

MD 355 North Corridor Advisory Committee Meeting #13

June 5, 2019
6:30pm – 8:00pm

Upcounty Regional Service Center
12900 Middlebrook Rd
Germantown, MD 20874

CAC members in attendance:

CAC members (marked with an "X" if Present)			
Carol Berger		Era Pandya	X
Paula Bienenfeld		David Rosenbaum	X
Dennis Cain		Margaret Schoap	
Jerry Callistein	X	Peter Shaw	X
Steven Cohn	X	Gail Sherman	X
Nallathamby Devasahayam		Goke Taiwo	
Cherian Eapen		Helen Triolo	
Peter Henry		Gary Unterberg	X
Kathie Hulley		Ronald Welke	X
John Lin		Andrew Williamson	
Richard Lindstrom	X	Paul Yanoshik	
James Martin		Joel Yesley	
Mark Pace	X		

Stakeholders and members of the public in attendance:

Other attendees
Alissa Rolf, City of Gaithersburg
Patrick Reed, MNCPPC

Staff in attendance:

MCDOT staff	Consultant team members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Darcy Buckley, Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) Director's Office • Corey Pitts, MCDOT Division of Transportation Engineering, MD 355 BRT Project Manager • Joana Conklin, MCDOT, BRT Program Director • Catherine Matthews, Upcounty Regional Office Director 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Denny Finnerin, Gannett Fleming • Alanna McKeeman, Foursquare ITP • William Shuldiner, Foursquare ITP • Dan Lovas, VHB • Dalia Levin, AECOM • Chris Bell, AECOM

Introductions, Project Update, Overview of Agenda

Alanna McKeeman, CAC Facilitator, began the meeting and the project staff and CAC members all introduced themselves. Alanna reviewed the ground rules for the CAC meetings. She explained that this meeting would consist of a presentation given by Corey Pitts, MCDOT, reviewing the results of the alternatives analysis performed in this phase of the study. This presentation would take about 40 minutes, so Alanna asked CAC members to save questions until the end of the presentation.

Presentation

Corey Pitts, MD 355 BRT Project Manager, gave a presentation that included a brief overview of the project, as well as the project timeline and purpose. He then summarized the different segments of the corridor and each alternative to help CAC members re-familiarize themselves with since the last meeting. Corey described the two-level station screening performed by the project team and presented the station location recommendations. Corey then discussed the results of the modeling process and explained how each alternative measured in terms of the project objectives, such as increasing ridership, making trips faster and more competitive, improving transit quality, minimizing environmental impacts, and more. The presentation ended with a summary of the findings and CAC members were invited to ask questions or provide comments on the contents of the presentation. [The presentation is available [at this link](#)]

Questions, Comments, and Discussion

Questions

QUESTION (Q): Why is the northbound direction usually involve the bus travelling in mixed traffic while the south has a dedicated lane?

RESPONSE (R): The segment in Rockville is the only one without a reversible lane. As you travel farther north the traffic is heavily skewed in the peak direction, but in Rockville the traffic flow is southbound throughout the course of a day. Additionally, spatial constraints with Metrorail and right of way in the area made it difficult to introduce a reversible lane that could travel north.

Q: How will the bus travel between the different "modes"? For example, transitioning between travelling in the curb and travelling in the median.

R: We found when the bus leaves the guideway frequently, it causes delays in travel time, so ideally BRT service will not likely switch frequently between different runningway types. When it needs to do so, we found that a merge lane was the most effective way of doing this.

Q: How do you determine where the stations are? Why are they so far apart in segment 7?

R: The project team wanted to ensure that the stations were close enough for people easily access one, but also that they were not close enough that the service would be slowed due to frequent stops. The average distance between stations is half a mile, although there are variations throughout the corridor. Adding a new station in segment 7 station would also be possible if future development points to that.

Q: Was there any thought to making the BRT station at the Rockville Metrorail Station a Transit Center? Especially since Veirs Mill FLASH will also stop there?

R: FLASH will stop on MD 355 in Rockville, not in the bus loop for both the MD 355 and Veirs Mill routes. If WMATA redesigns the station in the future, MCDOT would work with them to make sure that new redesigns include a logical place for FLASH.

Q: Will FLASH stop in the bus loop or on MD 355 at Shady Grove? Traffic in the area is bad and should be examined.

R: FLASH will stop close to the loop on Redland but not go into the loop.

C: It can be hard for people to walk from that location to the station.

Q: Many stores in Lakeforest Mall are closing. Will either of this affect the project or plans to have a station at the Lakeforest Transit Center?

R: Lakeforest has high ridership but the current siting of the transit center is not necessarily in the best place for transit connectivity to MD 355. If the mall gets redeveloped, MCDOT would request a design that helps minimize the time FLASH is travelling off of the MD 355 corridor and improves connectivity between the corridor and transit center.

City of Gaithersburg representative response: MCDOT will be involved in these future discussions.

Q: How will the sidewalk buffers work with the bicycle master plan?

R: The project is not implementing the full bicycle master plan, but it is accommodating the plan and the idea of people using bikes to connect to stations. The buffers will provide space for bikes and pedestrians to travel.

Q: Does the Montgomery County Council's request for transit on I-270 impact the project or modeling?

R: Anytime a parallel corridor gets changed there could be ripple effects that are felt on MD 355. We would look into the model again and re-examine the planned service if the project for transit on I-270 proceeds.

Q: Why is the segment near Shady Grove so much more expensive than the other segments?

R: This segment is longer than others and these numbers do not reflect a cost per mile, but rather a total cost.

Q: Is it better to begin service on the end of the corridor or could it begin in the middle and build outward in each direction?

R: There is not necessarily a clear advantage to either option. The reason we are exploring phasing is because it makes it easier to implement.

Q: What is the ridership on the Ride On extRa?

R: There are about 2000 riders a day during the peak-only service, which is better than was originally projected.

Q: Will the alignment in Segment 7 not travel to the Germantown Transit Center?

R: No, riders who wish to travel between the Germantown Transit Center and areas in segment seven will need to transfer to a different FLASH route on MD 355, not just travel from one to the other.

C: The Snowden Farm Parkway alternative in segment seven makes sense but Observation Drive should not be discounted since the land-use is more attractive for BRT service.

C: Segment 7 should be the first phase of the project because it can attract new riders that do not have existing transit service.

C: The alternative on Seneca Meadows Parkway in Segment 7 seems to make the most sense based on the population and land use there.

C: Having the station on Goldenrod Lane in the Montgomery College Germantown campus would speed up service in the area. Having service provided to Rockville as outlined would help Montgomery College since this is the largest campus and there would be many new riders. The parking lot there is currently underused so there is some room for a potential FLASH station.

C: If service starts in the north there needs to be a location where people want to go to, otherwise people will not use the service.

C: Starting on each end of the corridor and building toward the middle will help ensure that the entire project is completed.

C: Starting in the north and building until the Lakeforest Transit Center would give the most options to riders and would help provide the most options for future development.

C: Completing the FLASH project as quickly as possible could be a good way to ensure transit projects take priority over road improvements, especially in light of recent projects that the state government has expressed interest in.

Conclusion

Alanna thanked the CAC members for attending the meeting and providing constructive feedback. She invited them to attend the upcoming Open Houses that would take place at the end of June and said she asked for their help publicizing them.