

Meeting Summary
US 29 North Corridor Advisory Committee (CAC) Meeting #5
December 1, 2015, 6:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
East County Regional Services Center
3300 Briggs Chaney Rd. Silver Spring, MD 20904

Attendees

Corridor Advisory Committee (CAC) Members			
Erik Amick		Matthew Koch	X
Carole Ann Barth	X	Peter Myo Khin	X
John Bowers	X	Rob Richardson	
Brian Downie	X	Julian Rosenberg	X
Oladipo Famuyiwa		Ian Swain	
Johnathan M. Genn		Joseph Tahan	
Latisha Johnson		Eric Wolvovsky	X
Bernadine Karns	X		
Project Team			
Facilitator – Alan Straus		Facilitator Assistant – Lauren Garrett	
Lead Project Facilitator – Andrew Bing		Facilitator Assistant – Lauren Michelotti	
SHA Representative – Brian Lange		County RTS Manager – Joana Conklin	
SHA Project Manager – Jamaica Arnold		County Facilitator – Tom Pogue	
MTA Planning Director – Kevin Quinn		MTA Corridor Manager – Tamika Gauvin	
MTA Program Manager – Jackie Seneschal		County Project Engineer – Rafael Olarte	
		County Representative – Jewru Bandeh	
Public			
James Zepp		Dan Wilhelm	

Handouts

Handouts to add to CAC Members’ study binders were distributed, which included the following:

- Meeting #4 Summary
- Meeting #5 Agenda
- Meeting #5 PowerPoint
- Meeting #5 Breakout Discussion Info Sheet

Meeting materials, including a video recording of the meeting, will be posted on the County’s RTS website: www.montgomerycountymd.gov/rts.

Introductions

Alan Straus, the meeting facilitator, opened the meeting by providing an overview of the materials being distributed and the agenda. This meeting is an informational session followed by a breakout session for CAC members.

CAC Member Comment: Please provide additional information on County Executive Leggett’s statement on the future Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and how that impacts our work. Does it impact

our input on the project and schedule? We also still have items pending from prior meetings. Members previously requested a study of MD 650 (New Hampshire Avenue) as part of this project, and we expect a status update. Additionally, the data that was requested has only been partially received to this point.

- **Project Team Response:** Your comments and concerns have been recorded, and some of those outstanding items will be addressed early on in this meeting.

BRT Project Management Team Update

Kevin Quinn, Director of Planning and Programming with Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) introduced himself to the CAC Members. MTA is the operator of transit in the Baltimore region and also the lead planner and advocate for mass transit for the State of Maryland. Kevin noted that when the study started, Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) was the lead; MTA has taken on the leadership role as the study continues. The change in project leadership does not change the project team and key contributors; it actually allows additional resources to aid the project.

Joana Conklin addressed the announcement by County Executive Leggett regarding BRT efforts in Montgomery County. The press release was provided to members with the section that impacts this project highlighted. CE Leggett has instructed the Department of Transportation to continue working with the State on the studies that are underway, but to also look at short-term (or phased) solutions that might be able to be used to improve transit in the area for quicker results while studies on longer-term efforts are being undertaken. These BRT corridor studies take years and the Executive recognizes there is still a need to improve transit in the area in the shorter term.

Joana also discussed the status of the MD 650 (New Hampshire Ave) Study. In May 2015, the Montgomery County Council voted for two amendments to be added to the Rapid Transit System (RTS) project in the county's Capital Improvement Program (CIP): \$2 million dollars in funding for FY 16 (current fiscal year) and added language that the study of the New Hampshire BRT would begin in FY 16. A formal letter was sent by the County to the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) requesting a schedule, budget, and scope to initiate MD 650 BRT study. At the time SHA was managing the US 29 and MD 355 studies and reviewing their resources. SHA has been coordinating with MTA on a response regarding the State's ability to take on this additional work. The County is awaiting the State's response, and looking for guidance on how the project should move forward from the State's perspective.

