

MD 586/Veirs Mill Road Corridor Advisory Committee Meeting #7 Summary
Wednesday, April 13, 2016, 6:30-8:30 PM
Montgomery County Executive Office Building, 9th Floor
101 Monroe Street, Rockville, MD 20850

Attendees:

Members	
Messanvi Richard Adjogah	Jared Hautamaki
Timothy Crawford	Kathleen Hume
D. Jonathan Fink	Sara Moline
Larry Finkelberg	Jessica Reynolds
Ethan Goffman	Michael A. Staiano
Apologies	
James Agliata	Philip C. Sossou
Michel Audigé	Stacy L. Spann
Galo A. Correa, Sr.	Mike Stein
Mirza Donegan	Thomas M. Strawbridge
Mary Means	
Staff	
Facilitator – Denise Watkins	Consultant Project Manager – Karen Kahl, RK&K
State Highway Administration – Laura Barcena	Project Engineer – Dave Roberts, RK&K
Montgomery County DOT – Joana Conklin, Tom Pogue, Ligia Moss	Lead Facilitator – Andrew Bing, Kramer and Associates
Maryland Transit Administration Program Director – Jackie Seneschal	Outreach Support/Scribe – Linda Moreland, Remline Corp
Maryland Transit Administration Deputy Program Director – Kyle Nembhard	KGP – Seth Garland, Jamie Lookabaugh
KFH – Sue Knapp	
Public/Non-CAC Members	
Al Carr, Delegate D18	Larry Cole, MNCPPC

Handouts:

- Meeting #7 Agenda
- Meeting #6 Summary
- Proposed Station Locations Map
- Meeting #7 Presentation

Introductions:

Denise Watkins, the MD 586 CAC facilitator, introduced herself and welcomed everyone to CAC Meeting #7 for the MD 586/Veirs Mill Road Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Study. Following Denise's introduction, the staff members introduced themselves and explained their roles on the project.

Denise provided an overview of the agenda and a brief recap of Meeting #6.

County Executive Update:

Joana Conklin explained the letter, dated March 2, 2016, from County Executive Leggett that was sent to the County Council which talked about the plan for moving forward with BRT in the County. In the letter, the County Executive stated that the Veirs Mill Road BRT study will continue to move forward and a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) will be selected in Fiscal Year 2017.

The County Executive sent another letter to the Maryland Secretary of Transportation requesting \$1.8 million of additional funding over the next three years to fund WMATA operation of the Q9 Metrobus service during peak periods. The new Q9 service would be added on top of the existing services, with no changes to those existing services.

Questions and Concerns

- *Disagree with the Q9. Would it be more effective to adjust the current routes and patterns?*
This comment will be forwarded to WMATA for consideration.
- *I ride the Q routes and it is a little confusing because so many routes go the same places. Can that be reevaluated or readjusted to save money?*
The Q9 would be different than the existing services because it would be a limited stop service, which would make it quicker than traditional bus service. In addition, the Q9 would travel only between Rockville and Wheaton; no existing Q routes are limited to those two end stations.
- *Suggest renaming it to something that doesn't include a "Q;" this can get confusing. Maybe it could be named the Veirs Mill Express line.* This comment will be forwarded to WMATA for consideration.

Alternative Review:

Dave Roberts briefly reviewed the components of the BRT alternatives, which include the runningway, service plan and stations. Runningways were discussed in detail at CAC Meetings #5 and 6, and the service plans and stations will be discussed at tonight's meeting.

Dave then provided a brief overview of each of the four retained alternatives:

Alternative 1: No-build

Alternative 2: TSM alternative with enhanced bus service and queue jumps

Alternative 3: New BRT service in dedicated curb lanes (where feasible)

Alternative 5B: New BRT service in one bi-directional median lane or two dedicated median lanes

Service Plans:

An overview of bus service plans was provided by Sue Knapp. Bus service plans include bus headways (timing between consecutive buses), stations, hours of operation and the route. An overview of service characteristics for each alternative (except for no-build) was provided.

Alternative 2 would include an Express Bus Limited Service (WMATA Q9) with 12 stops. Service from Wheaton Metrorail station to Rockville Metrorail station would have 12 minute headways during peak periods and 15 minute off-peak with service running from 6 AM to midnight. Service from Rockville Metrorail station to Montgomery College would have 36 minute headways during peak periods and 45 minutes off-peak with service running from 8 AM to 10 PM.

Alternatives 3 and 5B would include a new BRT Service with 12 stations (curbside or median). Service from Wheaton Metrorail station to Rockville Metrorail station would have 6 minute headways during peak periods and 10 minute off-peak with service running from 6 AM to midnight. Service from Rockville Metrorail station to Montgomery College would have 18 minute headways during peak periods and 30 minutes off-peak with service running from 8 AM to 10 PM.

