

Meeting Summary

**US 29 South Corridor Advisory Committee
Meeting #17**

Tuesday, October 16, 2018, 6:30 to 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	X	Tom Lansworth	
Ilhan Cagri		Tracey Lewis	
Barbara Ditzler	X	Anita Morrison	X
Roberta Faul-Zeitler	X	Dan Reed	
Brian Feit	X	Herb Simmons	
Juanita Stewart		Tina Slater	
Avi Helpert	X	Brad Stewart	
Linda Keenan	X	Mel Tull	X
Members of the Public		Affiliation	
Michele Holzman			
Harriet Quinn			
Jim Williamson		Central CAC	
Chris Van Alstyne		M-NCPPC – MC, Transportation	
Staff			

Corey Pitts, Project Manager, MCDOT
Joana Conklin, MCDOT
Dan Hibbert, MCDOT
Marcelo Cortez, MCDOT

Darcy Buckley, MCDOT
William Shuldiner, MCDOT
Rick Kiegel, Consultant Project Manager, RK&K
Monica Meade, RK&K

Welcome and Introductions

The meeting commenced at 6:35 p.m.

Rick Kiegel of RK&K welcomed everyone and explained that the purpose of this meeting is mostly to present information to the committee, rather than solicit committee input.

Project Update

Final Design

The 85% plans were completed at the end of July. This was the last of the real engineering work. Since then, the plans have been reviewed for final details, often in labeling and directions. The plans should be very specific, leaving no questions from the contractor. For example, the plans for the southbound station at Fenton Street include four parking meters which will have to be removed. The plans need to include a note that they will be removed by others and that the contractor must notify the County four weeks before they plan to work in that area. Similar notes are included for the red-light camera at the Fenton Street intersection.

Moving forward into construction, there will still be a role for the design team. The contractor is required to prepare shop drawings, showing what they understand the design plans to require. The design team is responsible for reviewing these shop drawings for compliance with the design team's plans.

In addition, the design team will continue to be involved in the construction outreach.

Utilities

Question: Does the County use a private utility locator, in addition to "Miss Utility"?

Response: No, the County has not used a private utility locator in the past. Typically, the County does test pits to verify the accuracy of the plans.

Comment: There is an underground utility vault at Fenton.

Response: Yes, that is part of the reason that the NB Fenton Street platform is shorter than the typical platform.

Montgomery Arms Apartments

Comment: The County should do a pre-construction survey of the brick wall in front of the historic Montgomery Arms apartments to document the existing conditions.

Response and Discussion: Montgomery Arms is privately-owned, but it is managed by the Housing Opportunities Commission. The property line for the Montgomery County Arms is actually in the middle of the sidewalk so the County will need to purchase

property rights from the owner to construct the platform in this location. The County appraisers are working on the appraisals for all the property acquisition needed.

Architectural Coordination with Fabricators

The architects, ZGF, completed the design of the station shelters to a certain point, but the fabricator will finish the design, since it will be responsible for the shelters. At this point there are discussions with three fabricators.

Permits

Even though this is a County project, the project still must get the same permits as a private sector project. There are many different permits needed, including Erosion and Sediment Control and Building permits from the Department of Permitting Services, and Access Permits from the State Highway Administration (SHA).

Question: Does the County require MCDOT to post a bond?

Response: No, MCDOT is not required to post a bond.

Capital Bikeshare

The locations of some of the Capital Bikeshare docking stations have been shifted. The original plan was to locate the docking stations at the BRT stations, so the Bikeshare was a linear system. However, it was decided that it made more sense to place the Bikeshare docking stations in a hub and spoke layout. The hubs are at the White Oak Transit Center and Briggs Chaney stations. Four of the docking stations were moved from the BRT stations to support this concept.

Vehicles

The County has been working on the bus procurement for over a year. The Request for Proposals (RFP) was very detailed so every bidder was proposing on the same things. The County has just announced the selected bidder and it is posted on the County Procurement website. There is a ten-day waiting period for protests, which will end on October 23, 2018. The cost of the buses was estimated at approximately \$14 million total – 14 buses at \$1 million each. However, the bid actually came in lower than that. The buses are 60 feet long, articulated, (with an accordion-like section in the middle to make tighter turns), and with extra-wide doors, all on the right-hand side. These extra-wide doors will help speed up boarding.

