**Rapid Transit Steering Committee Meeting Minutes
EOB Auditorium**

**January 28, 2015 4:00 – 6:00 pm**

**Voting Members In-Attendance**Larry Cole (for M-NCPPC); David Dise; Sean Egan (for MDOT); Brady Goldsmith (for OMB); Andrew Gunning; Marc Hansen; David Hauck; Jonathan Parker (for WMATA); Al R. Roshdieh; John Schlichting; Frank Spielberg; Sally Sternback; Dan Wilhelm; Mark Winston.

**Non-Voting Members**Tom Autrey; Joana Conklin; Gary Erenrich; Edgar Gonzalez; Marc Hansen; Bruce Johnston; Rick Kiegel; Stacy Leach; Ligia Moss; Tom Pogue; Emil Wolanin.

**Other Attendees**Nancy Abeles; Jamaica Arnold; Jewru Bandeh; Andrew Bing; Kelly Blynn; Kevin Coates; Celesta Jurkovich; Kyle Nembhard; Gyvonnku Rizkallah; Geri Rosenberg; Brian Schoem; Paul Seder; Debbie Spielberg; David Winstead; Nathan Zook.

**Introductions and Welcome**

Al Roshdieh started the meeting at 4:10 pm. The meeting started with all attendees introducing themselves.

**Approval of Minutes for November 18, 2014.**

The minutes were approved without changes.

Al Roshdieh took this time to give an introduction to the Transit Authority. Marc Hanson gave a brief overview of the legislation involved.

Mr. Hanson started by walking the committee through the bill that was presented to the General Assembly that would provide for the creation, or possible creation, of an Independent Transit Authority (ITA) in Montgomery County. The General Assembly would authorize but not require the County Council to enact a law to create the Montgomery County ITA, which would be authorized to perform transit functions. Transit function is a term which is defined in the statute that would permit the ITA to build and operate a mass transit system, including the bus system, RTS, parking facilities and all of the accoutrements related to operating such a system. The State Legislation would enable the County Council to enact a law to create the ITA as an instrumentality of the county government that would be governed by a five member board. The five members would be appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council. It would authorize the County Council to create a special taxing district which is a defined term that means the district that encompasses the entire county. It would authorize the County Council to impose a special tax, Mr. Hanson calls it a transit tax, which would take the form of an ad valorem real property tax, which would be exempt from the current Montgomery County charter limit. It would authorize the County Council, by law, to generally provide for the organization of the ITA and to specify the powers of the ITA.

In addition, the State Legislation would authorize the County Council to permit the ITA to do the following:

* Incur debt
* Build infrastructure necessary to operate transit functions
* Acquire property necessary for those transit functions
* Adopt policies regarding personnel matters
* Establish a budget process. The operating budget would have to be consistent with the CIP and the current Master Plan
* Issue bonds and debt; the interest paid on that debt would be exempt from state taxes

Dan Wilhelm – there is a presentation on Friday night at the COB. There is also a web site that provides more information. The Council will take this up on Monday.

Andrew Gunning – Not speaking on behalf of the City of Rockville, but thinks it’s good that we are trying this based on his experience in another State that approved a similar measure.

Kevin Coats asked what the chances are that this will be approved by the State. Marc Hanson said it is too early in the process to have an idea of the chance for approval.

Al wanted to introduce this today because there has been some misunderstanding, and he wants to get ahead of the misunderstanding, especially with employees. MCDOT is completely on board. Currently, transit competes with other divisions within MCDOT (Highway, traffic, etc.) for funding, as well as with other County departments. With the ITA, Transit would no longer be competing with these entities for resources.

**Status of BRT Studies**

Jamaica Arnold gave this presentation since Barry Kiedrowski was unable to attend. Al Roshdieh announced the MD97 study has been cancelled by the County Executive.

**MD 586 -** Ms. Arnold discussed the steps currently being taken by the State for the ridership models. The alternatives being modeled are the No Build, Alternative 2, and Alternative 5B. SHA is in the process of coming up with impacts for these alternatives.

Frank Spielberg – In BRT, reliability is more important than travel time, and reliability is not something shown in modeling. Ms. Arnold mentioned the option of bringing in a modeler to answer questions at a future meeting.

**MD355 –** Currently looking at ridership and Master Plan ridership projections. Also looking at existing right of ways to see impacts associated with Master Plan recommendations.

Celesta Jurkovich asked how long this stage of the study will take. Ms. Arnold said they would like to have this done by the start of summer in preparation for Public Workshops to be held in late May/early June.

**Update on RTS Corridor Advisory Committees**

The letters for the CACs have gone out to the nominees. The kick off meeting is February 21. Joana Conklin gave a presentation on the CACs. The process is largely complete. She gave some background on the corridors and how we got to this point. There were 254 self-nomination forms received, which is somewhat atypical for a county committee (i.e. larger than expected number, showing strong interest in the topic).

CAC Nomination Categories

* Civic organizations – 60
* Civic unaffiliated – 40
* Business, organization, institution – 43
* At Large - 111

There were 52 self-nominations CAC applications for MD97, which was cancelled. Several were reassigned to other corridors if they met the criteria as at large members.

Max # of direct stakeholders – 30

Max # at large – 10

Direct stakeholders must out number at large representative by a ratio of 3:1.

In the end approximately 150 members were selected to serve on the five committees.

