**Meeting Summary**
**US 29 South Corridor Advisory Committee (CAC) Meeting #9**
**January 31, 2017, 6:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.**
**Silver Spring Civic Building**
**1 Veterans Place, Silver Spring, MD 20910**

## Attendees

| CAC Members ('X' for attendees, blank for apologies) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Louis Boezi | X | Jeffrey McNeil | |
| Alan Bowser | X | Karen Michels | X |
| Marie-Michelle Bunch | | Anita Morrison | X |
| Ilhan Cagri | | Brian Morrissey | |
| Barbara Ditzler | X | DeAndre Morrow | X |
| Sean Emerson | | Michael Pfetsch | X |
| Karen Evans | X | Mark Ranze | X |
| Roberta Faul-Zeitler | X | Dan Reed | X |
| Dan Figueroa | | Michele Riley | |
| Joseph Fox | | Herb Simmens | X |
| Sean Gabaree | | Tina Slater | X |
| Melissa Goemann | X | Brad Stewart | |
| Larry Goldberg | X | Eugene Stohlman | |
| Avi Halpert (alternate Nat Bottigheimer) | X | Mel Tull | X |
| Kevin Harris | X | James Williamson | X |
| Sean Heitkemper | | Teddy Wu | |
| Linda Keenan | X | Lori Zeller | X |
| Tom Lansworth | | James Zepp (alternate Harriet Quinn) | X |
| Tracy Lewis | X | Clifford Zinnes | |

| Study Team | |
|---|---|
| **Meeting Facilitator –** Jen Kellar | **Lead Project Facilitator** – Andrew Bing |
| **MTA Program Manager** – Jackie Seneschal | **MCDOT Rapid Transit System (RTS) Manager** – Joana Conklin |
| **MTA Corridor Manager – Tamika Gauvin** | **MCDOT Team Member** – Darcy Buckley |
| **Consultant Engineer –** Brian Lange | **MCDOT Team Member** – Rafael Olarte |
| **Consultant Engineer** – Angela Jones | **MCDOT Consultant** – Rick Kiegel |
| **Consultant Engineer –** Melanie Earnest | **M-NCPPC –** Gerald Cichy |
| **Facilitator Assistant –** Lauren Michelotti | **M-NCPPC –** Stephen Aldrich |
| **SHA BRT Coordinator –** Carole Delion | **WMATA** – Jamaica Arnold |
| **SHA BRT Coordinator – Laura Barcena** | |

| Public | |
|---|---|
| Jerry Garson – Montgomery County Civic Federation | David Cookson – Howard County Office of Transportation |
| Brian Feit – Self | Aaron Kraut – Legislative Aid, Councilmember Roger Berliner |
| Brian Anker – Montgomery County | Dale Tibbitts – Councilmember Marc Elrich |
| A. Doehner – Self | Jay Gluove – Self |
| Daniel Lovas – UHB / Resident | Councilmember Tom Hucker |

## Handouts

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

- Meeting #9 Agenda
- Meeting #9 PowerPoint Presentation
- Meeting #8 Meeting Summary
- CAC Binder Tabs (Meetings 8 through 11)

Meeting materials, including a video recording of the meeting, will be posted on the County's BRT website: *www.montgomerycountymd.gov/brt* .

## Introductions

Jennifer Kellar, the meeting facilitator, opened with a review of the meeting agenda and an overview of the materials distributed. Jennifer noted that there would be a question and answer period following each segment of the presentation.

MTA Program Manager Jackie Seneschal discussed the transition of the project from the State to the County. Jackie noted that MTA would be completing its study of the BRT design alternatives, which is based upon the analysis timeframe of meeting service demand needs for 2040. All study findings are documented in the Draft Corridor Study Report, available for review and comment through February 27th.

## 2040 Traffic Analysis and Cost Results

Brian reviewed Alternative A and Alternative B, which have been presented to CAC members previously. Brian also presented Alternative B Modified, the new alternative analyzed by the study team. This new alternative serves as a hybrid of Alternative A and Alternative B. Specifically, Alternative B Modified includes dedicated median shoulder BRT lanes in the northern section, peak direction curbside managed lanes in the southern section, and intermittent segments of mixed traffic lanes throughout the central and southern sections

**CAC Member Question:** Member asked whether there are different peak service routes to serve different spurs of the corridor.

