

**Friendship Heights
Transportation Management District
Advisory Committee
November 14, 2023**



Voting Members

Bob Banach	Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights
Elizabeth Demetra Harris	Friendship Heights Village
Shannon Rovak	Town of Somerset

Non-Voting Members

Sandra L. Brecher	MCDOT/Transportation Policy-Commuter Services
Peter Fosselman	B-CC Services Center

TMD Staff

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

Absent

Chief John Fitzgerald	Chevy Chase Village Police
Ahkeeia Payne	GEICO

Guests

Natalie Avery	Friendship Heights Alliance
Rachel Davis	Walnut Street Creative
Thomas Dant	Bethesda Urban District
Gary Erenrich	MCDOT
Larissa Klevan	M-NCPPC
Shelley Monique Mann	TMD Outreach
Julian Mansfield	Friendship Heights Village
David Proctor	TMD Outreach
Tom Quinn	ANC-3
Jeffrey Slavin	Mayor – Town of Somerset
Jason Winans	Chevy Chase Land Co.



Item 1 & 2- Introductions/ Minutes review: Jim Carlson called meeting to order, members & guests introduced themselves. July’s meeting minutes were reviewed.

Item 3- Friendship Heights Alliance – Update: Natalie Avery, Executive Director of the Friendship Heights Alliance, presented information about the Alliance. The organization is a place based non-profit funded by both DC & Maryland jurisdictions and by a commercial fee paid by business and property owners. It is a unified organization of two jurisdictions with one board of directors funded by the Business Improvement & Urban District (BID). She explained that the new planter program provides street plants with Alliance logo, and there is an urban team to maintain the basic needs of the community.

The Alliance will use social media to elevated the BID's operations to the community, eventually lead to positive changes.

- Some duties of the Alliance include stakeholder & community engagement via surveys and focus groups on both sides of the MD/DC border.
- Duties not performed by the Alliance are leasing, government actions such as zoning - they do not have the power to enact laws but can influence public policy via community action building.
- Community outreach events include film series, public history installments focusing on the displacement of Blacks in the Community, pop-up markets and a winter speaker series.
- Fall planting of tulips w/logo planters - replanting of median entering DC from MD that was full of weeds.
- A Safety & Security meeting on December 20th with area police, security forces, property managers and other community members discussing the unhoused population.
- Other DC/MD collaboration engagement and planning efforts include email list, traffic & pedestrian safety and a newsletter distribution at hello@Friendshipheights.com

Q&A + Stakeholder Suggestions:

- Inviting Transit Police via WMATA's Charlie Scott, to have a discussion with FH Alliance regarding safety & unhoused issues - how has Silver Spring Station dealt with the issue of homelessness.
- How the Alliance measures success via survey recommendations with word cloud, conducting activities to drive leasing that debunk the "ghost town" narrative and social media growth with a 60% growth rate - 20% is the normal rate.
- Federal Realty Investment Trust (FRIT) project is being held up 2-3 years due to an appeal - stressing the need for more housing and the Alliance's role in community smart development & growth.
- Compiling a list of infrastructure improvements to submit for a Federal Land grant that offers awards up to \$80,000 – applications are due in March and the jurisdiction must apply for the organization.
- The Federal grant cannot be used for new bike lanes but can provide funds for marketing & signage - since the Alliance is in startup mode, it will be overwhelming to applying currently, next year is better.

Item 4 – Metro Update: Gary Erenrich announced that the Metro board will meet this month to discuss the pending financial deficit. Its capital budget has \$5-6 billion-dollars for a 6-year period and with financial distress looming, many projects will be deferred, such as the Friendship Heights Western Garage relocation project. Also reported:

- Public meetings will be held starting January 2023 to address WMATA's budget shortfall.
- The Western Avenue entrance was broken into and a party held on the premises, highlighting security issues and lack of management of vacant properties
- Funding issues causing lack of system expansion such as the non-purchase of new rail cars
- Moving capital funding to pay for operational costs however capital costs are needed for preventive maintenance measures.
- One jurisdiction sets the funding limit for the other two jurisdictions; since their contributions are limited to three percent per year, that makes it difficult for the state-led legislation to change contribution amount

- Transportation Secretary Paul Wiedefeld announced a \$2 billion shortfall in Maryland transportation funding - no new transportation projects in Montgomery County and deferring other projects
- Discussion regarding using the state legislature to find solutions to debt crisis, which could see layoffs of up to 50 percent of Metro's 6,000 employee workforce

Mr. Erenrich discussed other WMATA exploration of other cost saving measures:

- Utilizing federal assistance via the Federal Transit Administration grants
- If the Federal workforce returns to the office, it will increase revenue to \$50 million
- Metro is hoping the trending decrease in inflation will assist in closing \$700 million budget gap

Mr. Erenrich report continued:

- Capital budget meeting this Thursday the 17th - Metro's General Manager will introduce budget in December with public hearings to follow
- Red Line closure from Dupont circle to Gallery Place the last two weeks in December is under review as alternatives are being explored
- The new fare gates to deter fare jumping has seen an increase in ridership revenue

Item 5 – Marketing Outreach Update: Shelley Mann reported:

- The Walk & Ride contest went well as they will soon distribute prize winnings
- Commuter Information Day (CID) was held at Washington Eye Associates
- Encouraged committee members to visit “Junction” as businesses in the Barlow Building are seeing a decline.

Item 6 – Updates:

- The County Executive is conducting FY25 Budget Forums around the county
- Council of Governments (COG) Employer Recognition Awards in June 2024 – January deadline for nominations
- The new Climate Change Officer briefing with the County Executive on Monday Nov. 27th regarding progress of the Climate Action Plan
- The Walk & Ride program was extended to County employees this year
- Commuter Survey that is conducted biannually showed the Non-Auto Driver Mode Share (NADMS) goal of 39 percent for the Friendship Heights area was met and exceeded – 48 percent pre-Covid, increased to 63 percent post pandemic

Around the Room: **Tom Quinn** (DC ANC-3 Rep) announced:

- Comments are due tomorrow regarding project on Wisconsin Avenue that is planned for unit development- streamlining the approval process for buildings going up to 150 feet
- There was an appeal filed for the FRIT project on 1533 Wisconsin Avenue, and FRIT is in negotiations with the filer.
- Construction has started for the Lisner Senior Home project located at Western & Livingston
- Traffic calming measures on Military Road at 43rd Street requested by FRIT are not approved by DDOT as they do not meet the minor arterial criterion of 30 feet

Adjourn: Next meeting: Tuesday, January 9, 2024