

Meeting Summary

US 29 North Corridor Advisory Committee

Meeting #15

Monday, February 26, 2018, 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

East County Regional Services Center

3300 Briggs Chaney Road, Silver Spring, MD 20904

Participants

CAC Members (X for in attendance, blank for regrets)			
Fisseha Adugna	X	Peter Myo Khin	X
Carole Ann Barth		Shane Pollin	X
John Bowers		Rob Richardson	X
Brian Downie	X	Julian Rosenberg	
Oladipo Famuyiwa		Sebastian Smoot/Sheila Stewart	X
Kevin Gunthert		Joseph Tahan	X
Latisha Johnson		Dan Wilhelm	X
Bernadine Karns		Eric Wolvovsky	
Matthew Koch	X	Ayana Lambert	
Members of the Public		Affiliation	
Harriet Quinn			

Staff

Joana Conklin, MCDOT
 Dan Hibbert, MCDOT
 Mike Nessel, MCDOT
 Clayton Evans, Arts on the Block
 Kristine Aono, Arts on the Block
 Jewru Bandeh, Dir. Eastern Regional Services Center

Rick Kiegel, Consultant Project Manager, RK&K
 Raulf Cheng, RK&K
 Kim Troiani, RK&K
 Jessica Alvarez, Foursquare ITP
 Joshua Diamond, Foursquare ITP
 William Shuldiner, Foursquare ITP

Welcome and Introductions

The meeting commenced at 6:35 p.m.

Rick Kiegel of RK&K welcomed everyone. He explained that because the project was moving into Final Design, he will now be serving as meeting facilitator. The main project contacts are now Rick, and MCDOT's Joana Conklin and Corey Pitts.

US 29 Mobility and Reliability Study

Joana Conklin of MCDOT introduced the US 29 Mobility and Reliability Study. A hearing is scheduled for the approval of funding. This study will look at the feasibility of a median busway on US 29, south of Tech Road. This study will include reviewing all the previous studies and models which have looked at US 29 and evaluating the benefits and impacts of those recommendations. It will identify potential mobility enhancements for local buses, autos, BRT, pedestrians, and bikes. It will look at strategies such as signage and striping and consider impacts to neighborhood access. Cost-effectiveness will also be an important consideration in this study. Any strategies showing merit would need to be adopted and advanced through design. Notice To Proceed will be issued to the contractor shortly. The CACs will be kept up-to-date on the progress of this study.

Questions:

QUESTION (Q): How long will the study last?

RESPONSE (R): It will be a 12-month study and will be an amendment to the FY 2018 Capital Improvements Program.

Meeting Overview and Project Update

Rick Kiegel provided an update of the project status. There have been noteworthy modifications to four BRT stations and some of the Bikeshare stations have been moved. The Bikeshare changes are to create more of a hub and spoke network, rather than a linear system.

At the end of November 2017, the 35 percent design was completed. The project is now ready to move into 85 percent, and then 100 percent design. This includes details such as finalizing the station architecture, platform design, and the landscaping. When the plans are finalized, they will be ready to turn over to the contractor to build. As part of this detailed design, the cost estimate will become far more precise. The cost estimate at 35 percent included a large contingency to cover the undetermined aspects of the project. As the plans get more refined

and the materials are better quantified, the contingency goes down. The County will review the cost estimate and compare it to the bids received for the project.

The project is also preparing to go through the County's Mandatory Referral process. We will submit the project to Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) and they will give us comments. We will develop responses. Following that, there will be a public meeting with a presentation to the Planning Board.

Questions:

QUESTION (Q): Is it considered a Public Hearing?

RESPONSE (R): It is a hearing held during the Planning Board's regularly scheduled sessions, to receive community comments.

Arts On The Block

Clayton Evans, Deputy Director of Arts on the Block (AOB), and Kristine Aono, Teaching Artist, made a presentation about AOB. The organization is in its 15th year. It is unique in the region in that it brings together art, design, business, and community development with young people. Their flagship program is an apprenticeship program called Pour Your ART Out (PYAO), AOB works with local high school students who apply to be in the program. Teaching artists act as mentors, and the students are given real world experience in the design and creation of public art, including the opportunity to meet with clients. Mr. Evans and Ms. Aono showed photographs of AOB work and explained that the art for this project would likely be rectangular mosaic panels made of unglazed porcelain tiles. They provided samples of the tiles. The images would be developed reflecting community input gathered at the upcoming project Open Houses.

Comments:

- The artwork should be placed in a visible location and possibly there should be two to three pieces of art at each station.
- Use colors that complement the design and aesthetic consistency throughout BRT lines.

