

## Meeting Summary

### US 29 South Corridor Advisory Committee

#### Meeting #15

Wednesday, March 7, 2018, 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Silver Spring Civic Building

1 Veterans Place, Silver Spring MD 20910

### Participants

CAC Members (X for in attendance, blank for regrets)			
Alan Bowser		Tom Lansworth	
Ilhan Cagri		Tracey Lewis	
Barbara Ditzler	X	Anita Morrison	X
Sean Emerson	X	Dan Reed	X
Roberta Faul-Zeitler		Herb Simmons	
Brian Feit	X	Tina Slater	X
Juanita Stewart	X	Brad Stewart	
Avi Helpert		Mel Tull	X
Ken Jones (Central CAC)	X	Lori Zeller	X
Linda Keenan			
Members of the Public		Affiliation	
Jim Williamson			
Harriet Quinn			

### Staff

Corey Pitts, Project Manager, MCDOT  
 Chris Conklin, MCDOT  
 Dan Sheridan, MCDOT  
 Mike Nesselt, MCDOT  
 Matthew Crooks WMATA  
 Clayton Evans, Arts on the Block  
 Kristina Aono, Arts on the Block

Rick Kiegel, Consultant Project Manager, RK&K  
 Raulf Cheng, RK&K  
 Monica Meade, RK&K  
 Jessica Alvarez, Foursquare ITP  
 Joshua Diamond, Foursquare ITP  
 William Shuldiner, Foursquare ITP  
 Reemberto Rodriguez, MC Regional Services Center

## Welcome and Introductions

The meeting commenced at 7:01 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

Dan Sheridan of MCDOT provided an update on the US 29 Mobility and Reliability Study recently approved by the County Council. 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): Was the County Council vote unanimous?*

*RESPONSE (R): Yes.*

*Q: Will the current US 29 BRT stations be compatible with the new median lane design?*

*R: Yes, but any related construction will not likely occur for many years, assuming a decision is made to implement it.*

## 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 to are 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:

*Q: Will this cost include the roadway improvements?*

R: Yes, it will, but there are only minimal roadway improvements as part of this project. The total cost will be approximately \$30 Million, of which about \$14 Million is for the buses.

*Q: Aren't shoulder improvements needed for this project?*

R: Yes, but the State Highway Administration (SHA) will make those repairs.

*Q: How many of the BRT Stations are covered in the Emerson/Smoot plan?*

R: Three are within the limits: Burnt Mills, University Boulevard, and Fenton Street. But the study scope does not include a median bus lane south of Sligo Creek Parkway, so only the Burnt Mills and University Boulevard station would potentially be affected.

## Arts On The Block

Clayton Evans, Deputy Director of Arts on the Block (AOB), and Kristine Aono, Lead 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 photos of local 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 will be developed reflecting community input gathered at the upcoming project Open Houses.

The program will start this summer, so the interns will be at the March Open Houses to talk to the public.

Questions:

*Q: Who will install the art work?*

R: A local professional installer who is experienced with this kind of work.

*Q: If the stations are relocated in the future, could the art be moved?*

R: Previous works have not been moved, but there is no reason to think they could not be relocated.

*Q: Is there a commitment from the County to maintain the work?*

R: The porcelain tiles are very durable, and the panels require little maintenance. We certainly hope the County will be committed to maintaining them.

## 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:

- The new station would make it easier for BRT vehicles to serve the station.
- Some CAC members felt that using the recessed area of the Mall building for a shelter is not an ideal alternative to having a shelter.

- The local bus stop could be moved across Fenton Street to the original BRT station location. The buses that turn on Fenton (e.g., Metrobus F4) have their stops on Fenton Street. This would reduce traffic for both BRT and buses that turn on Fenton Street.

Questions:

*Q: Will the existing canopy stay at the local bus stop?*

R: Yes, we are not changing anything about the local bus stop.

*Q: Could you have one big full canopy that extended to include both the local bus stop and the BRT station? Lighting under the shelter could make it more attractive.*

R: That would be up to the County. We can explore that option.

*Q: Why not co-locate the local and BRT bus stops? The BRT stop location could be identified with special signage, as is done with Muni in San Francisco.*

R: The intention is to brand the BRT with unique stations and signage.

*Q: Will there be a problem with bunching of the BRT if there are buses queued up at the local bus stop?*

R: We are confident that the BRT can still serve the station with two local buses waiting at the local bus stop in front of it. If there are three or more, the BRT will have to wait.

