

**Friendship Heights
Transportation Management District
Advisory Committee
March 9, 2021**

2b

Voting Members

Barbara Condos (Chair)	Town of Somerset
Christopher Itteilag	Somerset House Management Association
Bob Banach	Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights
Afua Ofori	Polinger Co./Large Employer
Ahkeia Payne	GEICO
Elizabeth Demetra Harris	Friendship Heights Village
John Mertens (Vice Chair)	Friendship Heights Village

Non-Voting Members

Sandra L. Brecher	MCDOT/Transportation Policy-Commuter Services
Derrick Harrigan	B-CC Services Center
Iftin Thompson	M-NCPPC

TMD Staff

Jim Carlson	MCDOT/Transportation Policy-Commuter Services
Nakengi Byrd	MCDOT/Transportation Policy-Commuter Services

Absent

Chief John Fitzgerald	Chevy Chase Village Police
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Guests

Gary Erenrich	MCDOT
Peter James	Crystal Clear Automation
Bob Joiner	The Agenda News
Nadiya Kutishcheva	TMD Outreach
Julian Mansfield	Friendship Heights Village
David Proctor	TMD Outreach
Mayor Jeffrey Slavin	Town of Somerset

Item 1 & 2 – Introductions/Minutes -Members and guests introduced themselves. Meeting minutes were tabled.

Derrick Harrigan announced that this is his last meeting as he has taken another position with the Office of Management & Budget. **Kevin Simpson** will fill in until a replacement is found.

Sande Brecher placed today’s presentation in context explaining that Personal Rapid Transit (PRT) is not a substitute for the MD 355 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system. The PRT system has not been evaluated by the County; however, MD 355 BRT has been through preliminary design & engineering review. PRT is being presented as a transportation alternative as a first mile-last mile solution.

Item 3 – Presentation-Personal Rapid Transit PRT: **Peter James** from Crystal Clear Automation, a robotics company in Gaithersburg, explained the benefits & operation of the system and how PRT using genetic algorithms to solve transportation problems. He said PRT, as the Dallas/Fort Worth area demonstrates, alleviates traffic congestion by removing vehicles same as the function of the Transportation Management District (TMD). Also discussed:

- Maryland Transit Administration is studying PRT along two corridors
- Because of its design, PRT does not intersect with other vehicular and pedestrian traffic, thus meeting Vision Zero goals of no roadway fatalities or serious injuries
- PRT contributes to greenhouse gas reduction, as vehicles are equipped with a solar roof

Mr. James explained the need for the PRT, saying that Maryland was voted second worst traffic, and Baltimore received a grade of “F” for job access. The PRT offers a new paradigm of a transportation option:

- Vehicles are lighter than the older models that were heavier due to the lead acid batteries
- Self-driving “pods” are calibrated to avoid collisions
- PRT has the same carrying capacity as heavy rail and freight
- Increase accessibility as one can drive pods home
- Lowest transit times and point to point without stops
- Cost reducing, as a 1000-mile network cost the same as toll roads
- Can be elevated, lowering environmental impact – pods are four feet wide, and three can fit on a 12-foot-wide lane
 - Would not have to widen the American Legion Bridge to accommodate traffic volume
- Lowers the cost of design planning, as genetic algorithms synthesize data for construction design
- Shared parking in the Ft. Worth/Dallas area to get people to park their cars and ride PRT- origin data is needed to find out where spaces should be placed. GEICO is an option for the Friendship Heights area

Q & A discussion:

- Baltimore Senator **Cory McCray** excited about the project and helping to secure funding – local currency (B notes) and transportation lottery as funding options
- Getting people to understand the PRT system is a major obstacle
- The vehicles can be owned by jurisdictions or a third party
- The City of Jacksonville has received a \$12 million grant to replace their monorail system with an Autonomous Bus Guideway and also in Rotterdam
- New York is retrofitting one subway lines with PRT system
- **Councilmember Craig Rice** trying to secure the old Public Safety lot for a testing track, also looking at using Fairgrounds instead
- **Mr. James’** company developed a robotic mower with a centimeter accuracy
- A main control system keeps pods separated
- The PRT can have large vehicles as well
- Vehicles can be both autonomous and a smart car hybrid
- The PRT system can be used to benefit transit equity in neighborhoods where a high percentage of residents without a car – vehicles autonomously return to a central recharging station on off hours
- PRT can be integrated into the Ride On Flex system

Item 4 – Metro FY22 Budget: Gary Erenrich reported that Metro will hold public hearings for each jurisdiction regarding proposed budget cuts; however, the new CARES funding looks promising to pass which will eliminate cuts. Public comment is greatly encouraged. Also reported:

- Ride On to receive funds if third Cares Act is approved
- Ride On to collect fares in April due to barrier installations

Item 5 - Employer TDM Reports: Jim Carlson reported one company, Microsoft, up for review. Microsoft meets the requirements.

The Committee voted to recommend approval to the MCDOT Director to approve the TDM Report.

Item 6 – Marketing Outreach Update:

- Outreach to Employers for TDM plans answering questions - technical issues with portal
- Weekly e-blast giving information regarding schedule changes and shutdowns

Item 7 – TMD/DOT/Other County Updates: Sande Brecher reported:

- Bike to Work Day on May 21st will not be in-person for the 20th anniversary. Bike shops will be t-shirt pick up stations; registration required-Chevy Chase Athletic Club will be the t-shirt location in Friendship Heights
- Comments are being reviewed by work pods for the Climate Action Plan. The Plan will be released sometime this Spring with Thrive 2050 included in plan actions

Adjourn: Next meeting date – TBD