

MD 586/Veirs Mill Road Corridor Advisory Committee Meeting #8 Summary
Wednesday, September 14, 2016, 6:30-8:30 PM
Montgomery County Executive Office Building, 9th Floor Conference Room
101 Monroe Street, Rockville, MD 20850

Attendees:

Members	
Messanvi Richard Adjogah	Rob Mitchell (alternate for Jared Hautamaki)
James Agliata	Michael A. Staiano
Ethan Goffman	Mike Stein
Kathleen Hume	
Apologies	
Michel Audigé	Mary Means
Timothy Crawford	Sara Moline
Galo A. Correa, Sr.	Jessica Reynolds
Mirza Donegan	Philip C. Sossou
D. Jonathan Fink	Stacy L. Spann
Larry Finkelberg	Thomas M. Strawbridge
Staff	
Facilitator – Denise Watkins	WRA- Melanie Ernest
State Highway Administration – Laura Barcena, Kate Sylvester	Consultant Project Manager – Karen Kahl, RK&K
Montgomery County DOT – Darcy Buckley, Ligia Moss, Joana Conklin	Project Engineer – Dave Roberts, RK&K
Maryland Transit Administration – Jackie Seneschal	Lead Facilitator – Andrew Bing, Kramer and Associates
Cambridge Systematics - Dilya Askaroff	Outreach Support/Scribe – Linda Moreland, Remline, Corp.

Handouts:

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

Introductions:

Denise Watkins, the MD 586 CAC facilitator, introduced herself and welcomed everyone to CAC Meeting #8 for the MD 586/Veirs Mill Road Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Study.

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



Meeting #7 Recap:

Denise provided a brief review of Meeting #7, which focused on the station locations and prototypes. The stations were the final components of the alternatives to be presented, as the runningways and service plans were presented in Meetings #5 and 6. All three of those meetings have led up to this meeting, Meeting #8, where the results of the alternatives comparison will be presented.

Transit Project Planning Process and Draft Corridor Study Report:

Karen explained that a Draft Corridor Study Report (DCSR) has been published online and made available at local public facilities for public review and comment. The DCSR summarizes the results of the alternatives development and comparison, and contains more detail on the information being presented at CAC Meeting #8. The next stage in the project will be a public meeting on September 28, 2016 to present the results of the alternatives comparison. The public comment period is open now through October 14, 2016. Following the public comment period, a recommended alternative will be selected and the DCSR will be made final by including information on the recommended alternative.

Alternatives:

Dave provided a review of the four alternatives retained for detailed study (ARDS).

- 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

All alternatives would have stops at the same 12 locations.

Alternatives Comparison Matrix:

Karen explained that there are five main categories upon which the alternatives are compared:

- Expected ridership
- Travel times
- Costs
- Traffic operations
- Environmental impacts

The group then walked through each of the five comparison categories and discussed the results.

Expected Ridership – Karen explained that a computer model is used to project future ridership for each of the alternatives. The model takes into account future land use, programmed transportation projects, and the expected speeds of the buses. The results of the ridership model show that overall transit boardings in the corridor are expected to increase over the No-Build with any of the build alternatives. Additionally, each build alternative attracts “new” transit riders. The projected BRT boardings range from 2,600 in Alternative 2 to 7,300 in Alternative 5B.

Questions & Concerns

- *What is the current ridership for the corridor?* Dilya responded that there are 18,000 existing daily boardings and alightings along the corridor.

- *Is this what you would expect to see in other systems?* There is a wide range of ridership on other systems across the country. It really depends on the length of the system and the adjacent land use. Since Veirs Mill Road is a relative short corridor the ridership projections seem reasonable.
- *Weren't they planning on starting the Q9 by now?* WMATA decided to not implement the Q9 service at this time because the public was not supportive of cutting back other routes, which would be required to create enough savings to fund the Q9. The County will continue to ask the State for Q9 funding.
- *If the headway in Alternative 2 was decreased to match the other alternatives, would the ridership change?* If the operating assumptions for Alternative 2 were changed to match the other build alternatives, the expected ridership would increase from 2,600 to 3,200 daily boardings.

Travel Times – Dave explained that a traffic model was run to predict the 2040 travel times for the enhanced bus/BRT, local buses, and automobiles for each alternative. The model was run for the morning (7-8 AM) and afternoon (4-5 PM) peak hours between the Rockville and Wheaton Metrorail stations. The key point is that the projected enhanced bus/BRT travel times in the three build alternatives are lower than the local bus travel times in the No-Build. This means that the build alternatives are providing a faster transit service along the corridor.

