

**MD 586/Veirs Mill Road Corridor Advisory Committee Meeting #6 Summary  
Wednesday, February 17, 2016, 6:30-9:00 PM  
Montgomery County Executive Office Building, Auditorium  
101 Monroe Street, Rockville, MD 20850**

**Attendees:**

<b>Members</b>	
Messanvi Richard Adjogah	Jessica Reynolds
James Agliata	Michael A. Staiano
Ethan Goffman	Mike Stein
Kathleen Hume	Thomas M. Strawbridge
Sara Moline	
<b>Apologies</b>	
Michel Audigé	Jared Hautamaki
Galo A. Correa, Sr.	Mary Means
Timothy Crawford	Jessica Reynolds
Mirza Donegan	Philip C. Sossou
D. Jonathan Fink	Stacy L. Spann
Larry Finkleberg	
<b>Staff</b>	
<b>Facilitator</b> – Denise Watkins	<b>Consultant Project Manager</b> – Karen Kahl, RK&K
<b>State Highway Administration</b> – Carole Delion	<b>Project Engineer</b> – Dave Roberts, RK&K
<b>Montgomery County DOT</b> – Joana Conklin, Michael Kinney, Ligia Moss, Tom Pogue	<b>Lead Facilitator</b> – Andrew Bing, Kramer and Associates
<b>Maryland Transit Administration Program Director</b> – Jackie Seneschal	<b>Outreach Support/Scribe</b> – Danielle Lloyd, Linda Moreland, Remline, Corp.
<b>Maryland Transit Administration Deputy Program Director</b> – Kyle Nembhard	
<b>Public/Non-CAC Members</b>	
Barry Gore, City of Rockville	Larry Cole, MNCPPC
Luisa Montero-Diaz, Mid County RSC	

**Handouts:**

- Revised MD 586 CAC Staff Directory
- Meeting #6 Agenda
- Meeting #5 Summary

**Introductions:**

Denise Watkins, the MD 586 CAC facilitator, introduced herself and welcomed everyone to CAC Meeting #6 for the MD 586/Veirs Mill Road Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Study. Following Denise's introduction, the Staff members then introduced themselves and explained their roles on the project.

Denise gave an overview of the agenda and a brief recap of Meeting #5.

**Traffic Signal Presentation:**

Mike Kinney (MCDOT) gave an overview of the existing traffic signal system along Veirs Mill Road. While the traffic signals are owned by the State Highway Administration, they are maintained by Montgomery County. He explained that while signals are "smart," they are not yet adaptive. "Smart" signals include vehicle detection and have several different timing cycles depending on the time of day. Mike noted that the signals were re-timed within the last couple of years.

**Questions and Concerns**

- *What exactly is an adaptive system?* An adaptive system is one that operates on top of the existing traffic signal system. Using additional detection in advance of the traffic signal, it takes control of the traffic signals to ease congestion. Adaptive systems can make a large difference in overly congested corridors during peak hours.
- *Transit signal priority (TSP) is being considered for some of the alternatives retained for detailed study. Does anything like this already exist in Montgomery County, or where would you get that technology from?* MCDOT has been working with transit signal priority for 25 years. The signal system was updated between 2009 and 2012 and is now ready for transit signal priority. To install TSP, all that would need to be done is to purchase the software and hardware for the buses and roadside locations.

**Discussion of Alternatives:**

Denise Watkins explained that another meeting will be added to thoroughly review all the details for all of the alternatives. The topics in that meeting will include station prototype design and operations plans.

Dave Roberts gave a general refresher of the alternatives and how the alternatives were narrowed down to the smaller group of alternatives retained for detailed study (ARDS). The remainder of the meeting was spent going over the details of Alternatives 3 and 5B. These two alternatives involve BRT designs, as opposed to the No-Build and Transportation System Management alternatives that were reviewed at meeting #5.

**Alternative 3:**

Dave gave a more detailed description of Alternative 3. This alternative proposes a new BRT service in dedicated curb lanes, where feasible, and in mixed traffic otherwise. It also proposes new BRT stations at several intersections throughout the corridor. Alternative 3 includes bike lanes outside of the City of Rockville boundary wherever the roadway is widened and a bike lane can be provided without significantly increasing impacts. Bike lanes are not included within the City of Rockville per the request of the City and MCDOT due to estimated property impacts associated with adding the bike lanes, safety concerns, and the City's ability to add bike infrastructure on parallel city routes. Dave referenced the map the CAC members received at CAC Meeting #5 which shows the details of Alternative 3. Dave reminded the members that while the limits of the physical infrastructure improvements for all of the alternatives end at the Rockville metro station, the limits for

the proposed service extend north along MD 355 to Montgomery College. The operating plan calls for every 3<sup>rd</sup> bus to travel to Montgomery College.