Question: What funds are being used to pay for the buses? Is the money from the TIGER grant?

Response: No federal funding is used to pay for the buses. The funding is coming from the County's Capital Improvement Program (CIP). There is a line item for the buses

(labeled “Other”) in the US 29 Bus Rapid Transit project. The CIP is funded by many types of County funding sources.

Question: When will the buses come?

Response: The buses will all be built together, so the County will get them within a very short time frame. The contract with the manufacturer sets the final delivery deadline at 435 days from contract start. They are expected to arrive before the end of 2019 so that the drivers can be trained on the buses and service can commence in 2020.

Question: Where will the buses be kept?

Response: The buses will be kept and maintained in the Gaithersburg maintenance facility at Shady Grove Road and Crabbs Branch Way. This facility was built in 2013 with the ability to accommodate articulated buses. The buses will use the ICC to get to the US 29 BRT route.

Question: What has been the safety record of the Ride On Extra service on MD 355?

Response: The County believes that the drivers are operating safely. The County will be adding a collision avoidance technology called “MobileEye” for the BRT vehicles. This is a vision sensor feature that reduces blind spots and alerts the driver to the presence of pedestrians. The drivers for the US 29 BRT and the Ride On Extra are a select group of highly trained operators.

Groundbreaking Ceremony

Groundbreaking is scheduled for October 25, 2018 at 10 am at the Briggs Chaney Park and Ride. Everyone is invited to this exciting event.

Construction

The project has already started the early phases of construction.

MCDOT has reached out to the utility companies, providing them with the relocation plans. Some utilities do the relocations themselves, while others will let MCDOT or the County contractor do the work.

MCDOT is doing soil borings. It is important to have a good understanding of the soil conditions and if the soil can support the canopies.

Question: What fire safety provisions have been made for this project? Will new fire hydrants be added?

Response: No new fire hydrants will be added at the stations. The stations will be accessible from the roadway. The buses include fire suppressant systems.

Construction Phases

During construction many things will be happening concurrently: right-of-way clearance, permits, utility relocation, and test pits, for example.

Testing and commissioning of the equipment will occur before the service opens. This includes the vehicles, ticket vending machines, cameras, etc.

Driver training will be done in Fall 2019. Training takes four to six weeks. The County is building a test platform at a County facility so that the drivers can practice docking close to the platform.

Construction Management at Risk (CMAR)

Typically, a project is done in three phases:

- *Design*
- *Procurement*
- *Construction*

MCDOT decided to use the CMAR process for the US 29 BRT. Under CMAR, the contractor was brought on board early, while the project is still in design. This way, the contractor can work collaboratively with the designers. CMAR has two phases, not three:

- *Preconstruction – value engineering, cost estimating, constructability reviews*
- *Construction*

The contractor's involvement in preconstruction reduces risk to the County.

The County issued an RFP for the CMAR portion of the project. The selection was based on a written proposal and an interview. The County selected Concrete General, Inc., a Montgomery County-based General Contractor.

Construction Schedule

The schedule shown in the presentation is subject to change. While the overall schedule will be contractual, it is developed to allow for some flexibility. The County is tracking adjacent projects which could impact our schedule, such as the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) work on US 29.

Most of the utility work will not be in the roadway, but in sidewalk or station areas, so there will be minimal likelihood of having to dig up a newly paved street. But it is possible that some work will trigger other work in the street. This reinforces the need for early coordination and

communication with the utility companies. MCDOT has good working relationships with the utility companies in the areas.

The actual construction time for each station will be about 45 work days. Some activities will take longer than others. Utility work can vary from one day to several months for splicing Verizon cables or relocating large Pepco transmission lines.

Question: Will the US 29 BRT schedule conflict with the Purple Line Construction at the Silver Spring Transit Center (SSTC)?