Question: What is the timeline for the short-term BRT effort?

- **Answer:** It is hard to say, as we have just received instruction to move forward with researching short-term options. MCDOT will need to develop its recommendations, and then the County Executive will be able to decide upon a course of action. At that point, a timeline for implementation could then be developed.

Question: Is there any information we can provide here through the CAC to help with short-term solutions?

- **Answer:** We will go back and revisit information we have gathered during the meetings over the last 9 months concerning issues and constraints in the corridor. We want to look at everything that has already been developed, and we are open to any additional thoughts and input you can provide. MCDOT will also be considering public input opportunities as part of its evaluative work.

Question: The statement from Leggett was to explore less expensive alternatives. Are there any parameters you've been given; for example, one or two alternatives as opposed to three? Are there any other parameters you can share?

- **Answer:** Nothing has been decided at this point, we are looking at the whole corridor right now. We will be looking at the limits and looking at each of the corridors in greater detail to determine an appropriate approach.

Question: Can MTA give us a response tonight about if they are able to take on the MD 650 study?

- **Answer:** No, but we are looking at it. We have to look at budgets, staff, contract authority and other aspects to determine available resources. We are in the process of putting together the cost estimates.

Question: Is FDA involved in funding the study of MD 650?

- **Answer:** Not currently, if we initiate the study on MD 650 we would form another corridor advisory committee and work towards getting FDA involved in that study. They have expressed interest on BRT in that corridor. And we continue to coordinate with them on the US 29 BRT study.

Project Process and Schedule

Jackie Seneschal from MTA covered current activities on the US 29 BRT project, and those projected to be conducted through summer 2016 and beyond.

Jackie explained that as part of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) approval process, SHA and MTA are required to do extensive preliminary work before they can enter the formal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process and receive federal approval for funding. MTA is working to complete as much possible of the fundamental planning and preliminary engineering work prior to entering the federal approval process, because once entered, NEPA approvals must be acquired and 30 percent engineering plans must be completed within two years. In order to meet this requirement, SHA and MTA are preparing documents like the Preliminary Purpose and Need to a level where federal approval could be reasonably expected.

The study team has developed a process to complete technical work during the pre-NEPA process that can then roll fairly easily into FTA's project development process. The flow chart on slide 5 shows the preliminary process we are going to follow. A great deal of data has been collected and presented, but it's clear from a number of requests that we have not provided all of the pieces of data to the CAC that some of the members are anxious to see. We are very close to having the preliminary purpose and need document assembled and ready to share with the CAC members. We want to provide it in language that is as clear and cohesive as possible. We have worked really hard to determine a set of goals and objectives to be included in the Preliminary Purpose and Need document based on initial feedback provided by CAC members.

We are also in the very beginning of the development of conceptual alternatives. We want to cast a wide net for those improvement concepts; we have to develop a set of measures of effectiveness to evaluate the conceptual alternatives. The goal is to have, by this time next year, identified a narrower set of alternatives that are reasonable and those that are not considered feasible will have been dropped from consideration based on the evaluation criteria we establish.

Slide 6 shows a preliminary schedule of project activities. Those activities that are shown in beige have not been funded thus far, but will be required to be completed prior to entering the formal federal NEPA approval process.

Question: Please explain purpose and need vs locally preferred alternative.

- **Answer:** Purpose and need defines the problem we are trying to solve. The locally preferred alternative is the point at which we can say, for local needs, this is the option/alternative that best satisfies the purpose and need.

Question: The ridership and traffic impacts analysis, what are we talking about there? Is that model running analyses of conceptual alternatives and actually getting more robust existing ridership information than we have?

- **Answer:** It involves a round of traffic models using a visual simulation modeling software called VISSM, as well as a ridership forecasting model. They are run for the future no-build option, and each of the conceptual build alternatives that we establish. Then, based on the results of the measures of effectiveness assessment, we will be able to compare the performance of each of the alternatives and hopefully find a locally preferred alternative.

