

MD 586/Veirs Mill Road Corridor Advisory Committee Meeting #9 Summary
Wednesday, June 14, 2017, 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	Jessica Reynolds
Ethan Goffman	Michael A. Staiano
Jared Hautamaki	
Apologies	
James Agliata	Kathleen Hume
Michel Audigé	Mary Means
Galo A. Correa, Sr.	Sara Moline
Timothy Crawford	Philip C. Sossou
Mirza Donegan	Stacy L. Spann
D. Jonathan Fink	Mike Stein
Larry Finkelberg	Thomas M. Strawbridge
Staff	
Facilitator – Denise Watkins, RK&K	Consultant Project Manager – Karen Kahl, RK&K
State Highway Administration – Laura Barcena, Kate Sylvester	Project Engineer – Dave Roberts, RK&K
Montgomery County DOT – Darcy Buckley, Ligia Moss, Joana Conklin, Tom Pogue, Raphael Olarte, Warren Barrett	Lead Facilitator – Andrew Bing, Kramer and Associates
Maryland Transit Administration – Jackie Seneschal	Outreach Support/Scribe – Brittany Rolf, RK&K
WMATA/Metro - Jamaica Arnold	ZGF - Chris Somma
City of Rockville - Barry Gore	

Handouts:

- Meeting #9 Agenda
- Meeting #8 Summary
- Meeting #9 Presentation

Introductions:

Denise Watkins, the MD 586 CAC facilitator, introduced herself and welcomed everyone to CAC Meeting #9 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 #8 Recap:

Denise provided a brief recap of Meeting #8, which focused on the Draft Corridor Study Report (DCSR) and the alternatives comparison matrix for Alternatives 1, 2, 3, and 5B. At that meeting, the project team presented the differences among expected ridership, travel times, cost, traffic operations, and environmental impacts under each alternative. Attendees also previewed the meeting materials for the September 28, 2016 Public Meeting.

Project Update

At the September 28, 2016 Public Meeting, 35 attendees viewed the alternatives and their potential benefits and impacts. Of the 33 comments received at the meeting or submitted via e-mail, approximately two-thirds were supportive of the project. Responses to all the public comments will be included in the Final Corridor Study Report (FCSR).

In December 2016, the results of the alternatives analysis were presented to the Transportation, Infrastructure, Energy, and Environment (T&E) Committee of the Montgomery County Council. The T&E Committee expressed concern about the cost of Alternative 5B (dedicated median alternative) and its lack of travel time benefit over other build alternatives. The Committee requested that a new, hybrid scenario be considered that combined the footprint of Alternative 2 (enhanced bus alternative) with the BRT service improvements of Alternative 3 (dedicated curb alternative). This resulted in development of Alternative 2.5.

Alternative 2.5 has the same runningway as Alternative 2, including queue jumps at select intersections, the use of existing lanes with mixed traffic, and no change to service roads. However, Alternative 2.5 also has the BRT service elements from Alternative 3, including six-minute headways in the peak period, larger BRT stations, and articulated buses.

Additional Alternatives Analysis

In early 2017, the project team completed a travel time analysis and developed cost estimates for Alternative 2.5.

The travel time analysis showed that in most cases, Alternative 2.5 would have similar travel times to Alternative 3 and slightly longer travel times than Alternative 2. The longer travel times when compared to Alternative 2 are largely due to the increased ridership that would occur with Alternative 2.5, as the additional riders would increase dwell time at stations and increase pedestrian crossing times at the intersections. Alternative 2.5 is expected to provide 2.5 times more boardings than Alternative 2 and similar boardings to Alternative 3. Other factors such as transit signal priority (TSP) and station placement also affect travel times, and all build alternatives would improve transit travel times over the No-Build Alternative by seven or eight minutes.

The estimated cost for designing and constructing Alternative 2.5 is \$80M, which is \$44M more than Alternative 2 and \$69M less than Alternative 3.

Recommended Alternative and Next Steps

On June 13, 2017, the Montgomery County Council voted to select Alternative 2.5 as the recommended alternative, but to retain Alternative 3 as the master plan option. Alternative 3 is supported by stakeholders such as the City of Rockville, the Montgomery County Planning Board, and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority. Retaining Alternative 3 as the master plan alternative will allow the County to reserve the necessary right-of-way along Veirs Mill Road as properties are redeveloped. The queue jumps in Alternative 2.5 would not

preclude dedicated lanes, and dedicated lanes are consistent with the County's master plan vision for a BRT network. As the BRT network is built, greater benefits of dedicated lanes along Veirs Mill Road may be achieved.

