Meeting Summary
US 29 South Corridor Advisory Committee (CAC) Meeting #3
June 2, 2015, 6:30 p.m. – 8:45 p.m.
White Oak Community Center
1700 April Lane Silver Spring, MD

Attendees

CAC Members			
Louis Boezi	X	Karen Michels	X
Alan Bowser		Bernice Mireku-North	X
Marie-Michelle Bunch	X	Anita Morrison	
Ilhan Cagri	X	Brian Morrissey	X
Carmen Camacho		Michael Pfetsch	X
Barbara Ditzler	X	Shane Pollin	X
Sean Emerson	X	Mark Ranze	X
Karen Evans	X	Dan Reed	X
Roberta Faul-Zeitler	X	Michele Riley	
Joseph Fox	X	Herb Simmens	X
Sean Gabaree		Tina Slater	X
Melissa Goemann	X	Julie Statland	
Larry Goldberg	X	Brad Stewart	
Bradley Gude		Eugene Stohlman	
Avi Halpert	X	Chris Wilhelm	X
Kevin Harris (alternate Larry Dickter)	X	James Williamson	X
Linda Keenan	X	Teddy Wu	X
Rebecca Lentz-Fernandes	X	Lori Zeller	X
Tracy Lewis		James Zepp	X
Harold McDougall	X	Clifford Zinnes	X
Jeffrey McNeil (alt. Eileen Finnegan)	X		

Project Team	
Facilitator – Jennifer Kellar	**Facilitator Assistant –** Lauren Garrett
SHA Project Manager – Jamaica Arnold	**Consultant Engineer –** Josh Crunkleton
County Rapid Transit Services (RTS) Manager – Joana Conklin	**SHA Representative** – Joe Harrison
Lead Project Facilitator – Andrew Bing	**SHA Representative –** Barry Kiedrowski
Consultant Project Manager – Brian Lange	**Consultant Engineer –** Lindsey Ulizio
Consultant Engineer – Feng Liu	**Consultant Engineer –** Melanie Earnest
County Project Engineer – Rafael Olarte	

Public	
Jim Bunch	Geri Rosenberg
Dave Hetum	

Handouts

Handouts to add to CAC Members' study binders were distributed, which included the following:

- Meeting #2 Summary
- Meeting #3 Agenda
- Meeting #3 PowerPoint

Meeting materials will be posted on the project website: *www.montgomerycountymd.gov/rts.*

Introductions

Jennifer Kellar, the meeting facilitator, opened the meeting by providing an overview of the meeting materials being distributed and the agenda for the meeting.

Project Update

Study team members Barry Kiedrowski and Joana Conklin presented to the team a recap of how we are applying the Federal Highway Administration's Planning and Environment Linkages (PEL) approach will be used for the BRT study which considers the environmental, community, and economic goals early in the transportation planning process. The PEL will be used to guide any subsequent environmental review processes such as the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) or Maryland Environmental Policy Act (MEPA). For more information on PEL, visit: http://environment.fhwa.dot.gov/integ/index.asp.

The study team had been planning to host Public Informational Open House meetings in June. However, we determined that a better path forward would be to postpone the Informational Open House meetings until the fall in order to address a few project related issues and study details that will affect how the information is presented to the public. The study team will also use this additional time to work more closely with the CACs to get input from the members on project issues and concerns.

The study team updated the members on the status of the MD 650 (New Hampshire Avenue) BRT corridor study. On May 21, 2015, the Montgomery County Council approved an amendment to the Fiscal Year 2016 Capital Improvements Plan to include funding for a study of the MD 650 BRT corridor. Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) will be formally requesting that the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) initiate the study, and will request a scope of work, schedule, and budget for the study. The project scope will outline how the MD 650 study would interface with the US 29 planning study and the project team will share information on the status of the MD 650 study with CAC Members as it becomes available.

