developed and the ridership is projected for each alternative, the ridership is evaluated along with the physical improvements to determine which alternatives are viable. There are BRT systems across the country with ridership ranging from 2,000 people a day to 20,000 people a day.
- Do you project the impact that the BRT will have on the other transit systems?  
 Karen replied that a new transit system will draw ridership from other existing transit systems. A new system would be an improvement with higher, better quality service, and would also attract new riders. If the majority of riders on the new system are coming from the current systems, the benefits of the new system could come into question. There are no defined criteria that explain how many riders the BRT needs to generate in order to be viable.
- Determining Alternative – What are the specific criteria to determine alternative?  
 Karen explained that many factors are used in evaluating the alternatives, including: impacts (homes, roads), costs, impacts to environmental features, and ridership.

**Questions and Comments:**

Denise then opened the meeting to questions and comments from the members. The following topics were discussed:

- Buses that operate on Veirs Mill Road are full all day and there is demand that is not met by the existing service. How much better would a BRT be over an express bus between the two metro stations?  
 Joana replied that the full range of alternatives will be presented in Meeting #3.
- One CAC member commented that the BRT is a short-term solution and asked if a long-term solution with a higher investment is being considered. Denise responded that the CAC process may not answer that and will note this as a concern. Joana responded the Master Plan outlines why BRT is being studied instead of light rail and a major reason is cost. Denise also noted the flexibility of buses is an advantage and Kyle stated that the implementation time of BRT is less than rail.
- Could the TSM (Transportation System Management) alternative be implemented and then phased towards another alternative?  
 Joana responded that implementing the TSM and then phasing towards another alternative could be advantageous because the TSM could be implemented more quickly. WMATA (Metro) is doing priority corridor network studies and has made recommendations on providing more

express service along several corridors, including the Veirs Mill corridor. The TSM alternative is essentially looking at implementing the express service that WMATA has recommended.

- Barry Gore stated that two concerns that he heard from the CAC members were losing the medians adjacent to the service roads and the need to add to character to the corridor. Barry urged the members to make suggestions during the CAC process because the BRT project would likely require reconstruction of the roadway. Regarding streetscape, Barry commented that the stations are opportunities to create places. Barry also stated that he believes that a goal of reducing carbon emissions should be added to the project purpose and need statement, and that he would like to see some consideration for battery or electric-powered BRT buses.

#### **Next Steps:**

- CAC members should present the material from Meeting #2 to their communities and bring any feedback they hear to future CAC meetings.
- The meeting summary will be posted to the website after it has been reviewed by the CAC members.
- Prior to Meeting #3, the CAC members should review the materials from the previous public meetings on the SHA website. The materials include typical sections of all of the preliminary alternatives. The information can be found here:  
<http://apps.roads.maryland.gov/WebProjectLifeCycle/ProjectInformation.aspx?projectno=MO2441115>
- **Meeting #3 is scheduled for Wednesday, May 27, 2015 from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. in the Auditorium on the Lobby level of the Executive Office Building.**