

MD 586/Veirs Mill Road Corridor Advisory Committee Meeting #4 Summary
Monday, September 21, 2015, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.
Rockville Memorial Library
21 Maryland Avenue, Rockville, MD 20850

Attendees:

| Members | |
|---|---|
| Mirza Donegan | Jessica Reynolds |
| Ethan Goffman | Michael A. Staiano |
| Jared Hautamaki | Thomas M. Strawbridge |
| Kathleen Hume | Mike Stein |
| Apologies | |
| Messanvi Richard Adjogah | Larry Finkelberg |
| James Agliata | Mary Means |
| Michael Audigé | Sara Moline |
| Galo A. Correa, Sr. | Philip C. Sossou |
| Timothy Crawford | Stacy L. Spann |
| D. Jonathan Fink | |
| Staff | |
| Facilitator – Denise Watkins, RK&K | Consultant Project Manager – Karen Kahl, RK&K |
| State Highway Administration Project Manager – Jamaica Arnold | Project Engineer – Dave Roberts, RK&K |
| State Highway Administration Community Outreach – Joe Harrison | Lead Facilitator – Andrew Bing, Kramer and Associates |
| Montgomery County DOT – Joana Conklin, Gary Erenrich, John Thomas. Rafael Olarte | Outreach Support/Scribe – Linda Moreland, Remline, Corp. |
| State Highway Administration – Tessa Young | Station Architects – Seth Garland, Bridget McCafferty, KGP Design Studio |
| Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) – Julie Hershorn, Ginger Murphy, Jerry Roberson, Yanira Rodriguez, André Stafford | |
| Public | |
| Rebecca Peele, Legislative Aide to Delegate Al Carr | Larry Cole, Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) |

Handouts:

- Meeting #4 Agenda
- Meeting #3 Summary
- Meeting #4 Presentation
- WMATA Q9 Update Presentation
- Summary of Related Events and Opportunities

- WMATA Survey Flier

Introductions:

Denise Watkins, MD 586 CAC facilitator, welcomed everyone to CAC Meeting #4 for the MD 586 Veirs Mill Road Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Study. She then had the CAC members and project staff members introduce themselves and explain their roles on the project. The general public then introduced themselves.

Denise reviewed the meeting format and agenda and told the group there will be an opportunity to ask questions during the summary at the end of the meeting. However, questions may be asked at any time during the presentation. She explained that questions from the general public may be asked at the end of the meeting if time permits. If there is no time at the end of the meeting for questions from the general public, a comment card may be filled out and submitted to Denise.

Denise mentioned a handout that summarized several events and opportunities for the CAC members, in particular a Purple Line Open House, County Executive Transit Task Force Forum, and a WMATA survey for the Q9 bus service. A flier for the survey was also distributed.

Purpose of the Meeting:

Denise explained that the purpose of the meeting is to provide information regarding the proposed WMATA Q9 service, to review the lane repurposing analysis that was conducted for Alternatives 4A and 4B, and to inform the CAC members about the various types of stations and the elements that are included in the areas around and at the stations.

WMATA Q9 MetroExtra Service:

Julie Hershorn, Manager of Metrobus Planning with WMATA, gave a presentation on the proposed Q9 MetroExtra Service. The Q9 would be a new limited stop route along Veirs Mill Road with service every 15 minutes. The money to fund the Q9 service would come from cost savings with the proposal to discontinue the segment between Wheaton and Silver Spring along the Q1, Q2, Q4, Q5, and Q6 routes. The C2 and C4 routes would also be adjusted as part of the State of Good Operations (SOGO) proposal. The proposed changes are expected to reduce travel times, increase reliability of the bus service, provide more capacity, and provide better productivity and overall system access.

The following comments and questions were discussed in response to the WMATA Q9 MetroExtra Service presentation:

- Q. How many riders are estimated to transfer from the Q service to the Y service and what is the cost to WMATA for providing the free transfer to the Red Line at Wheaton?
A. Julie responded that approximately 1,000 passengers would transfer to the Y service. Julie responded that there is no cost to provide the free transfer to the Red Line because the trains are already running with extra capacity. The free transfer would only apply to riders that travel between Wheaton and Silver Spring. In addition, riders have to be either coming from or going to a Q line bus in order to get the free transfer. Julie also mentioned that WMATA is working through all the possible scenarios to ensure that free transfer is used as intended and that there is no way to get around the system.