Project Update Questions/Comments and Responses

- A CAC member stated there are a lot of people on this committee that live on New Hampshire and they're not sure why the New Hampshire project couldn't be worked into this committee or have people from this committee support the New Hampshire committee. Is it necessary to establish a whole new committee for MD 650? It was

recommended by a CAC member there be three CAC groups, North, Central, and South with MD 650 being involved in the Central group.

- Question (Q): Has any thought been given to those concerns that were raised last time? What is the exact purpose of the CACs? Last time we had the feeling the agenda was closed and we were looking at only one option, the BRT. There were a lot of issues that came up during the last meeting and those have been left unresolved.
    - Response (R): Study Team members Barry Kiedrowski and Joana Conklin responded that we are using feedback from the CAC members to help the study develop the purpose and need and in looking at feasible and reasonable improvement concepts. It helps the study team utilize resources much better to involve the public earlier on in the process rather than waiting until the full NEPA or MEPA process is formally required. This CAC group supports decision-making along the way. As you hear our presentation tonight, we hope it will clarify issues and show how were addressing questions and concerns we've heard so far.
- Q: Can the project share what modeling information has been used?
    - R: Yes, this will be shared later in the presentation and additional information can be shared during later meetings focused on technical issues.
- A suggestion was made to provide an outline/comparison of the standard planning process compared to the PEL process that is being utilized.
    - R: Barry and Joana noted that is something the project team can provide and could potentially present during a later technical session for those interested.

Transit Ridership

Feng Liu, from the study team presented Existing and Future No-build transit data (No-Build refers to the assumption that no improvements would be made beyond those currently included in the statewide Fiscally Constrained Long Range Plan (CLRP), which means they have funding or are anticipated to be funded) in the context of both regional travel patterns and travel along the corridor. The study team is using the regional Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) model for this analysis.

The Existing and Future (2040) No-Build Regional Travel Demand covered included the following topics (more detail is provided in the presentation handouts posted online):

- Study Area Overview
- Traffic Analysis Zones
- TPB Traffic Analysis Zones
- Existing Transit Routes

Highlights from the presentation include a discussion on regional growth and activity centers, household and employment growth, and future trips within the study area, trips between the study area and the district, and trips through study area to the district.

The analysis shows evidence of a strong existing transit market in the corridor and output data that supports the County's growth visions and regional transit priorities for the future.

Transit Ridership Questions/Comments and Responses

- Members would like to receive more detailed information for the next meeting (technical session) to include a list of assumptions used, along with actual data utilized for the forecasts.
- Q: There is a prediction of 40% increase in Metrorail ridership throughout the study area, not the whole region. Those stations are not in the study area, but impact travel in the study area. Why the increase in ridership?
    - R: Study Team member Feng Liu responded that variables affect the forecast output, including population growth, congestion, travel time, and cost of travel, among others. The economic activities are a driving force in many cases. Congestion will continue to slow automobile travel which could lead to public transit having greater appeal to travelers.
- Q: Metrorail ridership has been declining in recent years, has that been taken into account?
    - R: There are many factors taken into account for that forecast, including current transit ridership volumes. We are using long-term forecasting which shows congestion getting worse over time. Sensitivity tests will be included as part of future analyses of the improvement scenarios to determine how they may function and how many riders we can anticipate using the service.
- There was a request for information regarding redevelopment efforts at the Burtonsville Park & Ride and how that could potentially impact the study.
- Q: Why is the Greencastle Road Park & Ride not being considered?
    - R: Greencastle Road Park & Ride was not included in the Master Plan list of potential stations. However, it may be considered in the future.
- Q: How will the project delineate the transit market areas? Why not show actual walk sheds instead of circular buffers?
    - R: The project will complete a multi-modal analysis during subsequent phases to evaluate and address access needs.
- A CAC member requested the information be broken down a little further, assuming the four-step model is used. It would be helpful to be provided the origin to destination (O-D) trip information to know who is going from one zone to another. There are a lot of trips to the Beltway so it would be good to know who would actually be using the BRT.
    - The project team noted this information could be provided at the subsequent technical meeting.
- Q: It was stated there will be a 40% increase in ridership and it is assumed to be attributed to an increase in development in the White Oak sector. Those numbers are based on commercial space allocated in the master plan but it is a mixed use of space that could be commercial or residential. Are there any other land use scenarios being included?
    - R: We do have proposed developments in White Oak included in the forecast presented, but we could potentially run another land use scenario at a later date. Because changes in land use are such and integral factor in the model assumptions, we would need County input to address any uncertainty on how the land use could change. For now we are using the available commercial space data.
- Q: How do the models incorporate climate change since we are talking about 2040?

