

## CORRIDOR ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC) MEETING #4 SUMMARY

JUNE 12, 2024  
 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

ATTENDEES:

CAC Members
Karen Guertler
Daniel Melnick

Members of the Public	
Bart Gerstenblith	Laura Winick
Bella Rose Liu	Mollie Habermeier
Brian Ross	Olivier Frecaut
Donald Allen	Peggy Schwartz
Edward Reich	Peter James
Eugene Cornelius	Peter Katz
Gail Landy	Roger Fox
Jack Schwartz	Steven Robins
Jane Cunningham	Suzan D
Karin Bolte	Theodore Lavine
Kristine Warner	

Montgomery County Staff and Consultant Team	
Jiaxin Tong	MCDOT
Dan Sheridan	MCDOT
Rebecca Mellema	MCDOT
Kate Widness	Kimley-Horn
Lucas Muller	Kimley-Horn
Emma Sexton	Kimley-Horn
Paul Elman	Kimley-Horn
Jessica Klion	Foursquare ITP

## PRESENTATION OVERVIEW:

- **Welcome and Introductions**
  - Project manager Jiaxin Tong welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave a brief overview of meeting expectations, zoom software, and the meeting agenda.
- **Study Overview and Status**
  - An overview of the planning study termini and outcomes.
  - Update on the project schedule.
  - A high-level overview of recent and ongoing project analysis tasks.
- **Overview of Alternatives**
  - An overview of the four alternatives being evaluated as part of the alternatives analysis, including intersection treatment elements, maps of alignments and station locations, and typical cross-sections for the build alternatives.
  - Alternatives:
    - **No Build Alternative:** Includes all infrastructure and developments that will be built out regardless of if the North Bethesda BRT is implemented.
    - **Transportation System Management (TSM) Alternative:** Includes increased service levels and potential Transit Signal Priority (TSP).
    - **Build Alternative 1 – Maximum Build Out:** Alignment with 2013 Transit Corridors Master Plan and additional multimodal and land use plan vision.
    - **Build Alternative 2 – Targeted Investment:** Strategic alignment with sector plan growth area.
    - **Note:** *No Build and TSM alternatives include the newly installed protected bike lanes on Old Georgetown Road.*
- **Alternatives Analysis Framework**
  - An explanation of how the metrics were developed from the project goals and objectives, and which study goals each metric addresses.
- **Alternatives Analysis Preliminary Results**
  - An overview of preliminary results for each metric measured in the alternatives analysis, except for Ridership Forecasts (forthcoming).
  - Final alternatives analysis results will be shared in the upcoming formal engagement period.
- **Next Steps**
  - An overview of the remaining technical and engagement components in the study schedule.

## QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS (BOTH “CHAT” AND VERBAL):

- Does “dedicated lanes” mean they run in the median, not the curb?
  - It means both—it may either be median-running or curb-running BRT lane.
- Does this project utilize Federal funds?

- It is still too early to talk about funding, but for any major County investments, the plan is source at least some funding from federal funds. As for this project, we have not gotten to this point yet. It should also be noted that there is a substantial process to get approved for federal funding.
- Where are you planning to get the land to build two dedicated lanes on old Georgetown? There does not appear to be room. The road is a mess right now and when Woodward opens, it will be even worse.
  - There is an increased right of way width, so as part of the current assumption, there would be some impacts to adjacent properties. But for Alternative 1, the bike lanes would be moved to the sidepath. The general purpose lanes would remain the same.
- The Tuckerman Lane stations seem very close together. What is the advantage of having both?
  - We are not necessarily proposing that there are stations in both locations. That is something that is being evaluated in the alternatives analysis and will be determined in the development of the preferred alternative.
- How often would the existing bus service on the corridor run?
  - Existing bus service would be replaced by the BRT service. The frequency of BRT service would vary by alternative: For the TSM alternative, it would run every 15 minutes. For the two build alternatives, service would be every 7.5 minutes. This is quite frequent, and one of the most critical benefits of the build alternatives.
- Reducing the number of transfers required for a trip can significantly reduce travel time. So, to increase access to jobs, has any thought been given to a single BRT route running from the eastern county, through North Bethesda, to Westfield Montgomery, Suburban Hospital, and Medical Center or downtown Bethesda? At the eastern end, it might connect with one of the other BRT routes rather than terminating in North Bethesda.
  - This BRT is already part of the County's robust BRT network--for instance, to the North of the North Bethesda BRT corridor, the Randolph Road BRT is planned. The project team is testing this as we continue to explore ridership, and testing how connecting to those other BRT and transit lines might impact ridership.
- How much additional time would actually be saved by a dedicated lane or timed stop lights? The Ride On 26 route from North Bethesda to Westfield Montgomery is already a short trip – about 15 minutes during rush hour. Increasing frequency of the existing route would reduce wait times for passengers, saving them time door to door.
  - You are correct, currently there is not much congestion for the short trip. But in the future, due to the increased congestion, that time would increase, so travel time savings from dedicated lanes or timed stop lights would be beneficial in the future.
- Would residents along the corridor have to look out of their home and see a bus stop? What would be the visual effect?
  - The design of the stations would align with the Flash BRT stations.
- What problem is this BRT trying to solve?
  - We are planning for the future. There will be a lot of changes to land uses in the area, with increased development. This BRT is potentially serving that growth.

