

**CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
 MEETING #1 SUMMARY**

**MARCH 9, 2022
 7:00 PM-8:30 PM**

ATTENDEES:

CAC Members	
Ron Basumallik	Robert Smythe
Susanna Parker	Mac Campbell
Timur Edib	Hua Tan
Steven Robins	Stephen Miller
Michael Krauthamer	Nathalie Bourdereau
Silvanna Valencia	Karen Guertler
Clark Maier	

Additional members of the public attended the meeting.

Montgomery County Staff and Consultant Team	
Sandra Marks	MCDOT
Corey Pitts	MCDOT
Darcy Buckley	MCDOT
Joana Conklin	MCDOT
Deanna Archey	MCDOT
Tim Cupples	MCDOT
Jesse Cohn McGowan	Montgomery County Planning Department
TJ Dant	Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center
Matt Higgins	Montgomery County Council
Nkosi Yearwood	Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
Melissa DuMond	Kimley-Horn
Lucas Muller	Kimley-Horn
Kate Widness	Kimley-Horn

PRESENTATION OVERVIEW:

- **Welcome and Introductions**
 - Project manager Sandra Marks welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave a brief overview of meeting expectations, zoom software, and project team.
 - Introductions by the citizens advisory committee (CAC) members included their name, what interested in them in this project, and what their top priorities are for this corridor.
 - The role of the CAC was provided along with a timeline of when they would be consulted during this planning project. The CAC will:
 - Provide input, guidance, and oversight in accordance with the Master Plan
 - Encourage community involvement throughout the project
 - Share information with the community
 - Build consensus

- **Bus Rapid Transit and North Bethesda Transitway Planning Study Overview**
 - Some characteristics of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) include upgraded vehicles, frequent and reliable service, priority at traffic signals, and improvements for other modes such as bicycling.
 - The North Bethesda Transitway was first identified in the 2013 *Countywide Transit Corridor Functional Master Plan*.
 - The North Bethesda Transitway will connect the Westfield Montgomery Mall Transit Center through the Rock Spring office park to the Metrorail Red Line
 - The planning study will determine the eastern terminus of the project, designate alignment types, and identify stop locations.

- **Goals and Objectives**
 - An explanation of what goals, objectives, and metrics are was provided.
 - The project goals and objectives for the North Bethesda Transitway were presented which include:
 - Quality service: Provide a fast, reliable, efficient, and connected transit service
 - Mobility Choices: Improve access to jobs, activity centers, and community facilities
 - Sustainable Solutions: Minimize environmental impacts and utilize cost-effective design
 - Community Equity: Provide improved and accessible transit service for underserved populations
 - Economic Growth: Promote economic development with appealing and functional transit
 - Public Safety: Improve safety of our streets and the livability and wellness of our communities

- **Study Area Context**
 - An overview of existing conditions within the study area were provided and key findings identified. The presentation depicted a number of maps and charts to better understand the existing conditions including:
 - Master Plans and Pipeline Developments planned for the study area
 - Transit Oriented Propensity: Areas where there is a presence of residents more likely to use transit.
 - Commuter Propensity: Areas where commuters who use transit are likely to live.

- Employment Destination Propensity: Areas where commuters are likely to go based on total jobs and job density.
- COVID travel trends within the study area
- Pedestrian Level of Comfort in the study area
- Some of the current characteristics of the study area are:
 - Transit ridership has not recovered to pre-pandemic levels, unlike private auto use
 - More people are commuting into the study area to work, than commuting out
 - Opportunities exist to upgrade bike and ped facilities
 - High transit propensity around metro stations
 - Lower density and less transit-supportive land use in middle of corridor
- Some considerations for future BRT include:
 - Consider stops, frequency and regional transit connectivity
 - Consider capacity needs and users in design
 - Opportunity to achieve visions of master plans
 - Look at increasing frequency and expanding hours of service
 - Include quality bike and ped facilities in design
 - Look at future demand in screening the termini options
- **Upcoming public engagement and next steps**
 - Ways to engage in the project were presented including:
 - Webpage: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/dot-dte/projects/northbethesda/>
 - Upcoming project survey
 - CAC members were asked to spread the word to the community
 - There will pop-up events later in the spring and we will update the webpage with the information