- **Study Team Response:** The project's proposed alternatives each have two peak service routes that serve different spurs of the corridor. There is also an off peak service route. (These routes were reviewed by Brian.)

**Question:** Member asked whether there would be managed intersections.

- **Response:** The study team considered applying Transit Signal Priority (TSP) at certain intersections. We will discuss that later on in this presentation. TSP gives buses an operational boost at intersections by extending green times or giving priority green phases.

**Question:** Member noted that all three alternatives are anchored at the Silver Spring Transit Center and expressed concern about where and how BRT will enter and exit the Transit Center.

- **Response:** Our assumption at this point is that BRT would use the base level for entry and exit.

Brian reviewed 2040 projections for total daily boardings and travel demand for the proposed BRT alternatives, noting total daily transit boardings are projected to increase between 18 percent and 22 percent over No-Build conditions. Brian also noted that vehicle miles traveled are reduced and person miles traveled are increased with all three alternatives. In addition, the HOV conditions proposed as part of Alternatives B and B Modified are expected to increase HOV volumes by 60 percent or more during peak hours.

**Question:** Member asked how the study team was able to create projections for 2040.

- **Response:** Our engineers used the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) regional travel demand model and took into account a large range of inputs, including anticipated developments and related population and employment growth to forecast future travel demand and anticipate traffic operational patterns.

**Question:** Member said it would be helpful to know what current daily boardings are, what Transportation Systems Management (TSM) boardings would be, and any projections the County can provide if they have another proposed alternative.

- **Response:** Existing transit service ridership numbers are provided in the Draft Corridor Study Report (at this time, there are approximately 11,000 daily riders using a combination of MTA commuter, Metrobus, and Ride On services). The MTA team cannot speak on behalf of the County or their projections for the proposed 2020 improvements.

**Question:** Member asked if there's also a decrease in Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) under the No-Build Alternative.

- **Response:** Overall, the VMT is expected to increase by up to 13 percent by 2040 under No Build conditions. All the alternatives, as compared to the 2040 No Build conditions, would decrease the total daily automobile VMT.

**Question:** Member asked if self-driving vehicles were taken into account.

- **Response:** The study team doesn't have a model that incorporates self-driving vehicles. Currently, there isn't any research or data for us to generate that information.

**Question:** Member asked how the year 2040 is determined as the target year.

- **Response:** We look as far into the future as we feel reasonable for project completion. A 25 year horizon is the typical timeframe we would use for a study of this nature.
- **CAC Member Comment:** The Transportation Planning Board typically projects data from a 6 year horizon through a 25 year horizon. As a project progresses, they compare and evaluate their projections against their progress.

Brian reviewed the projected AM peak hour corridor travel times for vehicles traveling southbound between 8:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. He pointed out "weighted person travel time" shows the combined average of all vehicle types utilizing the corridor.

**Question:** Member asked about the local bus operational projections for Alternative A.

- **Response:** We see a significant increase for local buses in Alternative A because they won't be using the dedicated lanes in the north and because they stop more frequently and have longer dwell times. We also anticipate that the local buses will be negatively affected by the anticipated increases in automobile traffic congestion along the corridor.

**Question:** Member asked how many more months it would take to run the State's models for the additional operational improvement studies (intersection, TSP, managed lane, etc.), and to fully understand them.

- **Response:** We would anticipate at least another year to complete all of the additional studies.

**Question:** Member asked if travel times are end to end.

- **Response:** Yes, for the AM and PM peak hour route from Silver Spring Transit Center to Burtonsville Park and Ride.

**Question:** Member expressed concerns about where exactly the study team has considered constructing additional lanes.

- **Response:** We have considered some areas in the northern section, particularly for the Alternative A and Alternative B Modified median shoulder BRT lanes, but nothing has been decided.

**Question:** Member asked if travel times factored in the difference between individuals' walking distance from a local bus stop to a BRT bus stop.