### Questions and Concerns

- *Still concerned about the bike lane; the best practices out there have bike lanes separate from traffic to draw in more riders. Is there any way you could separate the bike lanes along the route?* – The plan is for bike lanes to be located on the service roads within the City of Rockville, so there would be separation from Veirs Mill Road. Outside of the City, the SHA policy of providing a new bike lane within the roadway controls the design.
- *In Alternative 3, are you talking about moving the powerlines?* Yes, utilities would be relocated wherever they would be impacted. This is the case for Alternative 5B as well.
- *Do you have a comparison of all factors of outside lanes versus median lanes from previous projects like this?* A matrix comparing all of the factors and impacts of all of the alternatives will be presented in a future CAC meeting. From a BRT perspective, Alternative 5B is better because it provides dedicated bus lanes separated from the general traffic lanes. However, Alternative 3 would be less expensive because the road would not need to be completely reconstructed as it would in Alternative 5B.
- *What is the difference in the bus service from all of these alternatives and running the Q9?* The next CAC meeting is anticipated to cover the topic of bus operations in more detail. The BRT bus service would have 6 and 10 minute headways during the peak and off-peak times, respectively. The Q9 proposal includes 15 and 30 minute headways. The BRT also includes other amenities such as state-of-the-art vehicles, off-board fare collection, and upgraded stations that allow for level boarding.

### **Review of Alternative 3 Maps**

Karen and Dave sat down with the group and reviewed the plans for Alternative 3. Each map showed the proposed physical infrastructure improvements. Comments from CAC members were written on sticky notes and placed on the maps. The following topics were discussed for the various locations throughout the corridor:

### General Questions and Concerns

- *There are a lot of students who are only taking the bus from Shady Grove Station, are you coordinating that with 355?* Yes, that is being coordinated.
- *What kind of security, like sufficient street lighting, will help people get to bus stops safely?* That is a detail that will be evaluated in a later stage of the project.
- *So the unloading points would be at the corner?* Yes, all stations are located at intersection corners in order to prevent the bus from unexpectedly stopping in the lane in between intersections, which would occur if the stations were not located at intersection corners
- *Is right of way the main constraint when deciding where to go into mixed traffic?* Yes, right of way is the main constraint in providing dedicated lanes.
- *The MD 355 study is going on right now, so how will that affect the portion where the MD 586 buses are on MD 355?* Depending on the selected alternative from the MD 355 study, the MD 586 buses may be able to use a dedicated lane along MD 355. One of the main advantages of BRT is that it is flexible and the MD 586 buses could adapt to whichever alternative is selected for the MD 355 corridor, which could include dedicated or mixed traffic lanes. Andrew noted that there will be probably be open houses for the MD 355 study this spring.
- *Would buses ever be run more frequently for congestion ease?* As of right now that is not in the plan, but there is always an option to add more buses to the service.

- *What criteria are you using to decide where to put stations?* Station locations were chosen based on prior studies, which looked at ridership potential and land use. Stations were placed to minimize right of way impacts. The station stop locations could be revised based on the traffic models that analyze ridership. Station spacing is also important to maximize the ridership.
- *Would there be less local service with the BRT or would the BRT be in addition to the local service?* The BRT service would be in addition to the local service. Possible changes to the local service to optimize overall transit ridership are being analyzed, however.
- *Would the BRT use the existing bus stops?* No, new BRT stations would be installed in Alternatives 3 and 5B. In general, BRT stations are larger and include more amenities than a traditional bus stop. Amenities at a BRT station could include: canopy coverage, real-time information, seating, landscaping, art, off-board fare collection, and system maps.

#### Park Road BRT Station

- *Why mixed traffic and not dedicated lanes?* Right of way constraints do not allow for dedicated lanes.
- *Would buses run more frequently to the college?* This could be determined once the services are operating.
- *How will one get from the BRT station to the Metrorail station?* New sidewalk could be added, but that is a detail that would be evaluated at a future date.

#### Park Road EB BRT Station

- *How safe is this location? Is it well lit?* This will be evaluated in more detail in a later stage of the project.

#### First Street

- *Will there be right of way takes in this location?* Yes, property would be required to construct the queue jump at this location.

#### Nimitz Avenue

- *Are there any conflicts with Rockville Bike Plan?* The City of Rockville's Draft Bikeway Master Plan (2014) recommends a shared use path along Veirs Mill Road from Bradley Avenue to Twinbrook Parkway. Since Alternative 3 would include repurposing of the existing curb lane in this section and no additional widening, the recommended shared use path would not be precluded by the alternative. Alternative 5B would include widening in this area so the location of the shared use path would have to be coordinated with the City to ensure it is still viable if Alternative 5B is implemented.

#### Rock Creek Regional Park

- *Does it make sense to have a station at the bridge over Rock Creek?* A station at the bridge would result in a long walking distance from the nearest intersection, Twinbrook Parkway. A station is included at the intersection just east of the bridge, Aspen Hill Road.
- *How wide is eastbound shoulder through the park? Will it be used entirely for the bus?* The existing shoulder is about 13 feet wide and it would be repurposed into a bus only lane.

#### Twinbrook Parkway

- *Why keep the median? What if you removed the median and put in a left turn?* The median separates the service road from Veirs Mill Road and in many cases, the median width is not constant. In many places

where there is a wide median, it narrows shortly before or after so there is no real option to use the median space effectively.