Question: When do we define the no-build option?

- **Answer:** By definition we have to use the projects currently funded in the Constrained Long Range Plan (CLRP) for 2040 for the no-build option. TSM does not involve significant construction; our goal is to develop a TSM alternative that would involve a relatively low level of potential impacts while providing a measureable transit enhancement.

Question: The reason we go to the NEPA process is to apply for federal grants; is that happening?

- **Answer:** We are assuming at this stage when the time comes for construction, the county and/or the State would want to be in a position to go after Federal funding. That is our assumption today, but if the county can fund the improvements, we would still have to use the Maryland Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) process. There is a State and Federal process for funding requirements and we don't want to take any of those off the table.

Goals and Objectives/Preliminary Purpose and Need

Tamika Gauvin reviewed the purpose and need discussion that was initiated during Meetings 2 and 3. Tamika clarified that the purpose and need is a specific document that is reviewed and approved as part of the formal NEPA process to justify the project and provide a way to compare and evaluate the alternatives to determine the best alternative. We want to be best positioned for the NEPA process later, so we are currently identifying where we are now as the Preliminary

Purpose and Need. We have already started to get quantifiable data, and have identified the problems and possible solutions known as conceptual alternatives. We are starting the conversation tonight about the conceptual alternatives that we will present in greater detail at a later date.

Using CAC feedback, the study team has begun development of some language for the Preliminary Purpose and Need. A number of groups have provided input on the Preliminary Purpose and Need such as MCDOT, the County Rapid Transit System Steering Committee, MTA, Maryland National Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC), SHA, and the CACs.

In addition to developing the goals and objectives and purpose and need the study team must also develop measures of effectiveness (as noted earlier by Jackie) to see how the alternatives will perform.

CAC needs that were captured in previous meetings were made into quantifiable objectives by the project team. Primary goals drafted include:

- Improve quality of transit service
- Develop transit services that enhance quality of life
- Improve mobility opportunities and choices
- Develop transit services that support master planned development
- Support sustainable and cost effective transportation solutions

The next step is for the project team to distribute the purpose and need to the CAC. We will address your comments on the purpose and need, and then provide it to the general public for comments.

Question: Does the Federal purpose and need resolve after we get to the locally preferred alternative?

- **Answer:** By the end of this preliminary process, when we have selected the locally preferred alternative, we will also have a fully drafted Preliminary Purpose and Need document. The formal purpose and need document won't be finalized until it has been approved by an array of Federal agencies.

CAC Member Comment: As you go through the goals and objectives a lot of it is tied to end user or community experiences, then you get to a goal for providing cost effective transportation and to support a cost effective system. The goals should also reflect a driving factor aimed at reducing the cost to the end user.

Question: On slide 12, it says improve quality of transit service, and make door-to-door transit competitive with auto travel; how is that possible?

- **Answer:** When considering a way to implement the BRT system there are different running way options that can be utilized to expedite transit movements. The way we develop the alternative allows us to make a speedier and easier way to get the BRT through the traffic so that it may become faster using a certain service plan. One thing to remember is what you are trying to do with the goals and objectives is to use them as a

tool to compare alternatives. You will probably never beat door-to-door time in auto travel but some alternatives will be better than others (more competitive) and the goals and objectives, with their measurements, will help show and evaluate tradeoffs for implementation options.

CAC Member Comment: Currently there are systems that service existing transportation demand. Just about everything in here focuses on new riders. We have a high population of riders south of White Oak and I'm really concerned if we are only focusing the design on drawing future riders, even if the projections are true, we need to meet existing demand. Another important point that was lost is that community resources like shopping and entertainment should not be cut off by the transportation solution. It doesn't do us good to build something that improves some part of the corridor and trashes another.

Project Team Response: This is a process for us to develop goals and objectives and purpose and need. We really appreciate your input on all this and we are at the preliminary stage of getting this information out. We will be distributing to the public the draft preliminary purpose and need document along with all of the appendices over the next several weeks. The study team encourages members to submit their comments early. Additional comments from the general public will also be obtained as part of the spring public meetings.

