

**MD 355 South Corridor Advisory Committee Meeting #8 Summary
October 25th, 2016 from 6:30 to 9:00 PM
Bethesda Chevy Chase Regional Services Center
4805 Edgemoor Ln, Bethesda, MD 20814**

Attendees

Members	
Nancy Abeles	Deborah Michaels
Jay Corbalis	D. Todd Pearson
Kristi Cruzat	Chad Salganik
Ryan Emery	Eric Siegel
Greg Ford	Ana Milena Sobalverro
Jerry Garson	Michael Tardif
Celesta Jurkovich	Francine Waters
Peter Katz	Jan White
Tony Kouneski	Stephen Wilcox
Richard Levine	Lisa McCabe (East Bethesda Alternate)
Apologies	
Peter Benjamin	Todd Lewers
Joshua Arcurio	Damon Luciano
Bill Carey	Jeremy Martin
Barbara Condos	Patty Mason
Elizabeth Crane	Sasha Page
Jad Donohoe	Susan Roberts
Roger Fox	Ralph Schofer
Debbie Friese	David Sears
Victoria Hall	Gerard Stack
Eleanor Kott	John Alex Staffier
Staff	
MTA -- Kyle Nembhard	Facilitation Staff – Yolanda Takesian
MTA – Jackie Seneschal	Facilitation Staff – Liz Gordon
Montgomery County DOT – Joana Conklin	Study Team – Chris Bell
Montgomery County DOT – Darcy Buckley	Study Team – Alvaro Sifuentes
Montgomery County DOT – Rafael Olarte	Study Team– Krishna Patnam
Facilitation Staff – Andrew Bing	

Handouts

Handouts provided to CAC Members included:

- Agenda for CAC Meeting #8
- Presentation for CAC Meeting #8
- BRT Draft Conceptual Alternatives
- Station and Service Route Map
- Summary of CAC Meeting #7

Meeting materials and video of the meeting will be posted on the project website:

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/BRT/md355north.html>

Introduction

Facilitator Yolanda Takesian welcomed attendees, introduced meeting content, and outlined the agenda. She explained that the meeting was the first of a two-part review of the analysis of BRT alternatives; this meeting would include an open house format by topic area for members to understand the analysis performed. The next meeting will include a shorter presentation and working session to receive member input on which alternatives can be removed from consideration or refined to move to the next stage of more detailed study.

Corridor Planning Process

Kyle Nembhard recapped the process from the last meeting in the Spring of 2016. Since then, the project team has been testing at a high level four BRT conceptual alternatives for the corridor (Alternatives 3A, 3B, 4A, and 4B). At the conclusion of this phase of study, the team will have refined and selected the alternatives that will advance to the next, more detailed round of analysis. In the next phase of study, which will last approximately two years, the study team will perform more in-depth analysis on the refined and selected build alternatives, along with the No Build (Alt. 1) and the Transportation Systems Management (Alt. 2) Alternatives.

This CAC meeting and the next one will provide opportunities for the members to offer comment that will help staff refine and select the BRT Build Alternatives for testing.

Kyle provided a refresher on some of the materials introduced last Spring regarding the Conceptual Alternatives. The Conceptual Alternatives are composed of three main components:

1. **Running way:** The general options being considered for Build Alternatives are median-running and curb running BRT, with variations as to whether to terminate BRT service at Grosvenor or continue to Bethesda, and whether to continue north of Middlebrook Road on MD 355 or on Observation Drive. There are a few specific locations where modified runningway configurations, like a bi-directional section, are being considered.
2. **Station location:** Since the beginning of the summer some initially proposed station locations based on the Countywide Transit Functional Master Plan have been either consolidated or eliminated based on CAC feedback,.
1. **Service plan:** The service plan, which was included as a handout, is the same for all alternatives and follows the termini based on the proposed BRT alternative.

(Question) WMATA is reporting declining ridership. Why do we assume there will be demand for BRT?

(Response) This is based on the regional travel demand model, which is our best prediction tool.

(Comment) There will also be awful traffic as a result of BRT.

(Q) Can you please clarify what you mean by a “TSM” alternative?

(R) Transportation System Management. This includes transit signal priority, queue jumps, etc. Basically anything short of true BRT, which has 50 percent or more dedicated right of way.

(Q) What’s the plan for BRT operation at the Shady Grove Metro Station?

(R) Earlier proposals had the Shady Grove station along MD 355. Based on CAC member comment the current alternatives propose that the station be in the Metrorail station parking lot.

(Q) Will it go into the Shady Grove parking lot in its own right of way?