- R: This is transportation model which doesn't actually take climate change into account at this time. During subsequent environmental studies, affects to Air Quality will be assessed and documented.

Traffic Operations

Study team members Melanie Earnest and Lindsey Ulizio presented a summary of the traffic analysis results for existing and 2040 No-build operations for the corridor. In general, the data show that conditions will get worse under the 2040 No-build scenario. There is evidence of a network-wide degradation in traffic operations.

The study team analyzed 53 intersections along the US 29 corridor. Anticipated increases in regional growth are expected to lead to increased congestion throughout the corridor. Average speeds in the corridor are forecasted to be reduced between 3% and 50% from 2015 to 2040. Crash data for the corridor shows approximately 1,088 crashes occurred between 2011 and 2013, including 24 pedestrian crashes and 3 fatalities. Under future No-build conditions, network-wide bus speeds are anticipated to decrease between 11% and 51%.

Traffic Operations Questions/Comments

- Q: For the design year 2040 is the forecast assuming people are mindlessly getting in their car even with bad traffic conditions. Why there is no behavioral response in any of this data?
  - R: Melanie and Lindsey responded that the data are meant to be used for comparison purposes, if nothing else changes, this is what traffic will look like. This does not take into account any improvements beyond what is currently included in the CLRP. In the future we will be reporting on what the models can look like with the improvements included.
- Q: What time of day did you consider peaks?
  - R: The morning peak is 8:00 to 9:00 a.m. and the evening peak is 5:00 to 6:00 p.m., however the simulation model fills the network with traffic volumes already active along the corridor prior to the peak hours.
- Q: What percentage of the trips is non-automobile traffic?
  - R: The model accounts for all vehicles.
- Q: Is one of the main congestion problems due to the I-495 Beltway? If the Beltway could accommodate more cars, it seems that things would open up more.
  - R: Yes, there is an extreme bottle neck in the area of the I-495 interchange and University Blvd., but congestion on US 29 is also attributed to high demands and constrained capacity along several other segments of the corridor. These other locations of congestion include, but are not limited to, Georgia Ave. to Sligo Creek Pkwy., the ramps at New Hampshire Ave., and from New Hampshire Ave. to Fairland Rd.
- Not enough people currently use the ICC. If the ICC was free, it could alleviate traffic on the Beltway (and could ultimately have a positive impact on US 29).
- Q: How is travel time being measured for buses originating from other corridors outside the study area?

  - R: We have included in the assumptions that buses will enter and exit at different points along the corridor, from MD 198 to the Silver Spring Transit Center. Not every bus is going to have the same increase or decrease in travel time. It depends entire on where along the corridor the buses are running. We are looking at the corridor as a whole; so the numbers presented represent a collective average of all buses in the network.
- A CAC member stated the No-build traffic data serves as a base comparison for future build conditions to measure changes.
- A CAC member stated the data shows increased crashes in the southern portion of the study area, and it should be mentioned these are also the areas of higher population with higher bicycle traffic and pedestrians.
- Q: Would it be possible to remove the traffic associated with Howard County to see how the LOS looks for Montgomery County traffic only?
  - R: We don't have those results at this time.
- SHA District 3 has conducted a pedestrian safety study for Silver Spring which includes some of the intersections that are important to BRT (such as Spring Street and Fenton Street).
  - Study team member Brian Lange responded that SHA is in the process of finalizing the pedestrian safety study, and will be coordinating the proposed improvements from that study with the findings of this BRT study. Additional details from the pedestrian safety study will be shared once it's been finalized.
- It appears that some of the highest volume of crashes occurs on US 29 and fall within the reversible lane segments. Road safety is a major concern, especially associated with the reversible lane system.
- Q: Will the 2040 build condition take into account the BRT planned for University Boulevard and New Hampshire Avenue?
  - R: For this study we will only be evaluating selected build conditions along US 29. Once detailed build conditions are established for University Boulevard and New Hampshire Avenue (as part of separate studies), we can then look at the overall network of BRT options and how they function together. We currently do not have the level of detail on proposed build conditions necessary to perform that level of network-wide analysis.