Conceptual Alternatives Development

Brian Lange presented the conceptual alternatives. Brian emphasized that the team wants to help members better understand our approach to the development of the conceptual alternatives and to get your feedback on those components. The following components combine to make up the conceptual alternatives:

- Running way (there are 6 options)
- Station locations, surroundings, and access
- Service and operations

Keep in mind, not every running way option is appropriate for every section of the project area. Tradeoffs are important when thinking about the best approach for implementing improvements. We want to bring in as many riders as possible to these transit systems, safely and efficiently. Up to this point, we have not discussed service operations much, but we need to consider bus routing, transfer points, headways (time between buses) and frequency.

While in the breakout groups, we encourage the members to consider all of these components, including the tradeoffs of implementing each; how they interact with the surrounding communities and travel demand centers; potential impacts; rider needs and connectivity, and the user experience associated with running ways, station locations, and service operations options.

Breakout Session Overview

The CAC Members divided into two groups:

- North #1: Lockwood Drive to Industrial Parkway (includes Lockwood Drive/Stewart Lane Spur)
- North #2: Industrial Parkway to just north of Briggs Chaney Road

Groups were tasked with covering the following three topics:

- Running Way – What running way(s) may be appropriate for this segment of US 29?
- Station Locations, Surroundings, and Access – What station locations may be appropriate for this segment of US 29?
- Service and Operations – What activity centers should the BRT system serve?

The goal was to gather the CAC members' local knowledge of the area. The facilitators encourage respectful dialogue and noted there will be opposing opinions during this breakout session—the groups were advised not to seek consensus, but instead to gather as many comments as possible.

The Breakout Session took a total of 75 minutes followed by each group reporting out to all CAC members.

Breakout Session Report-out

The following is a running summary of the comments and discussions recorded during the breakout session for each topic. For each breakout group, there is also a summary of what was reported out to the entire group from the designated group reporters.

North #1 (Lockwood Drive to Industrial Parkway)

Topic 1: Running way type

- Dedicated peak direction reversible lane system north of Industrial Parkway then transition to two dedicated lanes to the north (peak direction reversible lane could continue down to Transit Center)
- Reversible lane would be taken away (repurposed) from general traffic going against rush hour (repurposing of a lane in the off peak direction)
- Consider an option for a dedicated reversible lane on Lockwood or mixed traffic
- Lockwood Drive (core area of White Oak) should be treated as the main trunk line. Buses staying on US 29 should be considered the express spur
- Concerns were raised about the southbound US 29 lane drop at MD 650. Already a choke point. If lanes taken away, traffic will be very congested. Noted environmental sensitivity at Paint Branch.

Topic 2: Station locations, surroundings, and access

- Station location considerations:

- Dangerous areas for pedestrians (Lockwood and New Hampshire).
- Stations too close together (Oak Leaf and White Oak transit center).
- Questions raised about transit demand at Oak Leaf – where are riders coming from? Is a station really needed here and at White Oak Transit Center?
- County Pedestrian Study on Lockwood Drive should be referenced regarding safety on Lockwood near Oak Leaf Drive.
- Future development (senior housing and police station and development of White Oak life science area) needs to be considered near Stewart Lane intersection.
- Propose additional stop on Stewart Lane near US 29 because of how far the White Oak transit center is from the more densely populated area near the White Oak Community Center at April Lane.
- Service Operation
 - Idea is to move people quickly and efficiently. Goal should be for people to be able to rely on transit so frequently that they don't need to know the bus schedule; a bus would be available every 15 mins.