(R) Undecided at this point in the process.

(Q) Why isn’t there a service plan that runs from end to end along the corridor?

(R) The regional model predicts higher demand for shorter trips and we believe very few people would use BRT to travel from one end of the corridor to the other.

(Q) Does the model include park and ride trips?

(R) Yes, the model considers all available travel modes for making the trips.

(Q) Does the model include trips heading from south to north on the corridor?

(R) Yes, the model considers all types and directions of trips.

(Q) Does the model consider ongoing land use/development?

(R) Yes, the model includes these as inputs in the form of regional land use planning development projections.

(R) Model assumptions were also covered in meetings four and five.

(C) Buses should stop on the far side of intersections, not stop for passengers, then stop again for a red light.

(C) The Cedar Lane stop isn’t necessary.

(R) We are early in the study evaluation process. This stop could be removed if deemed unnecessary.

(Q) Earlier phases of the study considered 12 buses an hour. Now the alternatives say six buses per hour. Why?

(R) This is due to ridership projections.

(C) Is this enough ridership to justify the investment?

Screening Criteria Results

Alvaro Sifuentes reiterated that this meeting would focus only on the results of comparing the BRT Build Alternatives. The four BRT Build Alternatives were compared to one another, on a high level, based on six screening categories. This meeting's screening categories show how the alternatives performed for Transit Ridership, Travel Times, Person Throughput, and Accessibility. The next meeting will add Costs and Property Impacts to the performance discussion. He explained the concepts of person throughput which refers to how many people each section of roadway is expected to move, under each alternative, and accessibility which refers to the projected number of additional households that have access to jobs and activity centers due to the installation of the BRT alternative.

Alternatives are being compared to one another and presented as "higher," "medium," or "lower." The higher, medium, lower ranking is based on the standard deviation of the results. This same methodology was used throughout all screening criteria and would account for small and large variability in the results. During the next phase of study, specific numbers will be presented after detailed analysis is performed. This higher level discussion was designed to allow this meeting to focus on what elements of the BRT alternatives tested should be dropped from further consideration and what elements should continue to be studied.

The analysis presented at this meeting answers six questions at a high level.

- How does Observation Drive compare to Maryland 355, in the northernmost end of the study corridor?
 - Observation Drive has higher ridership.
 - Lower congestion would allow the BRT to operate quickly in mixed traffic on Observation Drive.
 - Important activity centers are planned along Observation Drive.
- How do the two southern termini (Bethesda and Grosvenor) compare?
 - 15 percent of the ridership is generated by extending service South of Grosvenor. This is true both in that portion and in the central portion of the corridor, north of Grosvenor, because it provides greater access to important activity centers.
- What is causing differences in ridership for new BRT service between BRT alternatives?
 - Higher ridership along Observation Drive alignment (greater number of large trip generators).
 - Extending service to Bethesda increases ridership by expanding the BRT market and providing access to additional activity centers.
 - In general the median running way sections have shorter BRT travel times generating higher ridership within those sections.
- What are the effects of lane repurposing?
 - Transit person throughput increases on all alternatives and all alignment sections compared to the No Build.

- In general, total person throughput decreases in sections where lane repurposing is being proposed due to a decrease in auto person throughput (caused by increased traffic congestion).
- How does the bi-directional section operate?
 - It creates longer travel times due to buses having to wait to pass one another.
 - Longer travel times lower the ridership projections.
- How do the median vs curb running ways compare?
 - Median options result in shorter BRT travel times, in general.
 - Median alternatives also generate higher ridership.

(Q) How can the standard deviation be used to compare alternatives with a sample size of only four?

(R) Essentially, it's just meant to be a way to compare the alternatives at a high level.

(Q) Is the reversible alternative to be located in the median? The median in the Bethesda segment was just built.

(R) Yes. Alternatives with reversible lanes would require removing medians. However details involving accommodating left turns must also be considered in detailed study.

(C) As an end of line Metrorail station, Grosvenor Station doesn't seem to have many destinations.

(R) Projections indicate demand for trips in nearby sections of the corridor north of Grosvenor.

(C) The regional model doesn't account for when travel happens, currently.

(R) The model provides a useful look at a typical weekday.

Tabletop Exercise

Yolanda Takesian concluded the formal part of the meeting and said that staff would be available to discuss the results of this analysis one-on-one and in small groups. She invited members to take as much time as they need to ask questions of project team staff so they would feel that they had a sufficient understanding to participate in the development of alternatives for further study that would be the focus of the next CAC meeting.