Draft Purpose and Need Language

At the previous CAC meeting we spent time discussing purpose and need and how we intend to use the information the members provided to the project team. The bulleted lists of proposed purpose and needs summarize the study team's compilation of elements derived from the CAC member input as well as those suggestions from our partnering agencies. As it is currently drafted, the purpose of this study is to provide a higher speed, higher frequency, and all day transit service along the US 29 corridor between the Silver Spring Transit Center and the Burtonsville Park & Ride.

The study team requests that the members please take some time over the next week or two to review these items and let us know your thoughts on this draft language. If we have missed anything or if there are items or themes we could improve upon, please let us know. A lot of the

language you see has been consistent with what you've provided to us through other meetings and reflects what the study team will be including in a draft document (the purpose and need document would be later finalized during subsequent NEPA/MEPA phase with regulatory agency concurrence).

Purpose and Need Questions/Comments

- Q: Will the 1998 CCT study that did not recommend BRT systems be taken into account?
  - A CAC member stated this recommendation was based on little or no support for BRT at that time. Another member stated that a lot has changed in the area since 1998, including community opinions about BRTs.
  - Brian responded that the study team will make efforts to locate, confirm, and document the 1998 CCT findings; however, this study will re-evaluate the potential of BRT using the most recent data and evaluation metrics.
- Q: What does all day transit mean? Would it continue until the first and last Metro train?
  - R: Current local and existing transit systems would function similar to the way they do today. We do need to look at service operation issues and identify exactly how the BRT would function. We need to understand travel times and ridership demands so that we can address scheduling. All day means not just rush hour, but does not necessarily mean a full 24 hour service, either. The BRT system is likely to run from morning into the evening, but scheduling of service will not be identified until later phases of study can be completed.
- There was concern expressed about the livability piece of the "need" statement. Members noted that more specifics regarding safety enhancements and the avoidance and minimization of impacts to properties and environmental resources could be added to this section of needs statement.
  - Brian stated issues such as residential and commercial property impacts, environmental impacts, roadway widening and pedestrian safety will be taken into account. In addition, proposed measures of effectiveness directly related to "livability" of communities will be presented at a future meeting.
- Q: Is it possible to improve transit within the existing curb-to-curb footprint?
  - R: The study team will be looking at options that operate within the existing roadway footprint.
- The problem with the purpose statement is that it is not a purpose and need statement. A purpose and need statement should contain three components; the current status (why it is or isn't good), indicate the problem and outcome for future success, and establishment of metrics.
- The needs statement should account for the different types of transit users, such those who use transit to commute long distances for work, and those who travel shorter trips between communities and retail/recreational areas. Access from communities to stations and the distances required to travel (i.e., "last mile") must be factored in to improvements.

The study team acknowledges that there is more work to do on the draft purpose and need language and we will work to improve this with your feedback.

BRT Running Way Options

Six BRT Running Way options have been identified by the study team for preliminary consideration. The proposed options can be mixed and matched along different segments of the corridor to best fit within the surrounding area and needs of the transportation system. The location and dimensions of the proposed options and their related roadway elements will vary throughout the corridor and will be determined as part of additional engineering analyses. **The study team emphasized that not every option is appropriate for implementation in every segment of the US 29 BRT corridor**. The Running Way Options include:

