

US 29 Corridor Advisory Committee Program Plan

Introduction

The Corridor Advisory Committees (CACs) play a unique and important role in the overall public engagement process for the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Corridor studies in Montgomery County. Since February 2015, the CACs have met regularly with the BRT project teams to review information, ask questions, and provide feedback on the development of each of the three initial BRT corridors, as recommended by the Montgomery County Council (US 29, MD 355, MD 586). As of March 2017, a total of 45 meetings had been held with the CACs, 19 of which were on the US 29 corridor.

The US 29 CACs are divided into two segments: the US 29 North Committee and the US 29 South Committee, with New Hampshire Avenue as the dividing line. In February 2017, US 29 BRT project leadership, including CAC facilitation, transitioned from the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) to the Montgomery County's Department of Transportation (MCDOT). MCDOT will lead the project through design and implementation. Under the new oversight of Montgomery County, expanded programming will take place to integrate the public into the outreach process in a meaningful and engaging manner. This includes the introduction of this newly developed program plan for the US 29 CACs, and a high level of inclusion of the CAC members into the project design and the public outreach process.

Corridor Advisory Committee and Project Team Expectations

The CACs are advisory committees, and not decision-making groups. However, the CACs do serve as a major component of the overall public outreach process for the BRT corridor studies. This is an important and valuable role for representing the public as part of the BRT planning process, and feedback received at CAC meetings is taken seriously in developing program recommendations and understanding concerns of local communities along the US 29 corridor. CAC members have been chosen by the communities they represent, and an important part of their job is to be the liaison between the project team and their communities. The project team prepare with each CAC meeting detailed written summary of the meeting that will be disseminated and posted on the CAC website approximately two weeks after each meeting takes place.

Public engagement through public workshops, community meetings, employer focus groups, community events, and the project website will allow the broader public to provide input and feedback as the project progresses. The initial CAC program schedule spans from March, 2017, through October, 2017, as the County finalizes the preliminary design for the BRT station infrastructure, and reports on the impacts of the project (i.e., capital improvement elements, environmental documentation, and right of way). The role of the CAC members in subsequent project stages (e.g., final design, construction, etc.) will be discussed as the project team nears completion of preliminary design efforts. It is expected that CAC members will serve as advocates of the public involvement process in their communities. Diverse perspectives on the US 29 project should be encouraged by CAC members at community boards/meetings, local organization meetings, community listservs, and on social media.

The CACs will be given an opportunity to request informational updates by BRT project staff at community meetings, outside of CAC meetings, with local groups and organizations to discuss project opportunities and concerns. When information or a specific meeting is requested, the project team will need a reasonable period defined by the project team to research and prepare materials to ensure accurate and accessible materials are developed. Materials can be requested in alternative languages or ADA formats but the requesting party needs to provide adequate preparation time no less than seven business days advanced notice.

Corridor Advisory Committee Meeting Schedule

The upcoming CAC meeting schedule (**Table 1**) will align directly with the US 29 BRT project schedule and overall public outreach program. Each month, CAC members will have an opportunity to review critical materials associated with the development of the project corridor including: the design of BRT stations, operational planning for the BRT and local bus service along the corridor, multimodal access, and project impacts.

Table 1: CAC Program Schedule

Meeting Dates	Meeting Topics
<i>CAC #10 – Week of April 3, 2017</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions • Expectations • Overview of CAC Program Plan and Public Involvement Plan • Topics for future meetings • Project Schedule and Update
<i>CAC #11 – Weeks of May 15 and May 22, 2017</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Station Locations • Station Architecture • Service Planning Overview
<i>CAC #12 – Week of June 12, 2017¹</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodations • Transit Signal Priority • Environmental Documentation
<i>CAC #13 – Week of August 28, 2017¹</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BRT Operations Plan/Local Bus Service Plan Overview • Stormwater Management/Low Impact Development • Review of Project Impacts
<i>CAC #14 – Week of September 25, 2017¹</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other Topics of Interest to CAC members • Project Status/Outreach Update • Next Steps

¹ Meeting may be subject to schedule adjustment due to project updates or meeting site availability

Corridor Advisory Committee Meeting Format and Materials

CAC members will receive meeting materials one week prior to the first scheduled CAC meeting. This will include an agenda, informational handouts, CAC site visit assignments (if applicable), and project reports. Meeting presentations will be based on the provided materials, but will not be provided prior to the meetings. Instead, it is requested that the CAC members to take time to review the supportive program materials with care, consideration and an objective eye to content to ensure members are prepared to engage in meaningful discourse on the project at each meeting.