- **Response:** Those travel times, from local stop to BRT stop, will be dependent on the individual. We didn't make assumptions for the additional time it would take all people within a given area to walk, rideshare, and bicycle, etc. between destinations. That said, to the extent practical, the locations of our stops have been selected to support the ease of transfers from local bus services to BRT. What we do know is that the Alternative B and Alternative B Modified BRT service does appear to have a slightly faster travel time between selected data points along the corridor, as compared to the No Build conditions.

Brian then reviewed the projected PM peak hour corridor travel times for vehicles traveling northbound between 5:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. The study team found that Alternatives B and B Modified allow for the shortest weighted person travel times as compared to the No-Build and Alternative A.

Brian reviewed the projected AM peak hour person throughput at the selected locations the study team sampled along the corridor. He noted each grouping of bar charts represents a snapshot of roughly how many people are traveling southbound through the given point between 8:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m.

**Question:** If lanes are mixed use, how can any option go any faster through an area with mixed traffic lanes, than any other option, if they're all sharing the same lanes?

- **Response:** This is a system-wide analysis, so any traffic effects happening in the south will spread through the north and change travel times and vice-versa. Some alternatives

operate better than others in certain locations and those travel time savings spread throughout the system, in effect, making up for any delays within the mixed traffic segments.

**Question:** It would be helpful to understand where we would be seeing time savings.

- **Response:** The available project documentation provides a detailed breakdown of travel time and person throughput by segments and intersections for each of the alternatives and for No Build.

Brian then reviewed the projected PM peak hour person throughput at the selected locations the study team sampled along the corridor. He noted each grouping of bar charts represents a snapshot of roughly how many people are traveling northbound through the given point between 5:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

**Question:** Member asked to what extent the study team took future projections of flexible and remote work schedules into account.

- **Response:** Somewhat – it depends on what the major employers report their plans are and how many people they anticipate using the variable work options. These expectations in employment activity are typically included in the regional travel demand model calculations.

Brian reviewed traffic performance. Overall, traffic analysis indicates improved transit travel time and person throughput. However, there are some impacts to car and truck traffic operations that result from proposed peak period lane repurposing.

Brian then reviewed the estimated project costs. He explained right-of-way expenses reflect the right-of-way acquisitions required for new pavement, shoulder reconstruction, stations, and storm water management facilities. Bus procurement expenses reflect the total for the number of buses the study team anticipates purchasing. As the proposed project is still in the beginning stages of design, it's hard to narrow down construction costs. A lot of variables would affect the construction needs and corresponding costs which is why each element has a large potential range for cost.

**Question:** Member expressed concern that annual operating costs seem low and asked what's included in this cost.

- **Response:** Operating costs are comprised of system management, staffing, training, and facility and bus maintenance costs, among other things. The full list of operational costs is addressed in the Draft Corridor Study Report.

**Question:** Member asked if costs would be more defined if the proposed project were to move into the engineering stage.

- **Response:** Yes.

**Question:** Member asked what is included in construction costs.

- **Response:** The construction costs cover everything that has to do with the roadway and stations, such as: the cost of reconstructing shoulders, paving materials, excavation, drainage, signage, mobilization, laying out and constructing stations, maintenance of traffic, and engineering. This information is summarized in the Draft Corridor Study Report.

**Question:** Member asked how much has been spent on planning to date.

- **Response:** We would have to confirm with the management team.

**Question:** Member asked what the parameters are of Return on Investment in the proposed project.

- **Response:** There are none that we can specifically speak to at this time. Once a system like this is implemented and operational, the service provider will track and evaluate specific performance metrics. These metrics may provide some indication on return on investment.

**MCDOT 2020 Project**

MCDOT Rapid Transit System Manager Joana Conklin introduced Rick Kiegel, who will be working on behalf of the County as the US 29 BRT project manager. He will be overseeing the technical and engineering aspects of the project as it moves into the design phase. Joana then reviewed background information for the County's proposed project and current estimates for potential 2020 infrastructure improvement costs.