*Q: How many trucks use the alley south of the station? Will this cause a problem for the BRT?*

R: We don't anticipate this being a problem. However, the trucks will have to wait if the bus is blocking the alley. They do this now with local buses.

## Northbound University Boulevard Station

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

The previous location was 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 of University Boulevard, 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:

- The new signal at Lanark Way would be a benefit to the neighborhood and to people trying to use the BRT station.
- This new station location would be used by students and teachers at Blair High School.
- The new traffic signal at Lanark Way might back up southbound traffic to University Boulevard (at least) even if the lights are timed well.
- The two platforms will be even further apart now.

Questions:

*Q: Will the crosswalk of Lanark Way be repaired if the new crosswalk on US 29 is installed?*

R: Yes, it is State policy that if one corner is impacted, all are upgraded.

*Q: What is the schedule for construction of this project?*

R: Groundbreaking will be this fall and construction would take about a year. The BRT would open in 2020.

## 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 will be important to be mindful of the transition between mixed traffic and bus on shoulder service in both directions here.

Questions:

*Q: Is this the nearest station to Randolph Road?*

R: Yes

*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. 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.

*Q: What is the access from Washington Adventist Hospital on Cherry Hill Road?*

R: The hospital will run shuttles to the Silver Spring Transit Center. These could be rerouted to connect to the BRT instead.

## 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) 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: Can articulated buses handle the turns at this location?*

R: Yes.

*Q: Will the buses for the different County BRT routes be interchangeable?*

R: Yes, they will be interchangeable.

## 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 are to 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:

- There is a need for Bikeshare at Tech Road. It would be used by people going to Washington Adventist Hospital, Riderwood, and the Cherry Hill Shopping Center.
- Bikeshare should include electric bicycles (e-bikes) and tricycles.
- A Bikeshare station at Lockwood Drive and Northwest Drive would provide better transfers between FDA and the BRT. This way people could bike on Northwest Drive instead of New Hampshire Avenue. It will also eliminate the need for people to go north one more stop to then come back south on the Bikeshare.
- There should be Bikeshare locations at University Boulevard.

Questions:

*Q: What about regular bike racks? Are they included at the stations?*

R: All stations will include bike racks for privately-owned bikes, and passengers will also be able to bring their bikes on the buses. There will be hooks on the buses to hold the bikes upright, or passengers can simply hold their bikes beside them.

## 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:

- Many of the residential neighborhoods would benefit from small buses serving as neighborhood shuttles or circulators.
- There is concern about the loss of local service on US 29.
- There is a need for more neighborhood feeders to US 29 and to the Purple Line.
- There is concern about insufficient access to other destinations, particularly Wheaton and Forest Glen.

- There is concern that people will not use the BRT if it requires an extra transfer. They may use it if they are farther out in the county, but not closer to downtown Silver Spring.
- People are not likely to use the BRT for trips entirely inside the Capital Beltway.

Questions:

*Q: Is the County considering small buses for use in residential neighborhoods?*

R: Yes, the County is looking at smaller, more nimble buses.

### Map 1 – Downtown Silver Spring to University Boulevard

Comments:

- Positive feedback on the suggested Ride On 8/14 combination.
- There is a need for more service to the Forest Glen Metro station from this area.
- There is a lack of service on Dale Drive east of US 29. A circulator bus would serve these neighborhoods well.
- The current Ride On 19 is too circuitous.
- Ride On 8 and 19 need higher levels of service.
- Dennis Avenue need service.

### Map 2 – Burnt Mills to Stewart Lane

Comments:

- The fact that the current Ride On 22 doesn't serve the neighborhood loop south of New Hampshire Avenue in both directions is a problem.
- There should be better connections with Prince George's County.
- Industrial Parkway could be used as a route to get buses off US 29.

Questions:

*Q: Will FDA always provide shuttles for their employees?*

R: That decision is up to them.

### Map 3 – Tech Road to Castle Ridge

Comments:

- The Ride On 21 should run all day, not just during peak periods

- Fairland Road could use more direct access to the BRT service (under the current plans, riders need to go north to the Briggs Chaney station)

## Map 4 – Briggs Chaney Road to Burtonsville

### Comments:

- It is important that there is all day service on Old Columbia Pike.
- It may be worth allocating more resources to local buses off US 29, rather than putting the Metrobus Z8 on US 29.

## 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.