Response: No. This project's work is all inside the SSTC at level 2. In addition, the BRT work is expected to be completed before the Purple Line work starts at SSTC.

Question: Are there financial incentives to finishing early?

Response: No.

Comment: Rush hour can extend well beyond 9 am on US 29 inside the Beltway.

Response: If necessary, we can shift to doing construction in the nighttime or on weekends.

Question: How many crews will be working concurrently?

Response: Probably three or four.

General Discussion

All the stations are on sidewalks that have existing street lights. This project will not be adding new street lights. The station itself will be well lit with lighting in the canopies and the marker. The stations will probably not be lit all night (after the bus service has finished for the day). All the lighting will be Dark Sky Friendly Lighting, as the County implemented this standard several years ago.

Comment: The new concrete storm drains on US 29 south of the Beltway are breaking up.

Questions: Does the project impact gas lines?

Response: We don't impact any major gas lines, but there are two possible impacts with smaller lines.

Question: Will the street lamps at Fenton Street have to be moved? Will they be replaced? What about trees? Where will they be replaced?

Response: The street lights at the northbound Fenton station will not be disturbed. Those at the southbound station will be removed for construction, then replaced.

Trees in Montgomery County must be replaced at a ratio of 3:1. Some will be planted nearby, others will be planted elsewhere, since there is limited space at station locations.

Wiles Mensch is the landscape architect for the project. They have developed a landscape plan for the project.

Question: How will buses get into the SSTC?

Response: They will access Level 2 of the SSTC via Wayne Avenue and then Ramsey Street.

Question: When will the changes to the feeder bus routes be determined?

Response: Not until shortly before BRT service begins. Ride On has a public outreach process for service changes.

Question: Will the curb lanes stay the same width?

Response: Yes, but the sidewalks will be higher at the station platforms.

Question: What lanes will the buses use?

Response: That will be up to the drivers. This is one of the advantages of BRT. The drivers will consider where the next station is. This is similar to the drivers of the Ride On Extra on MD 355. The drivers quickly learned when they can easily move into another lane and when it is better to stay in the curb lane.

Question: Has pedestrian safety been considered in the development of the US 29 BRT plans?

Response: Yes, particularly in the location of stations. We were careful to avoid designs that would encourage mid-block crossings. Stations have been located near crosswalks. The northbound Four Corners station is not near a crosswalk because of the free right turn at University Boulevard so a new signalized intersection has been added at Lanark Way. In other locations where people might be likely to cross midblock, we have evaluated options for using landscaping or stormwater management facilities to guide people to the crosswalks.

Construction Outreach

The goal is to get information about construction out to the public quickly. The main mode of outreach will be through the internet – mostly the project website. This site will live in the MCDOT construction project pages, but there will be a link from the County BRT website. The website will list the ongoing construction areas and activities, and also upcoming activities. There will be general project information, as well as more detailed construction information.

The County's Twitter feed will be used to post up-to-date information. If you are on Twitter, use the hash tag #US29FLASH. The Twitter feed will also be shown on the project website, so you don't have to use Twitter to get the same information.

MCDOT is setting up an email address if people want to send in questions.

Variable message signs will be used along the road to alert the public of upcoming roadwork or lane closures, approximately two weeks in advance.

Suggestions from the group:

- *Signage on construction fencing directing the public on where to go for more project information*
- *Emails to nearby community associations*
Response: This will be done – not for every construction notification – but initially to tell people where to go for project information
- *Promotional messaging – build excitement and awareness about the project. “Future home of BRT station”*
Response: The speed of this construction might make it hard to do this for the early stations, but maybe for those being built later.
- *Use Facebook*
Response: the Montgomery County BRT Facebook site will direct people to the website for construction news.
- *More CAC meetings*
Response: CAC meetings are not particularly effective at getting news out to large numbers of people in a timely manner, but they could be used if a particular issue arose.
- *At Fenton Street northbound, suggest a pedestrian detour through the mall.*
Response: It is probably not permitted to route a detour through private property.

Adjourn

Monica Meade thanked everyone for attending and reminded them to come to the Groundbreaking October 25th.

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.