

Meeting Summary

US 29 Mobility and Reliability Study
US 29 Corridor Advisory Committee (South, Central, North)
Meeting # 19
 Thursday, June 9, 2022, 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Participants

29 South CAC Members (X for in attendance, blank for regrets)			
Alan Bowser		Linda Keenan	
Ilhan Cagri		Tracey Lewis	
Justin Chappell		Anita Morrison	
Barbara Ditzler	X	Dan Reed	
Sean Emerson		Jessica Simon	
Roberta Faul-Zeitler		Tina Slater	
Brian Feit		Brad Stewart	
Avi Halpert		Mel Tull	
29 Central CAC Members (X for in attendance, blank for regrets)			
Shruti Bhatnagar		Jeffrey Land	
Samantha Blizzard		Karen Michels (Larry Dickter)	X
Louis Boezi		Brian Morrissey	
Pat Connolly		Michael Pfetsch	
Karen Evans		Sanjida Rangwala	X
Sean Gabaree		Michele Riley	
Melissa Goemann		Eugene Stohlman	
Larry Goldberg		James Williamson	
Kevin Harris	X	James Zepp	
Ken Jones			
29 North CAC Members (X for in attendance, blank for regrets)			
Fisseha Adugna		Peter Myo Khin	
Carole Ann Barth		Shane Pollin	
Brian Downie		Rob Richardson	X
Oladipo Famuyiwa		Julian Rosenberg	
Latisha Johnson		Sebastian Smoot	
Bernadine Karns		Joseph Tahan	
Matthew Koch	X	Dan Wilhelm	X
DeAndre Morrow		Eric Wolvovsky	

Members of the Public	Affiliation
Harriet Quinn	
Shahriar Etemadi	
Marlene Hendler	
John Holden	
David Anspacher	M-NCPPC Planning
Bruce Gartner	Howard County
Cicero Salles	Montgomery County
Staff	
Corey Pitts, Project Manager, MCDOT	Paul Silberman, Consultant (Mead & Hunt)
Joana Conklin, MCDOT	James Bunch, Consultant (Mead & Hunt)
Dan Hibbert, MCDOT	Kyle Roberts, Consultant (Mead & Hunt)
Eric Sideras, MCDOT	Matt Storck, Consultant (STV)
	Jacob Smith, Consultant (STV)

Welcome, Introductions and CAC Roles

The meeting commenced at 7:00 p.m.

Corey Pitts welcomed everyone and then gave a brief overview of how to use Zoom.

Previous Study Summary

Corey Pitts then provided a summary of the alternatives that have been studied as part of the initial US 29 Mobility and Reliability Study effort. These included:

- Full-time Dedicated Median Bus Lane from Tech Road to Sligo Creek Parkway
- Managed Lane (Rush-hour Bus/ HOV Lanes) from Musgrove Road to Spring Street
- Six Intersection/Interchange Improvements at select locations
- System/ Demand Management measures to reduce non-recurring congestion and encourage carpooling
- Pedestrian and Bicycle improvements for better access (Silver Spring to Tech Road)

Paul Silberman then summarized the Mobility Study Continuation goals, objectives, and proposed alternatives. The goals and objectives include:

- Improve the Median Bus Lane for traffic and transit operations
- Make the Median Bus Lane more cost effective
- Provide clarity regarding the HOV and transit mode shifts
- Identify the independent utility of the spot intersection improvements

Paul then introduced the additional study alternatives being considered along with the previous two

- 1) Managed (Bus/HOV) Lanes
- 2) Median Bus Lane (Baseline)
 - A) Median Bus Lane + Intersection Improvements
 - B) Median Bus Lane Optimized
 - C) Median Bus Lane Value Engineered

He described the elements being evaluated to allow for comparison of the alternatives, such as the addition of traffic signals, travel time changes, and cost. Paul provided some visual examples of different transitway treatment definitions to aid in the discussion.

Paul then presented each of the five alternatives, noting: any intersection/interchange improvements included; new traffic signals; Flash station changes; location and type of transitway improvements; lane width changes needed to facilitate implementation; and intersections that would reach level of service “E” or “F”.

Kyle Roberts of the consultant team then presented two charts showing the modeled travel time estimates for passenger vehicles and Flash buses to travel the study corridor in the morning peak and evening peak directions.

