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

 **May 27, 2014 4:00 – 6:00 pm**

**Voting Members In-Attendance**Arthur Holmes, Jr.; Joe Beach; Andrew Gunning; David Hauck; Dan Wilhelm; Mark Winston.

**Non-Voting Members**Sean Egan; Gary Erenrich; Brady Goldsmith; Edgar Gonzalez; Dan Hibbert; Stacy Leach; Greg Ossont; Jonathan Parker; Frank Spielberg; Tom Street.

**Other Attendees**Nancy Abeles; Jay Carbalis; Celesta Jurkovich; Richard Levine; Thomas Pogue; Paul Seder; Ana van Balen.

**Introductions and Welcome**

Director Holmes called the meeting to order at 4:01 pm. Director Holmes announced that the work is continuing on the MOU for US 29 and MD 355 RTS studies. MDOT will do concept studies on these corridors based on the understanding between the agencies.

**Approval of Minutes for March 25, 2014.**

The minutes were approved with one change – adding Dan Wilhelm as having attended.

**Bus Demonstration Work Group Report**

David Hauck is working on obtaining an RTS bus for the Montgomery County Agricultural Fair. The type of vehicle is important to illustrate the desirable features that are different from a standard transit bus. David Hauck is working with Montgomery County Department of General Services to obtain an RTS vehicle to show at the Fair. To date, he did not have any commitments for the vehicle and will continue working with the County to obtain one.Some options mentioned included:

* Metroway BRT (in Virginia – won’t be marked, it’s a regular Metro bus with a new paint scheme).
* North American (NABI) for Fort Collins, CO. This depends on the production schedule and an agreement with Ft. Collins.
* Cleveland (OH) Vehicle – Cleveland designed the buses for their use. Mr. Hauck is interested in this option. Cleveland gets a percentage fee from each of the buses sold since it is their design development.
* Take a current bus, and wrap it to look like an RTS bus – but this might be expensive.

The NABI Ft. Collins and the Cleveland buses look different from current buses. Mr. Hauck will continue working with Bill Griffiths and Gary Erenrich. Mr. Hauk also spoke to Rick Kiegel about sharing the staffing for the exhibits since MTA typically has an exhibit at the Fair.

Tom Street – re: Cleveland versus Ft. Collins – important to use a bus that looks most like what the County is looking at. Does Cleveland look similar enough to show?
Mr. Wilhelm – Have not seen a Ft. Collins bus. Most people have never seen a BRT bus – it would be good for them to get to touch one.
Mark Winston – Cleveland looks like a Metro bus – not quite the look we desire for the Fair..
Mr. Street – Wants something that looks totally different – like the vehicle used in Las Vegas..

David Hauck mentioned that the Communities for Transit has been making RTS presentations around the county and that there is excitement building about the new buses – only had two negative people out of 300-400 attending their presentations. .

**Service Planning and Integration Work Group Update**

Dan Wilhelm and Gary Erenrich updated the status of the study. Mr. Wilhelm had just received the final study document.. A pdf of the file will be posted on the web site as soon as it is available. Mr. Wilhelm said they will be able to discuss the results in a few weeks and will get a few more copies of the report.

**Georgia Avenue BRT Studies**

David Hauck, Gary Erenrich, and Ana van Balen, Wheaton Regional Services Center Director, attended the Open House on May 14th. Rick Kiegel was not able to attend today’s meeting, so John Thomas, MCDOT, and Gary Erenrich gave the presentation to the Steering Committee, after Mr. Erenrich introduce Mr. Thomas. The presentation can be found on the RTS web site. There was some reaction to the alternatives presented at the Open House. The next step is to study travel demands using travel forecasting models. A follow on task will be to identify alternatives to be retained for detailed study. This will be accomplished after the citizen advisory committees are formed.