North #2 (Industrial Parkway to just north of Briggs Chaney Road)

- Dedicated median lane, nice overpasses can accommodate stations.
- Reversible lane segment or something simpler could also be considered to reduce impacts.
- Curb lanes good idea depending on where the stations would be located, where connected transit would be located, and pedestrian access.
- Station locations:
 - Tech Road Station – good location
 - Fairland road – not necessary until that construction gets sorted out
 - East County Park and Ride – not an ideal location for a station
 - Briggs Chaney Rd Station – good location
 - Musgrove Rd Station – good location
- Service and operations
 - Easily transfer across county and local lines
- Make sure business centers (food, shopping, car repair) are accessible and easy to access.

Additional Question and Answer Session

CAC Comment: I would like to see something that would demonstrate what is going on with some of the intersections regarding what is planned [proposed interchanges] and what is actually possible, development plans, etc. We have come up with some ideas but if the State or county says no, how will that impact us? Plug in the ridership numbers that we have and see how those match and don't match up to the station concepts.

Project Member Comment: There is a lot more detail to come, we are at the very base of this process and we will share much more with the group as it's developed in the near future. In meeting 3 we presented very generic, typical sections but we will put together the exact dimensions and configurations we plan to use and will share those with members at upcoming meetings.

Next Steps

The facilitator will communicate with the group via email regarding future meetings as dates are set.

Following a review by the internal project team, the meeting summary will be circulated to the CAC members for feedback before being finalized and posted online.

Addendum I – Additional Breakout Session Notes

North Group #1: Lockwood Drive to Industrial Parkway (includes Lockwood Drive/Stewart Lane Spur) Facilitator Notes**Topic 1:**

- Reversible lanes from transit Center north of Industrial Parkway. Southbound BRT run in northbound lane in a.m. peak and northbound BRT in southbound lane in pm peak.
- 2 Dedicated lanes from Stewart Lane to Briggs Chaney
- Mixed traffic on Lockwood/Stewart spur
 - Noted severely eroding cliffs at Paint Branch stream sensitive area, north of stream
 - Concern about Narrowing of 29 southbound at 650 narrows to 2 lanes
 - Questioned whether US 29 is the spur and Lockwood Dr/Stewart Ln is the alignment
 - Questioned ridership at Oak Leaf Drive (on Lockwood Dr.) station. Suggested reviewed z-line study which showed ridership on Lockwood Dr.
- Suggested that the needs may be for local bus improvements and not BRT

Topic 2:

- Oak Leaf and White Oak Transit Center stops on Lockwood Dr. are too close
- Safety for pedestrians on Lockwood Dr. is a concern, particularly near Oak Leaf
 - Interested in the considerations that led to Oak Leaf stop
 - MCDOT is doing a pedestrian study on Oak Leaf to Stewart Ln.
- Noted senior assisted living facility and police station southbound side of 29 at Stewart Ln. / Milestone Dr. Concerned about access to station on east side of 29, safety is a concern
- Suggested a new station at Stewart Ln. near 29
 - 250 unit housing development and grocery store planed at industrial parkway.
- FDA – big activity center that is not considered for access – MD 650 spur

Topic 3:

- Frequency and reliability are very important
 - Off peak have 1 line with detour at Briggs Chaney, 15 minute headways

North Group #2: Industrial Parkway to just north of Briggs Chaney Road Facilitator Notes

- Why not old Columbia Pike?
- What running ways?
 - Median access from the interchanges, some areas are more narrow
 - Don't want to wait so long for the Z8
 - Can go in the median or curb?
 - Curb you have cars

- Thoughts on type, width, bidirectional
 - Width and operations, tradeoffs, higher levels of operation
 - Median can be used
 - Lane repurposing takes away emergency, better to widen
 - 66 example, peak use of median
 - Interested in not widening to the outside
- Transfers to Randolph Rd can have impact on stations
- Overpasses, good for medians/ no median curb space
- How to get people to stations? Access to station?
- Lots of stations, speeds are affected
- Interchange at Tech Rd.
- Z bus transfer to BRT
- Big businesses, Verizon
- Centers for bus terminals
- Randolph Rd BRT
- 15-20 minutes
- Changing throughout the day, older people, handicap, fever during day
- Southern area more frequently