Matt Storck of the consultant team reviewed the estimated costs for the five alternatives, noting that costs for the original two alternatives has been adjusted to 2022 dollars for an equal comparison.

Station location changes required for the new alternatives were reviewed, along with the costs associated with the proposed change. A segment-by-segment review of the corridor was presented from Sandy Spring Road to the Silver Spring Transit Center comparing all the alternatives and noting differences between them.

Lastly, the project team introduced a proposal for the final alternative to be studied. This alternative would be based on the positive results of the previous alternatives. An overview of the remaining steps and schedule was presented before opening the meeting to questions.

Open Questions and Comments

Comment: *I do not see the need for the dedicated lane south of Sligo Creek Parkway. This would create more confusion for drivers. I think Option 2C or the proposal for the Hybrid Alternative make the most sense.*

Question: Viva White Oak is a future development. Do the proposed alternatives allow for the intersections of Tech Road and Industrial Parkway to expand to accommodate double lefts from southbound US 29?

Response: Yes, there are proposed recommendations for dual left turns at both.

Question: Why not just select Alternative 2B (Optimized) – Modified given the travel time benefits?

Response: What we are proposing as the Hybrid Alternative is taking the best aspects of 2B, 2B-Modified, and 2C. The Hybrid Alternative will include the shoulder improvements around the Paint Branch to save on costs for building a new bridge, limiting right-of-way needs in Burnt Mills with a single-lane station configuration, selecting the station location for 2B in Four Corners to avoid impacts to the high school, and then south of Sligo Creek – just advancing the southbound bus lane as a pilot project. We would not look to advance the northbound bus lane south of Sligo Creek given the travel time impacts observed from the analysis. The results from the Hybrid Alternative are like to look very similar to Alternative B Modified.

Comment: Ridership on the Flash seems low considering the initial investment. We would want to do everything to make the service more efficient and attractive. There are concerns that adding a station at Franklin would defeat the desire to make the service rapid.

Question: Why is the Franklin Avenue station needed?

Response: We heard from people at the December CAC and public meetings a desire for a station between I-495 and downtown Silver Spring. This was an attempt to address that.

Question: Has this been presented to Montgomery Planning and Maryland Department of Transportation – State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA)?

Response: The team has shared the preliminary results with them to get their feedback. We also want feedback from CAC so we would have it from all parties. MDOT SHA owns US 29 and will make any final determinations about alt.

Question: What was the feedback?

Response: Montgomery Planning provided some general thoughts on the presentation of the material but is still compiling their thoughts on the alternatives and the results.

Comment: I have concern with the timeline. You are developing final alternatives, but the community is just seeing it for the first time. Most of the neighborhood associations have recessed for the summer and will not be able to provide feedback. This is a lot of information to digest.

Response: We will share your concerns with department leadership and see what adjustments to the schedule can be made.

Comment: You should have presented this information to the CAC first before going to Montgomery Planning and MDOT SHA. This is too much information to select a recommended alternative by the fall.

Response: We are not asking the CAC to select an alternative now. We are seeking feedback on the initial alternatives to incorporate into a hybrid alternative to test. We will likely come back in September with the results of that additional alternative and the others presented tonight. At that time, we will seek feedback on the alternative prior to taking results to the Planning Board and the Transportation and Environment Committee. There will be time to digest the results.

Question: Is the interchange improvement at MD 650 (New Hampshire Avenue) included in all the alternatives? Is there widening needed to accommodate the single median lane?

Response: The interchange improvement at MD 650 is included in Alternative 1 (Managed Lane), Alternative 2A (Median Lane-Baseline + Intersection Improvements), and Alternative 2B (Median Bus Lane-Optimized). The team confirmed that there would be minimal widening just north and south of the bridge, but the bridge does not need to be widened to fit the bus lane. There would be some restriping of the bridge lanes.

Question: Why is the bus on the shoulder and not in the median north of Tech Road?

Response: The Managed Lane Alternative did consider a hardened shoulder in the median north of Musgrove Road. The results did not show much benefit when compared to the costs, so it wasn't advanced. These costs are part of the initial work, but it hasn't been considered as part of any of the new alternatives at this time.

Comment: The next meeting is realistically mid-September. I would request an in-person meeting to look at figures/layouts. This is an election year, with new council members and Transportation and Environment (T&E) Committee members. May not be beneficial to brief the old T & E committee. Will need more time in the fall with the CAC and public.

Question: What is the point of the single-lane to dual-lane to single-lane busway in Four Corners?

Response: We are trying to minimize impacts, costs, and footprints. Don't want to impact beyond the curb (high school excepted), so we removed the 4th general purpose travel lanes. We desire keeping both northbound and southbound Flash stations in the median. We could consider a northbound station on the curb, with the southbound station in the median, but this would result in the northbound buses always traveling in mixed traffic. In some cases where dual median bus lanes won't fit at all, we can place one station curbside, with the other in the median. This is not ideal. Four Corners has the highest ridership stops, longest crossing distances, and longer dwelling times.

Question: Is widening beyond the existing curbs only occurring at the high school?

Response: It depends on the alternative. We anticipate the autobody shop in Burnt Mills to be impacted by any of the median lane alternatives. There may also be some small easements, like what was needed for the existing Flash stations, but no other significant proposed impacts.

Question: It looks like the autobody shop property is fully needed; do you need the whole property?

Response: The building currently sits directly behind the sidewalk. Widening US 29 even a little will result in an impact to this building, and there does not appear to be options to avoid it when considering a median lane. We do not need the full property for our work, but the building is likely impacted.

Question: The traffic signal at Lockwood Drive is complicated and results in backups. How will this work with the addition of a signal at Hillwood? Did your modeling show delays at Lockwood?

Response: The addition of a signal at Hillwood that is synchronized with the one at Lockwood may result in a simpler traffic progression and make traffic operate more smoothly. The Hillwood signal is primarily to facilitate safe pedestrian access to the proposed median station and will likely only be called upon when transit users are trying to cross US 29.

Question: Why does the Burnt Mills station need to be moved?

Response: It must be relocated to facilitate a median bus lane. The buses would not be able to access the station currently on the curb.

Question: There was a stop added to the Flash service after it started. Are you planning to keep these or change? Ridership on local buses is much higher (than Flash); people don't want to transfer to BRT even if it saves time. Are there still plans to truncate the local routes?

Response: Plans that were originally made to change the local service with the start of the Flash deployment have not been advanced. There is now the Ride On Reimagined Study, which got underway this year. This study is expected to take 18 months to 2 years to complete. Any local route changes are likely to come out of this effort. The stop added to FDA was done at the request of the FDA campus. Ride On investigated the request and determined that the bus could stop at FDA in the off-peak direction only. There was no major infrastructure added at FDA.

Question: Is the blue line service only during rush hour?

Response: Yes, that was the plan and is currently how that service pattern operates.

Question: *Has there been negative feedback on the Blue line only operating during the peak period?*

Response: Both the Blue and Orange routes are on 15-minute headways when they operate. When both lines are operating (peak periods) the common stations have a bus stopping every 7.5 minutes. We will have to ask if Ride On has received any specific complaints regarding this. I have not heard anything anecdotally. The thought was that as demand grew, the line could run all day, but would start with peak service.

Comment: There needs to be more lighting along the sidewalk around the Four Corners northbound station.

Question: *Can you send the proposed bicycle/pedestrian improvements?*

Response: These improvements have not been updated since the initial phase of this planning study. They can be found on the project website [here](#). Funding was adopted by the Council to begin implementing some of these improvements as part of the fiscal year 2023-2028 budget.

Question: *I noticed on the MD 355 project that there are several segments proposed to operate in mixed traffic?*

Response: The segment through Bethesda does not allow for widening to accommodate a bus lane. The segment in Gaithersburg was requested by the City to operate in mixed traffic based on concerns regarding property impacts, and then up in the northern extents of the corridor where bus lanes are not warranted based on the congestion levels.

Question: *How would people access the southbound station proposed in the median at Lanark Way in Alternative 2C?*

Response: The concept drawing shown does not include all the details such as new crosswalks. There would be a crosswalk added to the south leg of US 29 to facilitate people crossing. All three legs would have crosswalks.

Corey concluded the meeting indicating that the recording of the meeting and presentation would be shared following tonight's meeting. The meeting adjourned by Corey Pitts at 8:40 p.m.