- Option 1 – BRT in Mixed Traffic (enhancing existing services or adding limited stop service)
- Option 2 – BRT Queue Jump Lanes (bus only lane at intersections to bypass traffic)
- Option 3 – One-Way, Reversible, Dedicated BRT Lane (adding one additional lane)
    - Type A: Additional lane is incorporated to accommodate the dedicated BRT lane
    - Type B: Existing travel lane is repurposed to accommodate the dedicated BRT lane
- Option 4 – Bi-Directional, Dedicated BRT Lane (dedicated BRT lane, with buses sharing a single lane through a constrained segment using coordinated signals to safely pass; transitions, signal coordination, and passing areas are very important with this option)
    - Type A: Additional lane is incorporated to accommodate the dedicated BRT lane
    - Type B: Existing travel lane is repurposed to accommodate the dedicated BRT lane
- Option 5 – Dedicated BRT Median Lanes (most traditional BRT system, would add additional lanes into the median area; challenge here is putting stations in the median, having pedestrians crossing in the median)
    - Type A: Additional lanes are incorporated to accommodate the dedicated BRT lanes
    - Type B: Existing travel lanes are repurposed to accommodate the dedicated BRT lanes
- Option 6 – Dedicated BRT Curb Lanes
    - Type A: Additional lanes are incorporated to accommodate the dedicated BRT lanes
    - Type B: Existing travel lanes are repurposed to accommodate the dedicated BRT lanes

Options 1 and 2 are less impactful, providing benefit but not as many physical changes to the infrastructure. Options 3-6 are much more complex systems that will need more detailed study to understand operations, transition, and potential effects as the study progresses.

BRT Running Way Questions/Comments

- Q: It appears that for Options 1-6, beyond mixing traffic it will involve something like widening lanes. US 29 South is quite narrow. How will anything other than Option 1 fit on US 29? It doesn't seem there is enough room for it without taking property.
    - R: We are only introducing the different options here and we understand there are constraints on US 29. No decisions have been made on what is the right fit for the various segments of the corridor. In addition, each of the options 3 through 6 have a variation that can be introduced within the existing curb-to-curb footprint, either

through lane repurposing or mixed traffic (it does not account for stations built outside of the curb, however).

- Q: Does Option 3A assume that northbound traffic would be mixed and southbound traffic would get the benefit?
    - R: Yes, for the a.m. peak travel condition. In the evening the dedicated lane would be reversed and northbound traffic would get the benefit and southbound would be mixed.
- There is concern regarding any potential improvements meeting current SHA standards outside of the roadway, such as bike paths, sidewalks, etc. These elements pose potential additional impacts to properties.
    - Brian responded that SHA will evaluate the multi-modal elements during the design phase to look for opportunities to integrate shared bike lanes, paths, and sidewalks. Property impacts will play a significant role in that evaluation and when appropriate, design exceptions can be requested to modify how and where those elements are included.
- Q: If BRT is proposed in the middle of the road, how will it be accessed? There are significant safety concerns with pedestrians (especially children/young adults) crossing the road.
    - R: There would be median stations, with signal studies conducted to ensure there is enough time provided to pedestrians of all ages and abilities to safely cross.
- Q: Where will passing zones be located for the bi-directional system?
    - R: We would look to have those near intersections where there are already turn lanes with wider medians. Passing zones will typically be provided approximately every 3 blocks or half mile, as needed, based on bus frequency and opportunities for passing areas.
- Q: Would local service buses be able to access the BRT only lanes?
    - R: In this situation, most of the local services would still need to access curbside stops so there may be short segments where they could utilize BRT lanes. We don't want local service to slow down the BRT system. School buses using BRT lance can also be looked at as the study progresses.
- Option 3B (repurposed one-way reversible BRT lane) was studied for the White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan in 2014, which resulted in a travel time decline of service for general traffic due to the removal of a general purpose lane. Travel times for vehicles would be increased because the network would get congested.
    - The project team responded that traffic engineers will look at that and consider that data and all congestion levels moving forward for repurposing options.
- Members expressed interest in wanting to see the existing roadway widths and widths of the potential options.
- Some of the options that were presented could involve adding lanes and lane repurposing as we go forward. I would like to see each of these options looked at with both alternatives presented.
    - This study team will attempt to look at conceptual option combinations as part of the evaluation process.
- Impacts of the BRT improvements could introduce left turn restrictions which may cause a significant impact on traffic operations.