### Meadowhall Drive

- *Is there an opportunity for a bike lane?* Bike lanes were not added if no roadway widening was proposed. This location is also within the City of Rockville, where no bike lanes were provided as described earlier.
- *Could the station at Twinbrook Parkway be moved closer to the shopping center?* The team is looking at the possibility of moving the Twinbrook station to Atlantic Avenue. The City Planning Department is looking at the station locations in this area.

### Aspen Hill Road

- *Where are the utility poles?* Between the sidewalk and road.
- *The station along westbound immediately after the light will back up traffic.* The right lane approaching the intersection is for right turners only, so only buses should be going straight through the intersection.

### Turkey Branch Parkway

- *Are flashing lights going up at Turkey Branch?* SHA is working on a project to install overhead flashing yellow beacons with trail crossing warning signs for both directions at the Matthew Henson Trail crossing. Construction of the beacons is anticipated to start in late spring.

### Randolph Road

- *Could there be corporate sponsorships of the bus stops?* This is a detail that will be looked at in a later stage of the project.
- *Could the westbound station be moved to west side intersection?* This would impact parking to the shopping center, but the team will consider this location.
- *The eastbound stop should be moved to the other side of the intersection because that is the corner used by the locals.* The business on the west side of the intersection would be displaced if the station is moved. The station is on the east side to minimize impacts.

### Connecticut Avenue

- *Station location for WB side?* The team will consider moving the station to the other side of the intersection.
- *Are the BRT stations raised? Can local buses also use the stations?* The platforms will be 12-14 inches, which is higher than a normal curb. We are looking into whether local buses will be able to use the higher platforms.

### Newport Mill Road

- *Why is the eastbound station on the east side of the road?* This layout resulted in fewer impacts.

### Pendleton Drive

- *Can you use service roads for drop offs?* There could be room in the service roads for people to drop-off BRT riders.

- *What is the philosophy of balancing impacts with providing better service?* Generally, if there is an improvement that would put a company out of business, or impact several homes in a row, alternative options were evaluated to minimize those impacts.
- *Can you have fare machines at local stops?* WMATA is looking into off-board fare collection for the local bus stops.
- *How much would Alternative 3 cost?* The cost estimates are still being developed and will be presented in the comparison matrix at a future CAC meeting.

### Georgia Avenue

- *Make sure you work with redevelopment at Wheaton Station.* The BRT could be modified to match any redevelopment at the Wheaton station, just as the existing local services would need to be modified to accommodate the changes.

### **Alternative 5B:**

Dave gave an explanation of the alternative and how it differs from Alternative 3. Alternative 5B would include a dedicated bi-direction median lane between MD 28 and Twinbrook Parkway, and a two-lane dedicated median to Claridge Road. In all other segments, the BRT would operate in mixed traffic. The station locations are the same as Alternative 3 and the BRT would continue to Montgomery College as it would in Alternative 3.

### Questions and Concerns:

- *What would happen if a bus breaks down in the one-lane section?* The bus drivers would likely be in constant communication with each other, so they would know if a one-lane section is not passable. If a bus is broken down in the one-lane section, buses in service could move to mixed traffic to avoid significant delays.
- *What would be the implications of weather and snow removal?* Alternative 5B would see more difficulties with things like snow removal due to the raised median between the BRT and general purpose lanes. Additional storm drains would be needed for drainage in the dedicated median sections.
- *Where there are currently median breaks, will they be closed?* Yes, any existing, unsignalized median break would be closed in Alternative 5B.
- *Would the median lanes be exclusive for the BRT buses?* Yes, the dedicated median lanes would only be used by BRT buses and local buses would continue to use the general purpose lanes.
- *The alternative takes away a lot of the existing grass medians. Is stormwater management being considered?* Yes, a drainage analysis was conducted and stormwater management facilities will be provided where feasible.
- *Do you have an estimated cost comparison for the alternatives?* Alternative 5B would be more expensive than Alternative 3. Cost estimates will be provided to the CAC at a future meeting.

### **Review of Alternative 5B Maps**

#### MD 28

- *Would these properties be displacements?* Yes, those properties would likely be displaced.
- *Would a “walk” light be installed to help with crossing the intersection?* Yes, pedestrian signals would be installed at all signalized intersections if not already present.

#### Turkey Branch Parkway

- *This area is prone to flooding.* The team will look into this to see if SHA is aware of the problem.

**Meeting Wrap Up:**

The next meeting (Meeting #7) will include the topics of bus operations and BRT stations. Meeting #8 will include the side by side comparison of all the alternatives.

**Comment Cards:**

- Suggestion to move Twinbrook Station to Atlantic Ave. to keep people from walking across Twinbrook Parkway
- Suggestion to move Veirs Mill/Randolph Station in front of Stonybrook Square or Gridley Avenue
- Run Q9 more frequently starting before BRT
- Fund Q9 right now
- Option 5 flooding at Turkey Branch, crossing Park Road would need better lighting, night safety, disabled access from service roads

**Next Steps:**

- The meeting summary will be posted to the website after it has been reviewed by the CAC members
- **Meeting #7 is scheduled for Wednesday, April 13, 2016 from 6:30 – 8:30 PM in the 9<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room at the Executive Office Building.**