Review of Selection Criteria

* Geographic proximity to the corridor
* Degree of impact from the RTS project
* Population represented
* Diversity
* Transit or road user within the corridor

Stats on each corridor

* MD355 North has 27 members – 20 direct and 7 at large – still room to add
* MD355 South has 42 members - 32 direct and 10 at large – this one is maxed out
* MD29 North has 16 members – 12 direct and 4 at large
* MD29 South has 40 members - 30 direct and 10 at large – this one is also maxed out
* MD586 has 19 members - 14 direct and 5 at large

Invitation letters went out the week of January 23. All selected nominees were requested confirmation they still wanted to participate and RSVP for the 21st.

CAC Kickoff – 2/21/15

8:30 am – Meet & Greet, light breakfast

9:00 am – Open Session – County Executive Leggett and Mr. Roshdieh speaking, as well as representatives from SHA and MTA. Keynote speaker is Cliff Henke (BRT Expert)

11:00 am – Individual CAC Meetings – ground rules, corridor presentations, logistics, Q&A

12:00 pm – lunch served back in cafeteria

Joana Conklin introduced Andrew Bing, who is the Lead Facilitator for the CACs.

The next CAC meetings will be in March. Each committee will settle on consistent day and time, location to be determined. The RTS web site will post information.

John Schlichting asked how many Gaithersburg residents are on the MD355 committees.

Joana Conklin said they are still recruiting – only 2 now

Andrew Gunning asked about getting a list of members. Tom Pogue said they could send that out.

Dan Wilhelm asked if nominees who were not selected to a committee were told they could still attend (public meetings). The answer was yes.

**Updates on Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) and Purple Line**

Al Roshdieh – March 9 deadline had not been postponed for RFPs.

Joana Conklin said Governor Hogan’s budget stays the course, still subject to review and evaluation.

CCT – 15% design plans submitted a couple of months ago. MTA is still reviewing and responding to comments. In the process of setting up bi-monthly meetings. Draft environmental document has been submitted, and will be available on the web site in the next week or two –including cost estimates.

Andrew Gunning asked if there is funding for construction. Joana Conklin said no funding was added for construction

**Planning Bus Rapid Transit for Montgomery College Community: A Presentation From Research for Montgomery College Honors Course Service Learning Project**

Kelly Blynn worked with students from Montgomery College (MC) on this project. MC is a major stakeholder for RTS: 3 campuses, no Metrorail, 60,000 students, 60% take transit.

The program that sponsored the project is an international relations class looking at suburban sprawl. Professor rides metro to Rockville and walks to the college due to reliability issues.

Germantown Students – travel between campuses is important, 48% travel to other campuses at least once a week. Car trip to Rockville campus takes 16 minutes, 55 minutes on the bus. Wi-Fi and real time arrival screens were the most popular amenities. Stations need bike racks. The BRT could detour onto campus only at certain hours or every other bus in order to speed service for non-campus commuters. Ride On is free, so they would stay on Ride On for free over paying for BRT. Most students would prefer BRT.

Germantown Employees - Looking for increased reliability - 91% drive today, but 71% said they would switch to transit if it was convenient and reliable. Important aspects were making it safe, and providing walking and biking connections to stations (students found there is currently poor access to bus stations).

Takoma Park Students – limit transfers where possible – over ½ have 1 to 2 transfers – a direct route between Silver Spring and Rockville on Viers Mill could be important. Wi-Fi, cheaper bus fare and more seats were most important amenities. Crowding is an issue – 61% said space is an issue on their commute. 78% surveyed said they were transit riders.

Takoma Park Employees – arrive and leave at rush hour. More frequency during these time periods is important. Cost is a good selling point – average weekly transportation cost for employees were $33.40 for drivers and $22.67 for transit. Amenities are important – real time arrival information and Wi-Fi.

Rockville Students – better service would increase ridership – 40% reported taking the bus currently; 61% said they would take BRT. Frequency matters – timing is biggest issue preventing them from taking the bus as many routes only come every 30 minutes. Students want to see direct routes as much as possible so they don’t have to worry about missing transfers.

Al Roshdieh thanked them for their presentation. He noted that he has asked Carolyn Biggins to make Wi-Fi on Ride On buses and a USB charger on Ride On so people can work. The County is currently working on a real time information system that connects Ride On, Metro, and Bikeshare.

Resident – if we add Wi-Fi and pricing, why bother with BRT. Al explained that Ride On and BRT serve two different purposes.

Jonathan Parker – since university campuses and students tend to ride buses, are there any students represented on the CACs? Joana Conklin doesn’t think we have any students – there are some younger people. There is one Montgomery College employee on the CAC.

Frank Spielberg – would a stop on 355 be considered serving the campus? Depends on the hour – during rush hour it would be more efficient, but during non-rush hour is would be better to come on campus. It’s not too bad of a walk to 355 from the campus.

**Meeting Calendar**

The next meeting is February 25, 2015 in the EOB Auditorium at 4:00 pm (the meeting was later cancelled).

Andrew Gunning mentioned they had a good inter-jurisdictional meeting in December, which served several purposes. He wants to do this in another six months. Joana Conklin mentioned that the City of Gaithersburg is doing a study and asked John Schlichting to talk about it. On January 9 the City of Gaithersburg issued an RFP for a study to see how well BRT would be accommodated with in the five miles of Gaithersburg. All responses are due in February.

Meeting ended at 5:31 pm