Logistics

Based on feedback received from the CAC members, there will be another CAC meeting scheduled in the next several months as an opportunity to dive deeper into technical aspects of the topics covered during this meeting. Once the meeting date has been determined, the facilitator will provide the date, location, and materials in advance of the meeting.

Next Steps

Jennifer will communicate with the group via email with the next meeting date once it has been determined.

Following review by the internal project team, the meeting summary will be circulated to the members for feedback before being finalized and posted online.

Meeting Summary Attachments: CAC Member Feedback on Purpose and Need Language

The purpose of this study is for residents, planners, and local businesses to together determine the transportation needs within the Route 29 corridor and to identify a suite of actions that will:

- Provide efficient, accessible, effective, and economical transit for Route 29 communities now and into the future;
- Enhance transit connectivity along the corridor and within the regional system;
- Strengthen existing Route 29 communities and local small businesses;
- Create measurable environmental improvements in air quality, water quality, tree canopy, carbon footprint, energy efficiency, tree canopy, heat island, and local stream valley ecosystems;
- Manage traffic demand to reduce congestion and avoid induced traffic; and
- Measurably enhance walkability and pedestrian safety.

Route 29 South CAC Meeting 2 June 2015

These are my comments on tonight's presentation:

1) P31 – "purpose of this study" The study doesn't need a purpose, the purpose is for the project.
2) P31 – "Improve the transit ability ~~for buses to move~~ along the corridor ~~(bus mobility)~~ with improved operational efficiency and travel times
3) P31 – "Address current and future ~~bus~~ ridership demands
4) P31 – "~~Look for opportunities to provide~~ Identify requirements to provide safe multi-modal access to a transit solution
5) P31 – "Continue previous Montgomery County studies which recommend Bus Rapid Transit along US 29" Not all previous studies recommended that a BRT solution proceed. The Route 29 CCT identified serious issues with implementation of a BRT solution south of Route 650 that the County DOT would not agree to mitigate. Therefore, the CCT declined to support the proposal, which has not been improved in 17 years.
6) P31 – In general, this Project Purpose and Need Statement content is inadequate. A Purpose and Needs Statement should include (1) a description of the inadequacies of the existing transit capability, (2) a description of the capabilities necessary for the project to be considered a success, and (3) characterization of the metrics to be included in the evaluation of project success. This characterization of candidate metrics will include, but not be limited to, measures of transit capability. In addition, measures of adverse impact, such as environmental impacts, impacts on historical sites and any other adverse community impacts, will also be identified now and formally measured during the development of the NEPA artifact in later stages. This statement has none of those.

For CAC Discussion

Traffic Metrics mentioned during Council Session April 28 2015

- Travel time on links
- Intersection delay
- Critical lane volume
- Congestion Threshold

Outcomes (Carol Barth)

- Provide efficient, accessible, effective, and economical transit for Route 29 communities now and into the future;
- Enhance transit connectivity along the corridor and within the regional system;
- Strengthen existing Route 29 communities and local small businesses;
- Create measurable environmental improvements in air quality, water quality, tree canopy, carbon footprint, energy efficiency, tree canopy, heat island, and local stream valley ecosystems;

- Manage traffic demand to reduce congestion and avoid induced traffic; and
- Measurably enhance walkability and pedestrian safety

7) P34 – As recognized, some of the BRT options are not appropriate for certain segments of the corridor. Specifically, the higher throughput versions of the BRT are not appropriate for segments south of Route 650, which may then present a queuing of backed-up BRT, regular buses and cars, such that the entire project cannot meet its performance requirements without community disruption. Therefore, the CAC should insist that evaluation of BRT options must include queue modeling in the solution engineering phase.

Mike Pfetsch
Woodmoor-Pinecrest Citizens Association,
Four Corners