- What are build alternatives 1 and 2, again?
  - The project team provided an additional walkthrough of the infrastructure assumptions and alignments associated with each alternative.
- Knowing the area is predominately single-family homes, and knowing you won't have parking around these stations, the assumption is that the riders would be coming from other services (bus). I need to understand the context of this as not just an isolated corridor. What is the point?
  - Showing connections to other routes is something we are considering and should be more transparent in the presentation in the future. We are not showing ridership right now because we are still working on permutations for how it might be impacted by connecting it to the broader transit network.
- Are you hoping to choose stops after this?
  - These are just preliminary findings. We will share ridership results at a later time, as well as the preferred alternative.
- It seems like you are taking a one-dimensional approach to the analysis. It's about people's whole lives, not just where they live and work.
  - You make a good point—we will share more details in the following meeting.
- Is this an intermodal transfer or a seamless transfer?
  - We can get back to you on that. Please reach out using my contact information in the presentation.
- The people living along the corridor want to be directly involved in making some of these decisions, because they will affect our lives, houses, etc. in a big way. Two things to consider in your future process: 1) very important that there be a clear statement of the timeline. Is the future 1, 7, or 20 years away? 2) have more opportunity for people who live along the route to provide input.
  - We will definitely take both things into consideration for future engagement.
- I have been trying to get other BRTs to incorporate autonomous guideways into the designs to support more potential federal funding. I would suggest using e-trikes being used all over Europe, which can be delivered straight to your homes. They are being implemented in Northern California. What would it take for the project team to study alternative forms of transportation like this?
  - Thank you for your comment.
- I'm with the Woodward Community. I just want to highlight that you are already doing an analysis without ridership results. Even with the travel time savings you mention, it's related to round trips, which people aren't doing. In addition, you already have an existing bus route. When considering no build vs. build alts, you may be able to address the mobility issues with just using the current infrastructure you currently have.
  - You make a good point of how can we build on what we have, especially in the short-term. The build alternatives are easiest to picture because there are infrastructure changes, but we have not picked an alternative, and there are options like no build and the TSM alternative that are also very possible options. The TSM increases frequency of service without physical

infrastructure—you don't get transit travel time savings from dedicated lanes, but lower infrastructure impacts and lower costs. If you feel this is an important option, please voice that.

- In addition, a few people have also mentioned existing Ride On Route 26 that interacts and/or overlaps with a lot of this potential BRT alignment. We would not be proposing to operate both of those services on top of each other. The BRT would essentially replace the Route 26.
- Where is the analysis on impact to homeowners?
  - We are still currently at a 1000-ft level of analysis, so as the project advances MCDOT will do as much possible to reduce impacts to homeowners.
- Are any of the options [alternatives] better for emergency response?
  - This wasn't an explicit metric that we analyzed. Certainly when you start talking about physical separation for dedicated transit lanes, that can be a consideration. Also, it should be noted that certain parts of the country allow emergency vehicles to use dedicated lanes.
- Is there any active planning for a BRT between Montgomery County and Tysons? Or is that just for future consideration?
  - Fairfax County and Montgomery County have been working in general to identify bus service between Tysons and Montgomery County, but much of this would depend on the express lanes on I-495. So, yes, there is active planning going on.
- Are you saying you are going to take land from the community or not?
  - Taking land from the community is certainly not the intention. There is much to still decide, various stages of engineering to do, and MCDOT will do what they can to minimize impacts.
- Why not run the TSM every 7.5 min?
  - The project team used 15-min for this round of analysis, and this could certainly be tested and refined over time to see the impacts/benefits of a faster frequency.
- I wonder whether fewer stations will increase walk times, which might actually increase total travel time for those who live along the route.
  - You are correct in thinking that station locations and station spacing are a tricky tradeoff. For instance, how a bus should deviate from the main road in order to hit a destination versus getting the travel time savings from being on a more direct route.
- I have ridden the 26 and 96 before and live along Old Georgetown Road. I have never seen the buses full. Does this BRT replace the current bus service or will the BRT run in addition to the current bus routes (e.g. route 26). If the intent is that they will both run, why not just increase the frequency from every 30 minutes to every 15 minutes and leave the road as is?
  - The project team spoke to this question earlier, when addressing a similar question.
- The problem with Route 26 is that the bus comes from a long distance away. If there was a bus that followed the same route but started at North Bethesda Metrorail Station, this would greatly increase functioning. If you didn't build it as a BRT, but just put in a bus following that route that ran more frequently, maybe that would solve the problem without spending \$100 million dollars.
  - Thank you. We will relay those thoughts to our partners at the County.

- Will there be a survey to homeowners in the surrounding areas? And will the results be made publicly available?
  - We had a survey that we distributed earlier in the project, of which results are summarized online on the project website and project StoryMap. This meeting is also not part of a formal engagement period. We are gathering comments and providing an update but will engage with the CAC and the public more formally in the future.
- Do you have a way of analyzing in your ridership studies that if existing regular bus frequencies vastly increased, that their ridership would increase in proportion?
  - Models we use can certainly test sensitivities, and there is a lot of research about the relationship between frequency and ridership.
- So is there joint planning among the BRT project, Ride On, and WMATA?
  - RideOn and WMATA are both stakeholders in this study, and there is often ongoing coordination beyond just this BRT. As it gets closer to implementation, these agencies will coordinate more closely.
- In your analysis, will you include in your analysis a No Build Alternative, but increase the frequency of the bus service in that alternative?
  - You are ultimately describing the TSM alternative, which is part of our analysis and on the table as an option. The No Build alternative does not include any increased frequency, but the TSM does include increased service levels. For the traffic results specifically, the TSM wasn't shown because it would essentially be the same as the No Build, but in future presentations we can certainly clarify that.
- Two things that concern me. Firstly, bike lanes installed by the state without community involvement, and secondly, a new school right in the middle of the corridor where you hope to have rapid transit. We do feel you are open to our thoughts, but it feels like a huge step has been jumped over by not just trying to look at ridership, increased frequency, and consider adding a few more buses to see what happens.
  - Thank you for your comment.