

MD 355 North Corridor Advisory Committee Meeting #12

February 21, 2018

6:30pm – 8:30pm

Germantown Library
Meeting Room B
19840 Century Boulevard
Germantown, MD 20874

CAC members in attendance:

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

Stakeholders and members of the public in attendance:

Other attendees
Kyle Nembhard, MTA
David Hondowicz

Staff in attendance:

MCDOT staff	Consultant team members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corey Pitts, MCDOT Division of Transportation Engineering, MD 355 BRT Project Manager • Joana Conklin, MCDOT BRT Program Director 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steve Hawtof, Gannett Fleming (GF), Project Manager • Dan Lovas, VHB • Drew Morrison, VHB • Sandy Davis, Foursquare ITP • Katie List, Foursquare ITP • William Shuldiner, Foursquare ITP

Introductions, Project Update, Overview of Agenda

Katie List, the meeting facilitator, opened the meeting with introductions from the project team staff, North CAC members, and other attendees. Katie updated the CAC members on the three recent open houses in Clarksburg, Gaithersburg, and Bethesda, which had 170 attendees and yielded 68 comment cards. These open houses provided the project team with valuable public input on various aspects of the project, including service planning, stations, and engineering.

She informed the CAC members that the next round of open houses would occur in Fall 2018, and that MCDOT will continue other outreach efforts throughout the spring and summer, including stakeholder meetings, pop-up events, and community updates.

Meeting Activity

Katie introduced the activity for the CAC meeting. During the activity, CAC members were separated into three groups; each group rotated around the room, visiting three stations. One station addressed BRT and existing local bus service planning, another addressed project engineering, and the third addressed station locations. Each group visited each station for 25 minutes, where they discussed the respective topics with project team staff.

Meeting Activity Feedback

Upon completion of the activity, Katie asked one project team member from each station to provide a summary of the discussions, comments, and questions during all three rotations.

Service Planning Station

At the service planning station, CAC members gave feedback regarding local bus service on the MD 355 corridor. Many members said that the Ride On Route 55 is slow and crowded, while others noted that Routes 55 and 56 are inconvenient because they often require riders to walk a long distance to a bus stop. Other comments addressed the Ride On extRa service (Route 101), which members said was significantly better than Route 55, especially for high school and college students. Many members thought Ride On extRa service should be extended north to the Germantown Transit Center.

In addition to providing comments about local bus service, members also discussed their preferences for new BRT service on MD 355. Members commented on the importance of serving Lakeforest Transit Center, as well as the high levels of congestion between Summit Avenue and Shady Grove Road. CAC members noted that college students will likely use the new BRT service if it provides efficient service south of Clarksburg. Finally, several CAC members commented about communication needs along the corridor, including the need for detailed signs that explain the new BRT service and for coordination between BRT and local bus service.

Engineering Station

At the Engineering station, all three groups of CAC members asked if it was possible to develop a final alternative where the BRT uses a dedicated curb lane in some parts of the corridor and a dedicated median lane in other parts of the corridor.

Members also discussed possible BRT service impacts on the Gaithersburg Master Plan, and asked if the plan is being considered during the BRT planning process. They noted that in some areas, including Gaithersburg, the number of bus riders in peak and off-peak directions on local bus routes is almost equal, making a bi-directional lane better than one-way peak service to ensure that riders traveling in both directions are served equally.

Members also discussed possible access management issues along the corridor if the median running alternative is chosen, including impacts to driveway access in the middle of the block. Additionally, as certain properties along the corridor are redeveloped, members noted that access management needs may change.

Other member comments addressed pedestrian safety in the median lane BRT stations, the size of lanes in the maximized and minimalized sections, and the size of stations in areas with higher levels of demand.

There were also discussions about the trade-off between maintaining effective schedules and serving the greatest number of riders if the Lakeforest Transit Center station is located too far from MD 355.

Finally, some members noted that the TSM Alternative could be a valuable tool when determining which alternative to use, and should be considered along with Alternatives A, B, and C.

Stations Location Station

At this station, CAC members discussed potential BRT station locations throughout the corridor and provided feedback on station preferences; during these discussions, members generally agreed that the Level One station criteria were an appropriate method to determine station locations.

Members discussed the importance and trade-offs of specific BRT station locations:

- Members said that commuter parking access is an important reason to locate the BRT close to the Lakeforest Transit Center.
- Members noted that BRT will be used by service professionals at Milestone, and said that this site needs a high level of BRT service.
- Other members said the BRT alternative the travels along Goldenrod Lane to Seneca Meadows Parkway would be the fastest route among the alternatives, because it allows the BRT system to bypass a slower segment of Observation Drive and also serves the business park.
- Members discussed the tradeoff between serving the Shady Grove Metro Station directly and locating the station on MD 355 – which could save time, but would require riders to walk if they wished to transfer.
- Members noted that MD 355 and South Summit Avenue may be a suitable location for a BRT station, but that historic properties may pose a challenge to locating a station there.
- Members expressed concerns about constraints on BRT operations and pedestrian safety in downtown Gaithersburg, especially at Chestnut St and Walker Avenue.
- Members discussed the Watkins Mill Park and Ride, and the tradeoff between a station located at Gunners Branch Road and Middlebrook Road.

Conclusion

Katie thanked the CAC members for attending the meeting and providing constructive feedback. She informed them that the next CAC meetings will take place in June, at which there would be information on preliminary modeling results, detailed engineering including stormwater management, bicycle and pedestrian accommodations, and environmental consideration.