

Meeting Summary

US 29 South Corridor Advisory Committee Meeting #16

Wednesday, June 6, 2018, 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 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		Linda Keenan	
Ilhan Cagri		Tracey Lewis	
Barbara Ditzler		Anita Morrison	X
Sean Emerson		Dan Reed	
Roberta Faul-Zeitler	X	Jessica Simon	
Brian Feit		Tina Slater	X
Dan Figueroa		Brad Stewart	
Avi Helpert	X	Mel Tull	X
Pat Connolly (US 29 Central CAC)	X		
Larry Goldberg (US 29 Central CAC)		Ken Jones (US 29 Central CAC)	
Members of the Public		Affiliation	
Jeffrey Land		US 29 Central CAC Member	
Harriet Quinn			

Staff

Corey Pitts, Project Manager, MCDOT
 Joana Conklin, MCDOT
 Dan Hibbert, MCDOT
 Dan Sheridan, MCDOT
 Mike Nessel, MCDOT
 Reemberto Rodriguez, MC Regional Services
 Center

Rick Kiegel, Consultant Project Manager, RK&K
 William Shuldiner, Foursquare ITP
 Jim Bunch, Sabra Wang

Welcome and Introductions

The meeting commenced at 6:35 p.m.

Rick Kiegel of RK&K welcomed everyone and began introductions by staff and CAC members. He explained that this meeting would begin with him providing a short update about the US 29 BRT project as it moves through the final design phase. After this, a representative from MCDOT's Division of Transportation Engineering would give an introduction of the US 29 Mobility and Reliability Study and take questions from CAC members.

Project Update

Rick explained that the 85 percent design will be submitted to MCDOT in July which will allow the project team to complete the 100 percent design by October 2018. The platform length is currently being finalized since the project staff has a rough idea of how long each BRT vehicle will be. The platforms, ramps, and sidewalks will be placed to minimize any potential impacts on surrounding utilities that may occur once they have been built and while they are being constructed. The architects are also finalizing the placement of the platform amenities, such as the station marker, fare collection machines, and benches. The project team is finalizing stormwater management facilities and drainage relocation where necessary. Additionally, the BRT project team is working with the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) to approve a new traffic signal and crosswalk at Lanark Way.

On the topic of right of way considerations, Rick explained that Montgomery County has sent letters to all property owners where an easement will be needed to accommodate the project and the negotiation process will continue throughout the summer. Canopies and windscreens are currently being designed and will be standard at all BRT stations across the county. Finally, the project team worked with WSSC to get approval for the water and sewer utilities at the new Briggs Chaney Comfort Station.

Questions:

Question (Q): At how many stations will you need to move utilities?

Response (R): 8 or 9 platforms need some utility relocation but some are much simpler while others require more time and resources.

Q: Will the Fenton Street Northbound station have a bench? People won't have to wait very long for the bus at this location.

R: No there is no bench at this location.

Q: Does platform hit the wall of the store located behind the platform at the Northbound Fenton Street Station?

R: No, the sidewalk is wide enough so that people will not need to walk across the platform and can stay on the sidewalk. On the southbound side the platform will reach to the back wall but there will be no ticket machines or canopies. The ramps at this station will also be ADA compliant.

Q: Is there any thought of putting a fence on the median of US 29 by Lanark Way to help prevent people from crossing in the middle of the street and instead encourage them to use the new traffic signal?

R: SHA will consider this if it becomes a problem but does not have any plans to do this at this time.

Q: What happens after 85 percent design?

R: Once the 85 percent design is submitted to the county, the project team will proceed with 100 percent design, which will be submitted to the county in late September or early October. The contractor has currently been selected and construction will begin in the winter of 2018 or the start of 2019.

Q: Have the buses been selected?

R: There are only two companies eligible to produce the buses under the TIGER grant so we know it will be one of these two companies. This gives us a rough idea of what the buses will look like, but they have not been procured yet.

Q: Are there plans to use electric buses in future?