Questions & Concerns

- *Is the project supported by the Montgomery County Transit Corridors Master Plan or the Veirs Mill Master Plan, which is still under development?* Both master plans support the proposed project. Montgomery County's Transit Corridors Master Plan is a functional master plan that recommends BRT along Veirs Mill Road. The Veirs Mill Road Corridor Master Plan that is currently under development by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission should include Alternative 2.5 as the recommended alternative with Alternative 3 retained as the long-term alternative.
- *The Mid-County Advisory Board is uncertain of the differences between the Q9 buses—which, they've been told, are currently being implemented—and the BRT bus services under Alternative 2 or Alternative 2.5. Could the Project Team clarify the differences?* Alternative 2 is similar to the proposed Q9, including enhanced bus service and limited stops. The main difference between the Q9 and Alternative 2 is that Alternative 2 would include queue jumps and TSP, whereas the Q9 would not include these improvements. Alternative 2.5 would also have more frequent service and BRT amenities, including new buses, level boarding, off-board fare collection and BRT stations. A WMATA representative clarified that there are no plans to implement the Q9 in the near term due to lack of funding.
- *What is the status of the MD 355 study?* The MD 355 BRT project team has identified alternatives to carry forward for further study. In about 18 months, the study will be at the current stage of the Veirs Mill Road BRT study. The US 29 BRT study is just entering the design phase.
- *Since Alternative 2.5 does not implement dedicated lanes, would Montgomery County want to differentiate its branding for the Veirs Mill BRT corridor? Maybe change it to "Flash-Lite"?* The Flash brand encompasses all elements of BRT that are being proposed throughout Montgomery County, even if the Veirs Mill Road corridor would not implement dedicated lanes.
- *Could local funding be set aside for Veirs Mill BRT just as it was set aside for US 29 BRT?* Montgomery County is in the process of evaluating if local funds will be available.
- *Press reports have said that Veirs Mill BRT queue jumps would occur at the 12 most congested intersections. That is the same number of stations that are proposed. Is this arbitrary or intentional?* The queue jumps are not necessarily located at the station locations.
- *How will existing bus traffic be handled when queue jumps are implemented? Would BRT be bogged down by the existing services?* Queue jumps may be used by local buses as well. Local buses, however, would not be able to use TSP due to lack of onboard equipment. If funding becomes available, the necessary onboard equipment could be added to local buses so they could use TSP as well. Because the Veirs Mill Road corridor has limited right-of-way, BRT station locations may have to be shared with local buses. From a technical standpoint, buses would be able to use the BRT platforms because the floor height of the vehicles is not very different. Whether the local buses will use the platforms will ultimately be a policy decision. For the US 29 BRT study, it is still being determined if local buses would use the BRT stations. The assumption at this point is that the local and BRT bus stations would be proximal, but not at the same locations, and a clear zone would be designed between the stations. Buses have the flexibility to adapt to traffic changes and to use the queue jumps when it is advantageous to do so.
- *How would sharing BRT stations with local buses affect dwell time?* The model included local bus traffic in the approximation of BRT travel times; therefore, the effect of local buses on the dwell times is already included in the projected travel times.

BRT Station Prototypes

Chris Somma (ZGF) presented the BRT station prototypes that were developed for the County's BRT system through a grant from the Metropolitan Washington Council of Government's Transportation/Land Use Connections Program. The presentation included the design goals for the station prototypes, best practice examples from around the world, an overview of the different types of platforms in the MCDOT BRT system, and a discussion on the menu of amenities that could be implemented at each station. Chris also talked about the public input that was received at two open houses, and the desire to use local materials in the station design, such as Seneca red sandstone, Sykesville gneiss, and Potomac marble.

A station family was developed to ensure that all BRT stations across the County have a consistent look and feel while still offering different size stations to fit the individual needs of each specific station site. The types of stations in the family have various numbers of markers, small and large canopies, and landscaping.

Questions & Concerns

- *Have dark sky recommendations been considered in designing the station lighting? It's important to reduce light pollution, especially in residential areas.* Station lighting will be designed to face the correct direction and to not over-light the area. The goal is to illuminate the station area sufficiently to make it safe, but not bothersome for nearby residential areas. In general, station design (including lighting) across all Montgomery County BRT corridors will be similar, but context-sensitive. Station design will continue to be refined in the next phase of the study.
- *Where would fare payment occur?* Weather-proofed Ticket Vending Machines (TVM), as well as SmartTrip targets, would be placed under station canopies. No more than one or two TVM would be placed under a canopy.
- *A few media reports say that Montgomery County had budgeted \$39.1 million for the entire BRT program. Is this true?* The media reports refer to the sum of money designated for the overall Capital Improvements Program (CIP), including a \$10 million grant from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Most of this money (\$31.5 million) has been allocated for the US 29 BRT project.

Next Steps:

- The meeting summary will be posted to the website after it has been reviewed by the CAC members.
- Since there is no funding for the Veirs Mill Road BRT project to continue, the CAC will not meet again until further notice. If funding is allocated for this project, the study would continue into preliminary engineering design. CAC members would be asked if they would like to continue their participation in the CAC at that point.