- Q. Why is it that with 9,000 riders a day on the Q line, there would only be 1,000 who would use the Wheaton to Silver Spring transfer?
A. Julie responded that those numbers are based on WMATA's origin-destination modeling. A lot of riders are already transferring at Wheaton, so these are only the people who are not transferring currently.
- Q. Is that because everybody gets on just past the Metro Station or is it because nobody is on the bus between those two. If you get on the bus most the time those people aren't going the whole route between Wheaton and Silver Spring. If they catch the bus at the Medical Center, how will that factor in the data as a rider?
A. Julie responded that if they are getting on at the Medical Center and getting off before they reach Wheaton station, they are not in this calculation.
- Q. How many people are expected to transfer to the Y service?
A. Julie replied that 1,000 people are expected to transfer to either rail or bus, but that WMATA does not have the detail on how many people would choose bus versus rail.
- Q. Wouldn't transferring to the Red Line add an extra half hour at least on most people's rides on weekends?
A. Julie explained that would probably not be the case because of all the traffic on Georgia Avenue between Wheaton and Silver Spring which affects the speed of the Q line bus operations in that segment. Julie added that another option is to transfer to the Y Line which currently has some extra capacity.
- Q. Would the Y lines have a problem trying to accommodate all the Q Line riders?
A. Julie responded that if the Y line becomes too crowded, they believe the riders will switch to rail.
- Q. Would the Q9 vehicles be articulated buses or regular buses?
A. Julie responded that the buses will be regular buses. However, they will be a different color and look different than the regular service. They would look like the bus on slide 10 of the WMATA presentation.
- Q. If the Wheaton elevator is out of service, how would handicapped riders transfer between the rail and bus services?
A. Julie responded that if the elevator is out of service, Metro will provide shuttle service.
- Q. How will these changes transition into the rapid transit system? Would it become the rapid transit system or operate beside rapid transit? Or would the Q9 be discontinued when BRT is implemented?
A. Gary Erenrich from Montgomery County responded that the goal is to move toward a BRT system. To some extent, implementing Q9 service is the first phase for implementing Alternative 2 (the TSM alternative). He explained that there are a lot of technologies available but no funds to implement them. He mentioned traffic signal priority (TSP), off board fare collection and the elimination of adding money to SmartTrip card on board as items that could be implemented if funds were available. These are part of a series of progressions that can lead to improved service, with the Q9 being the base.
- Q. What is load factor (referring to the appendix slide)?
A. Julie explained that the load factor explains how many people on the bus have a seat. A load factor of 1.2 indicates that some people are standing on the bus.

- Q. Instead of cutting all Q line service to Silver Spring, could some service remain in place?
 - A. Julie replied that WMATA can look at a phased approach, but the cost savings from reducing the Q service are what fund the Q9 service. WMATA is considering instituting the free rail transfer before the Q9 service starts to get users more familiar with the changes.

NEXT STEPS

Julie explained that the changes are part of the State of Good Operations Process. The Metro board held a public hearing last week, but are continuing to take input for those service changes until September 23. Julie encouraged the CAC members to complete the surveys and comment cards from WMATA if anyone wanted to provide input. The Metro board will vote on the whole package of State of Good Operations in the October/November timeframe.

Lane Repurposing: Alternatives 4A and 4B

Dave Roberts made a presentation on the lane repurposing analysis that was conducted to further analyze the possibility of retaining Alternatives 4A and 4B for further study. The results of the lane repurposing study showed that repurposing a general traffic lane to become a dedicated bus lane for the entire length of the project would not result in a greater person throughput than with no lane repurposing. For that reason, the team decided to not retain Alternatives 4A and 4B for further study. However, Dave noted that while lane repurposing along the entire corridor is not feasible, repurposing in smaller segments is an effective method for creating a dedicated bus lane and lane repurposing will be considered in the alternatives that were retained for detailed study.

Station Layout Overview

Seth Garland then gave an overview of the typical system elements located around the stations and at the stations. Seth also reviewed the various types of platforms, such as: median side, median center, and curb lane side.

The following comments and questions were discussed in response to the Station Layout presentation:

- Q. How are bicycles integrated into the BRT stations?
 - A. Seth responded that most BRT systems allow riders to bring bicycles on the bus. On articulated buses, there is usually an area near the node for storing the bicycles. Seth explained that bicycle racks on the front of the bus, such as the racks that many WMATA buses have, do not work well for BRT because the time it takes to load and unload the bicycles increases the dwell time of the bus at the station. Seth added that bicycle parking could also be incorporated at the stations.
- Q. How does the 14 inch platform height impact the bike lanes?
 - A. Seth explained that the slope to increase the curb height to 14 inches would be fairly shallow and it should not be an issue to move the bike up to the raised platform.
- Q. Have the locations of the station platforms been considered to reduce the required right of way?
 - A. Seth and Dave responded that the platform locations have been located to minimize the right of way impacts.

General Discussion

Joana Conklin from Montgomery County mentioned that the City of Rockville and Montgomery County have sent a letter to SHA requesting that no bike lanes be included in any of the alternatives within the City of Rockville limits. The City and County made the request to SHA because less right of way would be required without the bike lanes. In addition, the speeds along Veirs Mill Road create an unsafe cycling environment and the City and County believe that the service roads that run parallel to Veirs Mill Road would be better suited for the bicyclists to use. Joana will send a copy of the letter to Denise and she will forward it out to the CAC members.

Questions:

- Q. Would crossings and pathways be constructed between the service roads to make it easier for people riding bikes?
 - A. Joana replied that they haven't gotten that far but they can think about it. The City and County will work together on improvements to bike accommodation along the alternative routes should the State grant the bike waivers.
- Q. Are there any proposed bike sharing stations that will be installed along Veirs Mill Road?
 - A. Gary answered that a grant application for a bike share near Rockville Pike has been submitted and that there is no additional money for a bike share station along Veirs Mill Road. However, if additional bus service and other projects are implemented along Veirs Mill Road, installing bike share along the corridor may become a higher priority.

Conclusion:

Denise closed the meeting by stating that **Meeting #5 is anticipated to be in November or December 2015** and the agenda will include more information on the alternatives retained for detailed study. Once determined, the date and location will be emailed to the CAC members and posted to the County's website.