R: MCDOT has received a grant from the federal government for standard electric buses that will be here by late 2019. At this time there are no reliable, high-quality, articulated electric buses yet so they were not procured for the BRT project. Any future buses will charge at the bus depots after each day.

Montgomery County BiPPA Presentation

Rick introduced Dan Sheridan who gave a brief introduction to Montgomery County's Bicycle and Pedestrian Priority Areas (BiPPA) Program which can be found at the link below.

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/dot-dte/projects/BicycleandPedestrianPriorityAreas/index.html>

Comments:

- Biking in downtown Silver Spring is much more enjoyable now that there is a dedicated bike path in the area.

Questions:

Q: Is there someone we can contact to give suggestions about this project?

R: John (JT) Thomas from MCDOT at: John.Thomas@montgomerycountymd.gov

US 29 Mobility and Reliability Study

Dan then gave a presentation about the US 29 Mobility and Reliability study that was recently approved by the County Council. He invited CAC members to ask him questions or provide him with comments about various aspects of the study.

Information and documents from the US 29 Mobility and reliability study can be found at <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/dot-dte/projects/US29Study/index.html>

Comments:

- The curve on Spring Street west of US 29 makes it hard for vehicles longer than 10 feet to make the turn.
- Staying within the existing curb is important because there are state regulations that require other considerations
Response (R): All recommendations will be costed out to determine if the recommendation is cost-effective. Also moving the curb can affect right-of-way which can affect properties. All of this will be taken into consideration when determining cost-effectiveness of proposals.
- Four years ago, a pedestrian safety study was conducted by SHA and Montgomery County on the area from Silver Spring to Woodside Park. This study examined the idea of eliminating the reversible lane on Colesville Road. It would be helpful to release the findings of this study. There were requests to install a pedestrian signal at the former library (which is now a job fair center and could warrant a traffic signal).

- Eliminate the right on red at Spring Street and Cameron Street because of the bike lane.
- Many people run red lights on Spring Street at Cameron Street and US 29.
- Consider the development of Autonomous Vehicles for future plans.
- Brick sidewalks in Downtown Silver Spring often get slippery in inclement weather and are replaced with asphalt.
 - R: Bricks have been less slippery in recent years because they've been cut differently but BRT platforms and ramps will be made of concrete.
- There is a lack of sidewalks on Dale Drive.
 - R: There is a separate study which is funded for preliminary design starting in July. This will cover US 29 between Dale Drive and Georgia Ave.
- SHA or the county needs to clarify if people can make a left turn on red as part of the jug handle intersection at US 29 and University Boulevard.
- On Mansfield Road, off Wayne Ave, there is more cut through traffic and the traffic goes through quickly. The study should examine this since the current speed camera is not working.

Questions:

Q: Is the Emerson-Smoot dedicated lane BRT study separate from this US 29 Mobility Study?

R: The Emerson Smoot study is one task in this overall study.

Q: Is the dedicated lane study examining US 29 south of Sligo Creek Parkway?

R: No, this study does not examine the parts of the corridor located that far south but if past studies examine these areas we can continue that examination.

Q: While traveling southbound, US 29 is reduced from three lanes to two lanes after New Hampshire Avenue but then increases again to three lanes immediately. Has making it three lanes the entire way been studied?

R: Yes, in the past, but we can evaluate the cost of altering the bridge over New Hampshire to see if this is feasible.

Q: What will the product of this study look like? Will it be a matrix of the results of these studies? Will they be combined?

R: Yes, it will most likely be a matrix and the findings will eventually be combined or linked if feasible.

Q: Bicycle access is very limited on US 29 when traveling over New Hampshire Avenue. Can this be looked at as part of Mobility Study?

R: Yes, this is something that can be examined.

Q: Is the increase in neighborhood cut-through traffic being examined? Part of this comes from Waze and other traffic apps.

R: Yes, this will be examined. If US 29 traffic gets better, less people may use the neighborhoods to cut through.

Q: How long is the comment period for the mobility study?

R: The comment period will last the entire length of the study. MCDOT wants members of the public to give feedback throughout the process.

Adjourn

Rick Kiegel thanked everyone for attending and concluded the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.