The study originally stopped at Glenmont, but it was decided early on to extend to the Wheaton Metro. The state presented 5 potential alternatives:

* No Build
* Transportation System Management (TSM)
* Business Access Transit (BAT) – if the County does this, they will need to add an amendment to the MasterPlan. If the State does it, there is no need for an amendment.
* New One-Lane Reversible BRT
* New Two-Way, Two-Lane BRT

At this time, the project is only funded by the County for the studies. No funding is available to proceed into engineering at this time.

Several questions came up during the presentation.

Edgar Gonzalez – Is there a need to change the median?
John Thomas didn’t have the answer, and Gary Erenrich said they need to get an answer.

Tom Pogue – Are the stations in the center?
John Thomas – That varies, based on the conditions.

David Hauck – Would the stations in Alternative 5 be on the right hand side?
Gary Erenrich – Believes that is up for discussion.

Mr. Gonzalez – Do we know the current right-of-ways?
Mr. Thomas – It varies by area.

Dan Wilhelm – Since there are no federal funds involved, can some steps be removed?
Mr. Thomas – That’s a complicated question. If you remove the federal procedures, you take the risk of not being able to apply for federal funding at a later date.
Mr. Erenrich – I asked this question of MDOT, and am still waited for an answer regarding the amount of time and money that would be saved.

Mark Winston – Look critically at this question. He believed the likeliness of getting federal funding is slight, so the risk might not be that great. We need to be realistic about federal funds – the risk factors are very small. It doesn’t mean we should ignore the environmental questions, but it seems unwise to drag the process out.

Joe Beach indicated that he wouldn’t give up all hope for federal funding. In another year we should have a better idea about the federal funding opportunities.

USDOT studied 6 cities for BRT. They found in non-rush hour there needed to be a drastic cut to service and the buses were still mostly empty. One idea was having a dedicated lane running during rush hour, but shut down during the non-rush hour times. The MasterPlan only looks at rush hour so that non-peak period operating scenarios have not been addressed.

Mr. Thomas – Feels US355 and MD29 might be the most competitive for federal funding.

Mr. Hauck – Regarding the Alternative Options Workshop – he has concerns about taking a generic line and dropping it on Georgia Avenue. What about the properties currently there – all the lanes are getting wider. If one was to have realistic studies, impacts might drop.
The group agrees this is a worst case scenario. According to Mr. Wilhelm, you never build the worst case scenario.

Tom Street – If these are not real options, then why go through all this?
Mr. Wilhelm - When you lay out an alternative, why not make it more realistic?
Mr. Thomas – They do it this way to show you looked at other alternatives.
Mr. Gonzalez – We need to remember these are not our roads, they are state roads. If we don’t follow federal guidelines, then you need to follow state ones. Bike lanes are added because of state laws, which will widen the road.
Mr. Erenrich – We need to look at how we present the alternatives and how involved we need to be on these.
Mr. Holmes – We need to look at how project information is released and and what we say. We have to be cognizant of potential reactions to the information.

**Citizen Advisory Group Plan**

Mr. Holmes mentioned a letter from a Citizen Group about the Citizen Advisory Group. This letter was deferred until a later discussion since Mr. Holmes has not had a chance to review the information.

Tom Pogue led the discussion about the Citizen Advisory Group Plan. There are 6 Advisory Groups – US29 and MD355 each have two groups, MD97 and Viers Mill have one group. The number of advisory groups may change based upon further discussion.

We have gone forward with the initial process:

* moved ahead with the request from community leaders
* working on the self-nomination form

Mr. Wilhelm – What is your plan for reviewing the MOU by the Steering Committee?
Mr. Holmes – Right now it is a discussion between his department and State. Once we get to a certain point, he will bring it to the Steering Committee.
Mr. Wilhelm – Before or after it’s entered into fact?
Mr. Holmes –We haven’t gottenfar enough along in developing the process to offer a definitive statement at this point. The topic will be brought back to the Steering Committee at its next meeting.

**Meeting Calendar**

The next meeting is July 29, 2014 in the EOB Auditorium at 4:00 pm.