Questions & Concerns

- *It seems that Alternative 5B has the best travel times in the eastbound direction, but Alternative 2 has the best travel times in the westbound direction?* The far-side station locations at a few intersections in Alternative 5B negatively affect the travel time because the bus must wait at a red light, pass through the intersection, and then immediately stop at a station. Additionally, the progression of the traffic signals along westbound does not work as smoothly as it works in the eastbound direction. The higher ridership in Alternatives 3 and 5B results in longer dwell times, which contribute to higher travel times. In addition, there is more pedestrian activity in Alternatives 3 and 5B which affects the signal cycle lengths at the intersections. Finally, because the unsignalized left turn lanes are closed off in Alternative 5B, there are higher left turn volumes at the signalized intersections which affects the travel times of the through movements.
- *In PM peak, what is the breakdown of eastbound vs. westbound traffic?* The traffic volumes are balanced between the eastbound and westbound directions.
- *Why do automobiles have significantly better travel times in the alternatives vs. the no-build?* Generally, that is because of the transit signal priority. The early green or green extension for the BRT also benefits the through automobile traffic on Veirs Mill Road.
- *The best comparison in the matrix is the local bus no-build travel time of 40.4 minutes versus any of the build alternatives. That is about a 16-minute savings with any of the build alternatives. Otherwise, between the alternatives, it is a bit of a wash except for the travel time savings.*

Costs – Dave explained that both capital and operating cost estimates were developed for each alternative. Alternative 5B would have the highest construction costs because it would require complete roadway reconstruction, whereas Alternatives 2 and 3 would just involve widening along the outside of the roadway.

Questions & Concerns

- *Do you have a cost per new rider?* This cost is typically reported per all riders, not just new riders. The capital cost per daily rider is approximately \$40,000 for Alternative 5B, \$23,000 for Alternative 3, and \$13,000 for Alternative 2.

- *So, stations costs \$10 million per block? You could make a lot of the existing stations a lot more comfortable for a lot less.* The station costs range from \$35,000 for the enhanced bus stops to \$700,000 for the split side platform station.
- *Will the vehicles be hybrid or electric powered?* They would be 60-foot long fuel efficient, articulated buses.

Traffic Operations – Dave explained that the roadway and intersection levels of service (LOS) are not expected to change much in either the morning or afternoon peak hours. If anything, there is a slight improvement in the traffic operations in the afternoon peak hour.

Questions & Concerns

- *With a LOS E or F at an intersection, how many cycles would it take to get through?* Generally, with LOS F, you would sit through at least one cycle. At LOS E you could get through in one cycle.

Environmental Impacts - Karen reviewed the environmental impacts, including those to socioeconomic, cultural, and natural resources. There is a range of property impacts, and the final impacts would depend on the final station locations. Most of the property impacts are minor “sliver” takes where the roadway is being widened. Natural environmental impacts are focused in the parks and at stream crossings.

Public Meeting:

Denise explained that a public meeting will be held on September 28th, 2016 to present the results of the alternatives comparison and to receive public comments. Denise encouraged CAC members to attend and to notify their neighbors and community members.

Next Steps:

Denise explained that following the public meeting, the comment period will remain open until October 14, 2016. Comments can be submitted via email to md586brt@sha.state.md.us. Following the comment period, a recommended alternative will be selected and CAC Meeting #9 to brief the CAC on the recommended alternative. The Final Corridor Study Report is expected to be completed in March 2017.

The Recommended Alternative:

Karen explained that Montgomery County, SHA, and MTA will select a recommended alternative based on the results of the alternatives comparison and the comments received from the public. The recommended alternative is the alternative that would be advanced in the next stage of the project.

General Discussion:

The following questions or concerns were discussed:

- *Will the matrix be published at any time?* Yes, it is in the draft corridor study report, which can be found at montgomerycountymd.gov/brt.
- *The Q9 could be running right now for the price of \$2-3 million a year vs. \$289 million for Alternative 5B which would take 20 years to implement. Does the governor make the final decision?* The State provides a certain amount of funding to WMATA, who then decides which services to cut or add. The County will continue to ask the State for funding for the Q9 because it is needed.
- *Would this project have federal funding?* It is not clear yet if this project would have federal funding. An application is required, but a recommended alternative is needed first. All three of the build alternatives

would fall under the FTA Small Starts category. The ultimate goal is to have an entire BRT network, but that has to happen one step at a time. To receive federal funds, a project must prove that it can be successful as a standalone project, without the rest of the network in place.

- *If the project does not get federal money, would it still proceed?* Yes, it could.
- *Is there a fare difference between the local buses and BRT?* No.

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.
- **Meeting #9 is anticipated to be in January 2017. This is expected to be the last CAC meeting during this stage of the project.**