Questions:

Q: Will there be attention to safety for pedestrians, will the tiles be slippery?

R: The tile has been chosen for its durability and non-slip surface.

Q: Have there been problems with vandalism in the past?

R: There is not usually a problem because of durability of the mosaics. Only one problem occurred on a knee wall, but proper cleansers removed the damage.

Q: Who will provide the funding for this?

R: Commissions are being funding by MCDOT.

Q: Could the mosaics be included on vertical elements of the project to be more visible?

R: That could certainly be considered.

Breakout Sessions - Design Updates

Rick Kiegel and Raulf Cheng, both of RK&K, led two breakout sessions to go over the design updates. The updates include modifications to four stations and changes to the Bikeshare locations.

Fenton Street Station

The northbound Fenton Street station has been moved to the south side of the intersection.

The previous location had physical constraints on the platform size because of limited sidewalk space and business access. In addition, immediately south of the intersection is a stop for local buses. The BRT bus would have to wait for those buses to clear and then pull forward to line up tightly to the BRT station platform.

For this reason, the northbound Fenton Street Station has been relocated just south of the existing bus stop. The bus will be able to easily pull up to the curb, as it will already be in the right lane. Because this is in downtown Silver Spring and space is very constrained, the station will not include a canopy. However, the building adjacent to the proposed station has a covered recessed area that could be used by riders if the weather is bad. Because there are utilities close to the building, the platform would not extend all the way to the building face. In addition, because there is an alley just south of the new station location, the platform would be limited to 20 feet long. Only the center door would be near-level boarding, but the front door would be available to anyone in a wheelchair who requires the use of the ADA ramp.

Comments:

- This will work well with the recessed area in the building.

Questions:

Q: Will there be handicap accessibility with shorter platform?

R: The front door will be available to those in a wheelchair.

Q: Won't making the sidewalk narrower make it very congested in this location?

R: While the sidewalk behind the platform will be narrow, the platform itself will still be available for through-passing pedestrians to use, as it has ramps at either end.

Northbound University Boulevard Station

The northbound University Boulevard station has been moved south to the intersection with Lanark Way.

The previous location was situated in the right-turn lane for eastbound University Boulevard. It was also immediately past the exit for the Montgomery Blair High School parking lot. This could create conflicts with traffic. Because of the turn lane to eastbound University Boulevard, and because the right-most through lane ends after westbound University Boulevard, the BRT bus would need to move over two lanes to the left in a very short distance. While the previous location was closer for transfers to other bus routes, these factors made it not an optimal location for the stop.

The proposed new location is approximately 300 feet south on US 29, between Lanark Way and the exit for the school parking lot. There is an existing local bus stop at this location, which would be shifted north about 50 feet. SHA has decision-making authority about the addition of new signals on US 29, but if approved, the intersection with Lanark Way would be signalized and a new pedestrian crosswalk created to provide safe pedestrian across US 29.

Comments:

- Plantings in the median would help to deter mid-block crossings

Questions:

Comment (C): It is difficult for pedestrians crossing safely.

R: The community has asked for a crosswalk at this location.

Tech Road Station

The Bikeshare stations have been removed from this location. At this point, there are not many bike destinations in the vicinity. As future development occurs, the demand may come as well, and Bikeshare could be added. The sidewalk on the southbound side to the park-and-ride lot remains.

Comments:

- It makes sense to remove the Bikeshare stations at this time.
- The modifications to sidewalks will result in a “goat path” developing where people would cut through. Should consider adding a crosswalk across Prosperity Drive.

- Once Viva White Oak opens, Tech Road will likely be a major route for a Cherry Hill/Randolph Road BRT. The existing bus stops on Tech Road could be used for this service. It could travel a similar route to the existing Ride On 10.

Questions:

Q: What about dockless bikeshare? It appears to be much more popular in the area.

R: The dockless bikeshare currently in Silver Spring is being tested at this time. There is no certainty that they will remain, and at this time, Montgomery County is still part of the Capital Bikeshare system.

Briggs Chaney Park and Ride Station

The County has decided not to buy buses with doors on both sides because there are very few manufacturers of these buses in the US and doors on the left-hand side of the vehicle results in elimination of seats inside the bus. US-made buses are required under the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA's) Buy America Requirements. This would mean that the County would have little leverage in negotiating prices.

As a result, the station at the park-and-ride has been redesigned to locate a sawtooth bus bay on the right side of the bus loop for BRT. Layover spaces will be on the left side of the loop. The buses will pull up to the station stop, unload passengers, and then pull over to the left to layover. If necessary, the driver could loop around by pulling out of the bus area and reentering. This will be the pattern when the bus returns to service. Local buses could also use this layover area, so buses would no longer layover on the street. This station still includes a bus operator comfort station.