Moving forward, the State/MDOT will continue to welcome comments from the CAC members through February 27th, and will update their report as necessary. MDOT will finalize the Corridor Study Report, and the County/MCDOT will advance a shorter-term project into the design phase. The CAC will therefore have a new facilitation team since continuation of the project will be managed by the County going forward.

MCDOT will hold a project introduction open house for its short-term transit improvements on March 7 at the Civic Center in Silver Spring and another on March 15 at the White Oak Community Center. [Note: a third open house was subsequently scheduled after this meeting. It will be on March 13 at the Montgomery Blair High School in the Four Corners vicinity.] Rick Kiegel confirmed the same information will be shared at both [all three] open house meetings, so CAC members will only need to attend one. He also explained that since the County is moving into preliminary design, future CAC meetings will be more focused on design.

Joana Conklin reviewed the project schedule and noted the proposed project is expected to begin operation in late 2019 or early 2020. She stressed that although the State's study is coming to an end, the County will benefit greatly from the studies completed thus far, and from the feedback and participation of the CAC. She encouraged everyone to continue to stay involved.

**Question:** Member asked when the County expects to finalize station locations.

- **Response:** We expect to have them more pinned down in the next three months and anticipate it being one of the first things we cover with the CAC.

**Question:** Member expressed thanks to Joana and the study team. Member expressed concern regarding Return on Investment, lack of TSM research, and lack of data for the alternatives the State is proposing. Member would like for the study team to look at BRT options on MD355 (New Hampshire Ave), and feels that what the County is proposing is not truly BRT.

- **Response:** What the County proposed does have many elements of a BRT (enhanced buses, limited stop service, off-board fare collection, level boarding, etc.). Ridership data estimates will be available at the County's open houses in March. The study team does not plan to look into the Metro Extra study as a TSM option – it is a service that can only be implemented by WMATA and is not an option the County is pursuing at this time.

**Question:** Member asked about operations costs for the County project.

- **Response:** The County is working on those numbers in more detail now and doesn't expect operations costs to be more than what the State has estimated.

**Question:** Member requested the image of an example BRT station in New York on page two of the report be modified or changed so that it's more representative of what the ultimate station will look like in the county. Member expressed concern about the use of curb station bump-outs.

- **Response:** The study team will look into changing that image. Curb station bump-outs are not currently being considered as a design element to be incorporated along US 29.

**Question:** Member expressed concern regarding safety in the corridor. Member also expressed concern that given the time and location, the public open houses will be hard to get to and suggested using local high schools.

- **Response:** The County will take this into account. [Note a third open house has been subsequently scheduled, this one at Blair High School on March 13th, as referenced in another editor's note above.]

**Question:** Member expressed concern that the County is moving forward with something else before the State's report is fully completed. Member feels the process is being rushed.

- **Response:** The County is not changing course, as all of the elements of the County's project were included in the State's study. County staff is following the direction given last spring by the County Executive, which included a timeframe for operations.

**Question:** Member expressed concern regarding station placement and requested to know where they will be and if any land will need to be taken.

- **Response:** We intend to stay within the existing right-of-way as much as possible. Since design is an 18-month process, we cannot provide that information at this time because we don't yet have it. However, the station locations included in MDOT's corridor study are being used as the basis for the County's BRT implementation.

**Question:** Member asked what the County would do regarding level floor boarding in the event a BRT stop impacts a local stop.

- **Response:** We anticipate our stations will be used solely by BRT. If our station impacts a local stop, we would anticipate the local stop would be shifted.

**Question:** Member expressed concern regarding environmental responsibility in terms of bus fuel.

- **Response:** We haven't decided what the fuel source is going to be, but we want this to be an environmentally friendly service.

**Question:** Member questioned if Howard County would aid in financing the proposed project.

- **Response:** Those negotiations would happen down the road if they were necessary. We haven't gotten to that level of detail yet, but are coordinating regularly with Howard County staff. [Note: the county executives of Montgomery and Howards counties held a joint press event on February 23rd in which they discussed the importance of BRT on US 29 serving both jurisdictions.]

## Wrap-up

The facilitator asked members to proceed to the one-on-one question and answer portion. Jennifer encouraged everyone to use this opportunity to interact with the study team and ask any questions they may have.