Meeting agendas will provide details of the program content each month, and define how meeting materials will be featured in each section of the meeting schedule. Activities that will take place during the meeting will be highlighted on the agenda, and a brief description will be provided. Informational handouts will offer updates on project progress, including details of the public outreach process, service planning effort, and station design progress. At select times, requests will be made of CAC members to go to specific sites along the US 29 corridor to review locations where project implementation will take place to provide a first-hand experience regarding existing land use conditions and to support visioning of future planning efforts. Materials will be available in a printed format at the meetings for distribution to members, except for reports more than 10 pages that must be requested 3 business days prior to the meeting.

Corridor Advisory Committee Proposed Detailed Meeting Schedule

The meeting schedule developed for each CAC meeting will be dynamic in nature, and is subject to modification and update based on feedback from CAC members and the project team. The current CAC schedule is proposed to cover the following subject areas and topics:

CAC #10: Week of April 3, 2017

Serving as the kick-off for the County led CAC Program Plan, the CAC facilitator will use this meeting to reintroduce the project, present new technical and/or support staff, and set the stage for the four subsequent meetings that will present technical information for the project. CAC program expectations will be discussed to ensure an inclusive and engaging community space is established for all future programs.

The proposed CAC Program Plan will be reviewed to ensure that topics that CAC members are interested in hearing about are covered. A digital voting activity will be administered to represent CAC membership demographics, interests, and goals. After the digital voting activity is completed, CAC members will have a facilitated discussion regarding next steps for future meetings and updates to the CAC Program Plan. After this activity is completed, the meeting will end with a discussion of the overall interest of the CAC members regarding the status of the project.

CAC #11: Weeks of May 15 and 22, 2017

The second meeting will focus on the features of preliminary engineering and design of the US 29 corridor. The technical staff will present the station locations determined from a preliminary planning analysis perspective and will present proposed station sites to solicit feedback. In this context, stations sites can be described as where each platform is proposed at each station with respect to the nearest cross street and configuration of the station (e.g., side platform vs. center platform). A hot spot activity will be assigned to CAC members prior to the meeting via email by the project team to prepare for this section of the meeting agenda.

Station architecture prototypes will be presented to the groups based on work performed through the MWCOG grant for the Countywide BRT station prototypes design and the US 29 BRT work. The framework for how the prototypes were developed will be presented along with architectural designs for the canopies, station sizes, station finishes, station safety, and station elements and amenities. CAC members will have an opportunity to review stations on a digital interactive map to see where station infrastructure could be placed at key intersections (this will not include right of way impacts covered in meeting #4).

In addition, local bus service planning concepts will be reviewed, and a trade-off discussion will take place regarding the realignment of the local bus service. CAC members will consider how the diverse land use of the US 29 corridor will dictate different service goals for the project along the corridor, and details of the service planning analysis will be provided from the project team's existing conditions report.

CAC #12: Week of June 12, 2017

The third meeting will focus on improvements to multimodal access and environmental impacts of the projects. Pedestrian and bicycle accommodations will be presented to CAC members, including facilities already available for pedestrians and bicycles to access the stations, where facilities could be added to enhance connections to the stations either in this project or by other local projects, and what type of bicycle infrastructure will be accommodated at the stations themselves as it relates to parking and bikeshare.

The project team will define Transit Signal Priority (TSP) as a key tool in supporting BRT service, and explain the preliminary results of where TSP may be beneficial to improve service for the BRT vehicles along the US 29 corridor. A case study of TSP efforts nationally and locally will be considered to provide evidence of programmatic success of this advanced bus technology.

The Environmental Documentation process will also be described to the CAC members. The process for achieving a signed Categorical Exclusion document through FTA and how it relates to the TIGER grant funding that Montgomery County expects to receive for the project will also be presented. The level of detail presented at this meeting regarding the NEPA process will be contingent upon coordination with FTA.

CAC #13: Week of August 28, 2017

The fourth meeting will focus on the topics of operational planning and stormwater management. The operations plan overview will cover the proposed BRT routes, the days of service for the routes, hours of service by day of week for each route, and the service frequency by time of day and day of week for each route. In addition to discussion of the operational plan, renderings of the BRT vehicles and a discussion of the BRT bus procurement process will be included. Local bus service recommendations will also be shared, and a discussion will be held regarding the impact local service will have on the overall transit network. Expert support will be provided from Montgomery County's Division of Transit Service to support the discussion.

The stormwater management approach for the project will be described including the project requirements and approving agencies. It will also include topics such as "What is Stormwater Management?", "What is Low Impact Design?", and "Why is Stormwater Management needed?"

Updates will also be provided regarding the impact of the service on the project corridor and the adjacent communities. This topic will be based on questions received from CAC members over the course of the program schedule.

CAC Meeting #14: Week of September 25, 2017

In the final CAC meeting for the initial program plan schedule, additional topics that CAC members have stated an interest in discussing about will be presented, and additional experts may be brought in based on the desires of the CAC membership. The overall public outreach program will also be reviewed in detail, and results of community engagement efforts will be presented. In addition, the upcoming program plan and project schedule will be updated and presented to the CAC members.

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