Another change is a reconfiguration to separate the transit area from the access to the park-and-ride. Both regular vehicles and buses will use the entrance off Gateshead Manor Way, but the buses will turn left into the dedicated transit area, while the cars continue forward into the park-and-ride lot. The existing center entrance to the park-and-ride will be eliminated.

Questions:

Q: Will the handicapped shuttle at the entrance to the loop be impacted by the changes?

R: No, the shuttle will not be impacted.

Bikeshare Locations

A map was presented showing the changes to the Bikeshare locations. The map showed the location of the original nine facilities, some of which were eliminated, and the new locations of the new facilities. The current plan has ten facilities. As stated earlier, the Bikeshare changes to are create more of a hub and spoke network, rather than a linear system. Now, the

Bikeshare locations are clustered at activity centers or near areas of denser housing development. These bike stations are just the initial stations. More will likely be added in the future.

Comments:

- Bikeshare locations could be placed at Food and Drug Administration campus.
- MCDOT should also place one at FDA so people will ride to work (and not pay). It will be worth relocating a station from another less densely populated place.
- Space should be left at the BRT stations for dockless bikeshare.
- There should be a Bikeshare station at the White Oak Shopping Center

Questions:

C: The County is not approving permit for a Bikeshare station at the Duffie Companies building on New Hampshire Avenue. There is a 7' x 53' area available.

R: Joana will follow up with Shane Pollin on this.

Local Bus Service Concepts

Jessica Alvarez and Joshua Diamond of Foursquare ITP presented maps of the existing bus services along the corridor, and maps of some suggested changes to the bus routes. Examples were shown for feeder bus routes, crosstown bus routes, and express bus routes along the corridor. Participants were asked to review both sets of maps and provide comments for needed service types, levels of service and coverage along the corridor. It was emphasized that the maps showed proposed concepts that are still under discussion at this time. WMATA and Ride-on are different agencies and both have their own processes (including public outreach) to implement service changes.

General Comments:

- There is a need for more Ride On routes going into the neighborhoods.
- No other service is needed on US 29, north of Tech Road
- It is important for the "crosstown" service to have 15-minute headways. Is the frequency of service going to be increased?
- Since we don't need all the existing routes on US 29 anymore, we can reallocate the resources to other areas and increase the level of service off US 29.
- Services need to better match work hours.
- Better weekend service is needed (Sunday service especially).
- Consider more consolidated services.
- Need to really focus on where transferring makes sense, frequency is key.
- By the time Ride On routes get to University Boulevard, they are full.

- WMATA express routes are empty when passing University Boulevard but can't stop.
- Ride On is fairly unreliable, but more customer-friendly than WMATA Metrobus.
- Should consider deviated fixed-route.
- Don't cut local service to Silver Spring.
- Don't force people to get onto the BRT.
- Don't have BRT service within the Beltway, just leave local services.

Map 1 – Downtown Silver Spring to University Boulevard

- Ride On 8 should be a more direct route to Holy Cross Hospital.
- Eliminate Route 19 and create a neighborhood circulator.
- Route 8 should continue to connect with Downtown Silver Spring.
- Provide more service to the Forest Glen Metro Station.

Map 2 – Burnt Mills to Stewart Lane

- Is Metrobus Z2 still necessary? Can BRT take over some of the passengers and the Z2 connect with the Metrobus C8 on New Hampshire Avenue? There needs to be a better connection between US 29 and New Hampshire Avenue.
- Be sure to factor in the Purple Line stations when designing routes.
- Oak Leaf Drive should be served in both directions, it might be dangerous to cross US 29 to get to this area. The left-hand turn into Oak Leaf Drive is going to be eliminated.

Map 3 – Tech Road to Castle Ridge

- Service around Old Columbia Pike and Cherry Hill Road is needed.
- Service is needed on Galway Drive and in Calverton.
- Consider routing up into the FDA campus.
- Fairland could use more direct access to the BRT.
- Provide more connections between Prince George's County and the BRT.
- Keep Z8 on Old Columbia Pike.
- Paint Branch High School doesn't have a connection with US 29.

Map 4 – Briggs Chaney to Burtonsville

- The Metrobus Z11 should be eliminated, because BRT duplicates it.
- The Burtonsville Revitalization Plan needs to be considered.
- Consider express service from Burtonsville Crossing.

- Keep Z8 on Old Columbia Pike.

Adjourn

Rick Kiegel thanked everyone for attending and reminded them to go to the Open Houses, March 15, 20, and 21. All three Open Houses will have the same information, so pick the one that is most convenient!

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.