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS:

- How far into the future are we projecting our planning? Are we looking at a world without gas powered cars and alternative EV (Electric Vehicle) vehicles?
 - Staff responds that the future year assumptions are for 2045, and we build the scenarios based on existing, and planned future conditions in land use, population, development, jobs, etc.
- How is this program better than an expanded ride-on service?
- [Referring to goals and objectives slide] RE metrics: is it possible to identify transit time for customers who are going from one point to another, that currently requires a transfer? Just for example, to go from White Flint Metro to Suburban Hospital requires a transfer at either Westfield Montgomery bus depot or the Bethesda Metro station.
 - Staff responds that ridership and transit travel shed analyses will consider trips that require a transfer, factoring the extra time into the analysis.
- Accurate headways and schedule tolerance were important metrics that were suggested for “quality of service” goal
- East to west transit connection is hugely important
- In the context of mass transit, what differentiates economic growth and community equity?

- Staff acknowledged overlap in the goals. Economic growth will consider how the service would serve existing and help spur planned development. Community equity will consider who is being served and where are they going and understanding if the service being provided is equitable. Understanding where people work and commute to is also a component of economic growth in terms of access to jobs and community destinations; many of the goals and objectives relate to one another.
- Optimizing for maximum ridership should be the most important factor.
- Public safety in the evening is a concern for some bus users. Having more people around using the bus would make people feel safer.
- Can we add maximum usage (ridership) as a metric?
- What was the methodology to predict who is most likely to use transit?
 - Staff responds that the methodology combines a series of demographic factors with historic transit use; these layers such as low-income households, zero-car ownership, senior populations, and others are layered on top of each of other to produce the propensity analysis. It is important to note that this is not a perfect formula or prediction on ridership, and it is based on existing demographics
- [Referring to the propensity maps for transit, jobs, and where commuters live] Map you have on screen is based on existing conditions but not future conditions or development changes; one of many pieces that go into overall analysis and in next phase includes that future planned development and land use changes.
- Residential users are as equally important as commuters.
- When I use the bus on weekends, other users are going to work; service on weekends is serving commuters with no other transportation option. Need to make this BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) project attractive for everyone.
- Do we know where we are going with biotech and or White Flint property? 25 years into the future might be a vastly different world?
- To piggyback on that, the new development at Grosvenor of close to 2,000 residents with a good deal of MPDU. Will also have some mixed commercial use from what I understand.
 - Staff responds that development will be taken into consideration in the evaluation.
- Is there any reason Cabin John Regional Park is not considered terminus? Why does it have to end at the mall?
- I was surprised that the area near to White Flint Metro did not have a high level of interest (transit propensity) in taking transit.
- [Referring to pedestrian level of comfort slide] How is pedestrian level of comfort determined?
 - Staff responds that typical sets of data (width, speed of adjacent roadway, quality of existing pedestrian facility, etc.) are used to develop this. The countywide map and analysis can be found here: <https://mcatlas.org/pedplan/>
- Where does Virginia fit into this discussion?

- Staff responds that we will look at the more regional network to understand connections into Virginia, such as I-270, I-495 and American Legion Bridge route.
- New Woodward high school and existing WJ school are along this corridor; are you taking into consideration student use?
 - Staff responds that when looking at operational span of service, student use may affect that and is a factor we will look at.
- Really be interested in which of these two routes and potential dedicated lanes would get more use for other bus routes as well. [Staff noted for BRT facilities to work properly, not all buses can use those dedicated lanes].
- If looking at a dedicated lane, why are we focused on bus and not light rail?
- You may want to use live transcription for our zooms in case of hard of hearing attendees.

POLL EVERYWHERE RESPONSES:

