

Get On Board US 29 BRT Public Involvement Plan (PIP) for Preliminary Design Phase

1. Introduction

1.1 Outreach Strategy

The overarching goal of the US 29 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) outreach effort is to educate the public of the project objectives, and to engage with stakeholders to collect meaningful feedback which can be incorporated into the project design. Within the outreach strategy, the project team will use a wide variety of public engagement tactics to reach diverse audiences within the US 29 service corridor. The outreach efforts build on the “Get on Board BRT” outreach program launched by Montgomery County in fall 2016, with the goal of establishing deeper knowledge surrounding the US 29 BRT project by creating corridor specific materials and project specific informational products. Expanded programming will integrate the public into the project’s outreach process in an expansive and engaging manner.

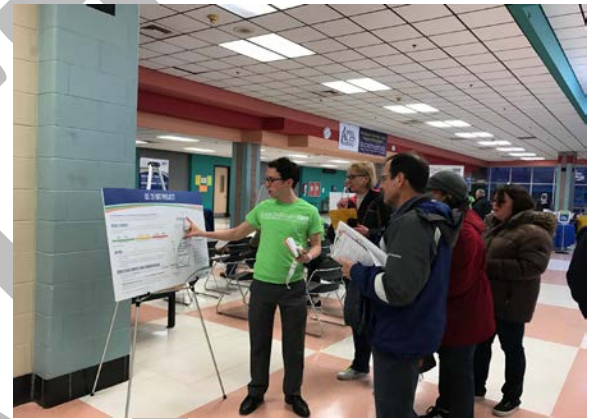


Figure 1: Project Team Member explains the US 29 Corridor to community members at an open house on March 13, 2017

This phase of the outreach schedule spans from March 2017 through October 2017. Results from a survey in fall 2016 indicated that Montgomery County residents are still unfamiliar with the concept of BRT. Upcoming outreach events focus on informing and educating public on the US 29 BRT project and will include opportunities for public feedback. Topics include the distinction between local bus and BRT, the nature of the US 29 alignment, and passenger amenities. During this period, the County will finalize the preliminary design level for the BRT station infrastructure and examine related elements including multimodal access opportunities and local bus service planning.

1.2 Internal Coordination

The previous project team for the BRT study was led by the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) in partnership with Montgomery County. Starting in February 2017, the US 29 BRT project transitioned to County leadership for design and implementation, with transit service expected to start in late 2019/early 2020. The County is developing the preliminary level design for BRT stations, pedestrian and bike improvements, Transit Signal Priority (TSP), and recommendations for service realignments for local buses along and intersecting with the project corridor.

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments’ (MWCOC) Transportation/Land-use Connections (TLC) technical assistance program is funding the development of the initial station prototypes in Montgomery County that will be featured as part of the design plans. The design process for the US 29 corridor stations and the TLC grant prototypes will be developed concurrently.

2. Project Schedule

Graphical Project Schedule will be Developed

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3. Stakeholder Engagement

3.1 Corridor Advisory Committees

Since February 2015, two Corridor Advisory Committees (CAC) for the US 29 project have met regularly with the BRT project teams to review information, ask questions and provide feedback. Comprised of key stakeholders, the CACs play a vital role in ensuring that local voices are represented in the planning and design of the BRT project. The CACs are advisory committees rather than decision-making groups, and feedback received at CAC meetings is taken seriously in developing program recommendations and understanding concerns of local communities along the US 29 corridor. The US 29 CACs are divided into two segments: the US 29 Northern Committee and the US 29 Southern Committee, with the break point between the two committees being New Hampshire Avenue. The CACs will continue to meet throughout the design and implementation process.

The Corridor Advisory Committee Program Plan outlines the plans for the next phase of CAC meetings, spanning from March 2017 to August 2017 (see Corridor Advisory Committee Program Plan in **Appendix**). The program plan includes an overview of the upcoming meeting schedule and topics that will be covered (Error! Reference source not found.):

Table 1: CAC Draft Meeting Schedule

Meeting Dates	Meeting Topics
<i>CAC #10 – Week of April 3, 2017</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions • Expectations • Overview of CAC Program Plan and Public Involvement Plan • Topics for future meetings • Project Schedule and Update
<i>CAC #11 – Weeks of May 15 and May 22, 2017</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Station Locations • Station Architecture • Service Planning Overview
<i>CAC #12 – Week of June 12, 2017¹</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodations • Transit Signal Priority • Environmental Documentation
<i>CAC #13 – Week of August 28, 2017¹</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BRT Operations Plan/Local Bus Service Plan Overview • Stormwater Management/Low Impact Development • Review of Project Impacts
<i>CAC #14 – Week of September 25, 2017¹</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other Topics of Interest to CAC members • Project Status/Outreach Update • Next Steps

¹ Meeting may be subject to schedule adjustment due to project updates or meeting site availability

With CAC members’ assistance, the project team will conduct outreach to engage the broader community in the design and implementation process. Types of outreach are listed in **Table 2**:

Table 2: Types of Outreach

Type	Outreach	Groups and Residents Engaged
Written	Monthly e-newsletter	All individuals in database
	Paragraph updates for other newsletters	Municipal, County, State, and Federal elected officials’ newsletters
	Mailed newsletters	Individuals on mailing list
In-person	School outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paint Branch High School • Blair High School • Eastern Middle School • St. Bernadette’s <p>Outreach includes school plays, Back to School Nights, and sporting events</p>
	Umbrella Civic Groups	Includes citizens’ associations in East Silver Spring, South Four corners, Northwood Four Corners, and Calverton as well as the Presidents’ Council in Silver Spring.
	Silver Spring Opinion Leaders Groups	Includes Advisory boards in Silver Spring and East County.
	Large Residential Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enclave rental apartments • Riderwood
	Religious Institutions	Includes churches, temples, and religious centers.
	Outdoor Pools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Martin Luther King County Pool • Community pools during swim meets.
	Shopping Centers	Includes shopping centers in White Oak, Burnt Mills, Woodmoor, WesTech, Briggs Chaney, and Burtonsville.
	Event Tabling	Includes the Silver Spring Farmer’s Market, concert series, and Burtonsville Day.
	County Parks	Includes playing fields in Indian Spring Terrace Local Park.
	Pop-Up Events	Community Locations

3.2 Community Updates

To support outreach efforts and engage new audiences, project team members will conduct community updates through scheduled community events and meetings. These updates are held in coordination with local citizen groups such as homeowners' associations, employers, civic associations, community advocacy groups, and Chambers of Commerce. Community updates are designed to be 10-15 minute informational presentations to provide the public with a basic overview of the project and encourage increased participation in community meetings and website visits. These updates may also provide an opportunity for project team members to identify potential concerns that may warrant follow-up. Community members can request that project team members provide a community update online through the project website, contacting the project team, through a CAC meeting, or will be reached out to directly by the project team.

- **The project team will create the community update content and attend community events starting in April 2017.**

3.3 Community Meetings

Community meetings are an opportunity for additional, focused discussion. Residents may request a community meeting on a topic through contacting the project team through community updates, the project website, via email, or through a CAC meeting; and the project team will prepare and promote the meeting within four weeks of the request.

A community meeting involves a presentation and facilitated discussion about major concerns or questions that have arisen during the outreach process. The project team will recruit experts in the issue area to present and facilitate. In-depth discussions will inform the project team and design of the project. The meeting may involve other interactive components, and type of interaction may depend on the size of the meeting. Issue area topics may include operation planning, service planning, multi-modal access including bicycles and pedestrians, station infrastructure, and any other issues of interest.

Key partners will include home owners' associations, public agency partners (e.g., libraries, schools, etc.), and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) such as Casa de Maryland. The project team will research and create a community outreach database, which will capture all civic groups that have engaged with the outreach efforts since March 2017 through August 2017. This database will support outreach conduct to promote community meeting through a variety of media (e.g., e-blast, phone calls, direct site engagement, etc.) to ensure a diverse set of participants at each meeting.

- **The project team will create the community meeting content and a digital voting activity to capture feedback in real time. This feedback will also be analyzed and presented back to the CACs. A total of five meetings will take place from May 2017 through August 2017.**



Figure 2: Get on Board BRT will reach out directly to the community on issues of concern.

4. Public Outreach Events

4.1 Interactive Open Houses

Three public open houses were held in March 2017. Each open house location covered a key part of the project; the Silver Spring Civic Center covered the southern portion of the project’s service area; Montgomery Blair High School represented a key constituency in the central portion of the service area; and White Oak Community Center represented the northern portion of the service area. The Silver Spring and White Oak locations were chosen due to the existing precedent of state events being held at the locations, and the Montgomery Blair High School was added to the schedule due to a request from the community. All locations are accessible by transit. Open house locations, dates, and times are listed in **Table 3**.

Through the first round of Open Houses, the project team engaged 190 participants and received nearly 100 comment cards. This was a significant level of participation, and although there were minor inclement weather conditions during two of the events, the turnout remained steady through each open house. Comments received from participants through interactive activities are currently being tabulated and considered in the project design.



Figure 3: Boards display information about BRT Station Design at the Open House on March 7, 2017.

Table 3: Spring 2017 Open House Schedule

Open House Event Location	Date and Time
Silver Spring Civic Center 1 Veterans Place Silver Spring, MD 20910	March 7, 2017 6:30pm-8:30pm
Montgomery Blair High School 51 University Boulevard Silver Spring, MD 20901	March 13, 2017 7:00pm-9:00pm
White Oak Community Center 1700 April Lane Silver Spring, MD 20904	March 15, 2017 6:30pm-8:30pm

The concept and design of the open house program modeled and mirrored the experience of riding a BRT line through a series of designated “stations.” Stations reflected these five themes:

- **Area 1: Welcome to Get on Board BRT!** Welcome boards explored what makes BRT unique and what features will be implemented as part of the Montgomery County BRT program. A 2-minute video regarding BRT gave a brief introduction to the project.

- **Area 2: Explore the US 29 BRT Corridor.** This area presented information on service alignment on the US 29 corridor by the BRT service, including project timeline, project goals and objectives, graphic visualization of the service alignment, project budget, and project benefits.
- **Area 3: Improve Local Bus Service.** Infographics and text presented potential changes to existing bus service to improve overall network service quality and capacity. In a tradeoff exercise, participants chose priorities with yellow stickers.
- **Area 4: Learn about BRT Station Design.** This area focused on the features that define bus stop locations along the BRT corridor, including the types of amenities that could be provided based on the land use characteristics presented along the project corridor and the various station design options that could be implemented.
- **Area 5: How to Stay Involved.** Members of the public can stay involved through Corridor Advisory Committees, upcoming community events, upcoming community meetings, and employer focus groups. Participants are encouraged to complete the sign-in form, visit the project website, and engage on social media.

Results from the interactive activities, including the trade-off activity in Area 3 and word cloud activity in Area 4, will be utilized by the project team in developing the initial design for the BRT stations, and the recommendations presented to the public on improvements to the local bus service along the corridor. The full presentation can be viewed in the Virtual Open House online (<http://getonboardbrt.com/us-29-virtual-open-house/>).



Figure 4: Community member completes the trade-off activity at the Open House on March 15, 2017.

The next set of Open Houses will take place in November 2017, and will be designed to update the public with findings from the preliminary design phase of the project. The project team will use local examples to create and display visualizations of the project corridor, including what mixed traffic and bus-on-shoulder plans look like for the US 29 corridor. The project team will present information on the effectiveness of Bus Rapid Transit systems, particularly that a BRT service will improve on-time performance and reliability of transit along the corridor.

A digital interactive map will allow participants to explore the planned US 29 corridor, and station locations will be noted with renderings visualizing future capital improvement options. The project team will present local bus service recommendations, indicating how public feedback received in the first set of open houses is reflected in this design. The project team will also present the bus station design recommendations, with types based on surrounding land use. The timeline for the final design and implementation of the project will be presented, providing detail about how the public can continue to be involved in the process. In addition, environmental and property impacts will be discussed. The Open Houses will be promoted in October 2017, with a location and time to be determined.

- **After the preliminary station design plans and local bus service planning recommendations are completed, another set of open houses will take place in November 2017. These meetings will be coordinated with the CACs and promoted in October 2017.**

4.2 Focus Groups



Figure 5: "Get on Board BRT" giveaways available to the public as engagement incentives

Employee focus groups will take place in partnership with multiple employers served by the future US 29 BRT project. Key partners could include: FDA, Silver Spring Downtown Business District, Adventist Hospital and other major corridor employers. The project team will create the focus group content and a digital voting activity to capture feedback in real time. This effort will provide additional inputs into the US 29 service planning effort and station design.

The project team will research and create an employer outreach database, which will capture all employers that have engaged with the project since November 2016 through the end of May 2017. This database will support outreach conducted to promote focus groups through a variety of media (e-blast, phone calls, direct site engagement) to ensure a diverse set of participants at each meeting.

Employers can currently fill out a virtual signup on the BRT website (<http://getonboardbrt.com/meeting-request-form/>) if they would like to request a focus group. A follow-up survey will be sent to all participants to better identify which interest groups they represent and which dates, times, and locations would be ideal for a focus group. Focus groups typically have a maximum of 20 participants to allow for effective interaction. Focus groups will offer food options and giveaways to incentive participation of employers and employees.

- **The project team will set up a series of employee group meetings with employment centers in White Oak and Silver Spring. A total of two meetings will take place from the week of June 5, 2017 through the week of June 12, 2017.**

4.3 Pop Up Events, Community Events, and Festivals

The project team will host "pop up" events throughout the County to continue the BRT education program, "Get On Board BRT," and include material regarding the US 29 project outreach effort. Events will include existing community programming, festivals, as well as original "Get On Board BRT" pop up events at transit, shopping, and employment centers along the project corridor. These events will be designed to include educational materials regarding the future of the US 29 BRT project, the station design effort, and project timeline. A digital and print survey will be utilized to obtain feedback for the US 29 outreach effort at select pop up events, and "Get on Board BRT" themed giveaways will be used as incentives for public participation.

The project team will provide community updates and tabling at community events. Upcoming outreach opportunities include:

Table 4: Upcoming outreach events

Date	Event	Type of Event
March 9, 2017	Briggs Chaney Marketplace	Community Event
April 8, 2017	Pop-Up Event	Community Event
April 11, 2017	NOAA Employee Benefits Day	Employer
April 22, 2017	Verizon Earth Day	Employer
May 19, 2017	Silver Spring Bike to Work Day Pit Stop	Community Event
July 1, 2017	Celebrate Independence Day Festival	Community Event

- **Pop up events will take place as part of the “Get On Board BRT” outreach and education efforts throughout the project schedule to educate the public of the overall BRT program in the County. Select events during the month of July 2017 will focus specifically on the efforts regarding the US 29 project.**

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5. Outreach, Communication, and Reporting

5.1 Outreach and Communications Support

The project team will continue to maintain all online promotion and outreach through the “Get on Board BRT” project website, and social media platforms (i.e., Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube). Open houses were promoted through contact with local organizations, community boards/meetings, community listservs, on social media, the County’s website and email listserv, and through civic associations. Open house materials are available to the public on the “Get on Board BRT” website at <http://getonboardbrt.com/us-29-virtual-open-house/>. The digital survey designed for upcoming outreach efforts may be embedded into the project website and promoted through social media. In addition, all events and programs will be posted to the project website’s calendar, and promoted through real time social media engagement.

- **Updates to the BRT and Get on Board BRT website and social media platforms will be made at key points in the project schedule. Complete details will be provided in the Outreach and Communications Plan which will be completed in April 2017.**

5.2 Public Involvement Survey

The project team will create a survey to better understand the needs of residents, employees, and visitors that could potentially utilize the US 29 service.

This survey will ask targeted questions regarding respondents’ current commute and demographic information. The survey will ask participants which bus services they use and how often they use public transit. It asks users to identify which community groups they belong to or represent; zip codes for where they work and live; time that would work best for a focus group; ethnic background; household income; level of education; language preference and level of English; and any other general comments. Additional details could be added regarding their general knowledge of BRT and trade-offs regarding potential station design options.

- **The survey will be completed the week of June 26, 2017 to be ready for use at select pop up events. The digital format of this survey will be posted to the project website by the first week of July 2017.**

5.3 Public Feedback Analysis and Final Report

The project team will collect feedback from the public through a variety of media, including print feedback forms, digital survey tools, online comments, and interactive activities. All hand-written comment forms, notes and non-digital activity feedback taken during events is input into a public involvement comment database. At the end of the preliminary design phase, in Fall 2017, an outreach report will be produced that includes a summary of activities and outcomes from CAC meetings, public workshops, focus groups, community meetings, pop up/community events, survey responses, and online engagement.

- **Public feedback will be available throughout March 2017 – August 2017. A report will be created at the end of the project schedule in September – October 2017.**