Questions and Concerns

- *Will the services run early and late enough for college students to get to and from school efficiently?*
We talked to the school and took their class times into consideration when planning the hours of operation, but adjustments could be made to meet the students' needs. The hours of operation of the service is one of the easiest elements to change once the service has been implemented.
- *Would the 12 station locations in Alternatives 3 and 5B be different than the current local stops?*
The goal is to have the BRT stations placed close to the local bus service stops. However, that is not finalized because the stations locations are still being discussed.
- *I teach at the Rockville campus and I have an 8:00 AM class so you need to look at revising the start time of the service.*

Sue gave a brief description of what the BRT vehicles could look like. Level floors, multiple doors for easy boarding, and comfortable interiors with room for wheelchairs and bicycles are all features that could be included on the BRT vehicles. Buses are typically articulated 60-foot vehicles with a capacity of 80-100 passengers.

Questions and Concerns

- *Can 40 foot buses be used off-peak?*
They could be used and they would be branded in the same manner as the articulated buses.

Station Location Discussion:

Karen Kahl provided information on station locations in the corridor. Two main considerations when thinking about locations are:

1. Placement in the corridor
2. Placement at the intersections

The current locations are based on previous studies and the *Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan*. When the team receives the projected ridership by station, those station locations will be evaluated to determine if any of them need to be changed or removed, or if any new stations should be added.

Karen explained that stations should be near high activity centers with a spacing of approximately 0.5 to 1.0 miles between stations. Stations should be located where riders can easily transfer from other transit services.

Current ridership numbers for the existing bus stops were reviewed. Barry Gore discussed the boardings and alightings at each of the current Q-line stops and then described potential stops that have been included in the City's master plan. The group discussed in detail the possibility of a BRT station at Atlantic Avenue and/or Twinbrook Parkway. The effects of moving one station on right-of-way impacts, access for residents, and station spacing were also discussed. The goal is to select station locations that generate ridership by serving major destinations without negatively affecting the adjacent properties.

Questions and Concerns

- *I'm concerned that people will not want to walk more than half a mile to the bus stop.*
The general rule of thumb in transit planning is that riders will walk 0.5 miles to access a rail station and 0.25 miles to access a bus stop, on average.
- *Population density should dictate station spacing more than just the 0.5-1.0 mile station spacing rule.*
Population density is one of the main factors in choosing station locations. However, people should not have to have to walk extreme distances to get to station locations.
- *Is the County considering zoning changes to encourage mixed use and higher density development in the future that would better support local bus and BRT services?*
There has been a discussion in the area Master Plan for the vicinity of Randolph Road and Veirs Mill Road intersection and some other smaller locations, but there is no goal to change the density corridor wide.
- *Locations need to be evaluated based on transfer locations and where people are going. Some riders will take the BRT for their entire ride, others will take the local their entire ride, and some may use a combination.*
- *Is the goal to keep the number of stops in Rockville capped at four?*
Four is not the maximum number of stops in Rockville. However, adding more stops would increase costs and lower the bus speeds.
- *In the Wheaton area, near Randolph, there is a parking lot that could be useful for a Park and Ride. Is that a consideration since it is about a halfway point?*
That isn't being considered for part of this study, but the comment will be kept for future consideration.
- *Some crosswalks near school areas where many children walk to school and cross the street have unmarked intersections and no signals.*
- *Cars are using "Bus Only" lanes without any enforcement by county officials.*

Karen briefly discussed station placement within intersections regarding near-side vs. far-side placement. She explained that they are looking to minimize property impacts while also keeping passengers safe. Three examples were discussed.

Station Prototype Discussion:

Jamie Lookabaugh provided an overview of the five different station prototypes that are being proposed among the retained alternatives:

- Enhanced Bus Stop- curbside stop with more amenities than a traditional bus stop
- Side Platform- 120' long curbside station
- Reduced Side Platform- 60' long curbside station
- Split Side Platform- 120' long median station with loading areas on one side
- Center Platform- 120' long median station with loading areas on both sides

Jamie described which station prototype would be used for each station location in each Alternative. She noted that there are many options with varying aesthetics and functionality.

Jamie provided an overview of canopy coverage at stations. Canopies are put in place for protection from the elements. The type and size of the canopy would depend on the level of ridership and costs. Longer wait and high ridership areas should have more coverage. Investment should be made to promote comfort and to attract additional riders.

There are safety concerns that if the canopy is too large it could be a distraction for drivers and may become a refuge for homeless people. In addition, the size can also be intrusive for property owners.

A brief overview was given of station amenities, such as seating, ticket vending machines, bicycle racks, artwork, etc. Amenities should be spread out at the station to avoid crowding.

Jamie led a brief discussion on the importance of branding and station identity.

Questions/Concerns

- *A minor level of distinction and branding will be helpful; however, people either ride the bus or they don't.*
- *Some of the alternatives will need signs and physical distinction because it is a separate service from the local service.*

The importance of technology and real time information displays/apps were discussed as these are beneficial to increasing ridership.

Questions/Concerns

- *The real-time information displays look good but are always wrong. If they are accurate, they are useful.*
- *Not everyone has the apps for their phones, so the signage is helpful and important.*

Meeting Wrap Up:

CAC members should email Denise with any additional feedback, questions, or comments. The team is anticipating a public open house in the fall. The next CAC meeting will be held prior to the open house.

Next Steps:

- The meeting summary will be posted to the website after it has been reviewed by the CAC members.
- Denise will send an email to the CAC members with links to all of the relevant information.
- **The date for Meeting #8 is TBD.**