



Area Advisory Committee Kick-Off Event
 Saturday, April 5, 2014, 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
 Universities at Shady Grove Conference Center
 9630 Gudelsky Drive, Rockville, MD 20850

Attendees:

AAC One Members

Joseph Allen	David Rosenbaum
Marilyn Balcombe	Steve Scharf
Stuart Barr	Anita Schweinfurth
Brian Downie	Francine Waters
Cherian Eapen	Michael Watkins
Neil Harris	Ronald Welke
Erik Morrison	Kam Yee

AAC One Apologies

Girum Awoke	Lynne Tucker
Peter Henry	James Woods
Michael Janus	

AAC Two Members

Donna Baron	Jefferson Jex
John Brandt	Toby Lehman
John Dunlop	David McDonough
Marilyn Fleetwood	Malanie Weerakoon
Kara Guthro	Sims Zhou
Tim Henderson	

AAC TWO Apologies

Wayne Berman	Tami Mensh
Rosalind MacLennan	

AAC Three Members

Marcia Bond	Timothy McDonald
Kevin Johnson	Arlene Robinson
Alan Kaplan	Gail Sherman
Marilyn Leist	Mel Willis
Martin Mankowski	

AAC Three Apologies

Gerald Calderone	Fred Samadani
Christopher Maravilla	

Elected Official

Craig Rice, Montgomery County Council President

General Public

Karen O'Keefe	Joana Conklin
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Presenters

Otto Condon	Henry Kay
Jack Gonsalves	Stu Sirota
Dan Hardy	Greg Slater

Staff

AAC One	Diane Ratcliff – MTA Director of Planning
Elizabeth Andrew- Traffic Engineer	Rick Kiegel – MTA Project Manager
Todd Connelly- Station Architect	Ken Goon – Consultant Project Manager
Denny Finnerin – Segment Engineer	Anthony Brown - Logistics
Holly Storck - Facilitator	Patrick Butler – M-NCPPC
AAC Two	Jack Carroll - Stations
John Bull – Station Architect	Erik Dahlberg - WMATA
Charles Freeman - Traffic Engineer	Gary Erenrich – Montgomery County DOT
Karen Kahl – Segment Engineer	Charles Kenny – RK&K
Cathy Smith - Facilitator	Emily Khalid - Stations
AAC Three	Tori Leonard - Logistics
Allison Berkheimer – Segment Engineer	Kyle Nembhard - Logistics
Kevin Permisohn – Traffic Engineer	Crystal Saunders – Public Involvement Lead
Kyle Kramer - Station Architect	Charles Scott - WMATA
Tracee Strum-Gilliam - Facilitator	Daniel Seo – City of Rockville
	Jordan Vann - Logistics

Welcome

Rick Kiegel, Project Manager, Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT), began the session with welcoming remarks, introductions of the speakers and acknowledgements, followed by an overview of the CCT project and the program agenda. (Attendees were provided copies of all presentations for their binders.)

Rick explained the order of the presentations and noted that there would be an informal question-and-answer period after each presentation. Rick then introduced MTA staff: AAC facilitators, engineers and architects; Montgomery County, WMATA, Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission and local jurisdiction representatives; and project consultants.

Imagine the Possibilities

Henry Kay, Executive Director, MTA Transit Development and Delivery

Henry thanked AAC members for their participation in the project planning and stressed the importance of their input into the success of the project. Henry spoke about the larger context of the CCT project within the state's transportation program and emphasized the value of a collaborative planning process. In addition, he stressed the MTA's goals for quality, effectiveness, efficiency and choosing the right mode for the right setting. Henry also discussed how the CCT stations provided placemaking opportunities for the community.

Project Potential and Possibilities

Corridor Cities

Dan Hardy, Principal, Renaissance Planning Group

Dan presented Corridor Cities, which outlined the project's potential and possibilities. He noted the diverse backgrounds of those present and stressed that bringing these unique sets of skills together is very valuable. He pointed out that planning for the CCT has been a priority for decades and gave an overview of

the evolution of land use planning in the county (including integration of transit in communities such as King Farm and Crown Farm).

Q & A

Question: Given that the CCT has a circuitous route, at what point does it make sense to keep the buses running as they are now?

Answer: The objective of the CCT route is more about accessibility than it is about getting people from one end of a corridor to the other. The corridor has MARC service and I-270 (including the planned HOT or ETL improvements) for through traffic from Clarksburg and points north looking to get to Shady Grove or Washington, D.C.

Q: Will the Shady Grove loop route be frequent or occasional? How does it compare to the service on RideOn route 56?

A: During the initial planning, it was determined not feasible to take the main route of the CCT to the Universities at Shady Grove, because of balancing corridor speed with the stops at the activity centers. The current study plans to overlay the trunk line service with an additional bus every 15 minutes that travels the same route between Shady Grove and LSC Central, goes into mixed traffic along Great Seneca Highway and Darnestown Road to the Universities at Shady Grove and Traville Gateway and then returns back to the transitway to complete the trip to Metropolitan Grove. The inbound service would have one bus every 15 minutes doing the same movement.

AAC Member Comment: Currently, USG has approximately 4,000 students and in the next five years, the number of students is expected to increase to almost 7,000. Significant congestion in the area occurs now but the more we can encourage them to ride the CCT, the better congestion can be handled.

Q: King Farm, Crown Farm, Kentlands and the development they're planning at Belward Farm – were those developments planned well in advance of the Corridor Cities Transitway being in place and operating?

A: Some, but not all, of the Belward campus has been approved. Some additional development at Belward Farm cannot occur until various milestones for the CCT have been met. King Farm and Kentlands were planned and approved without restrictions related to the CCT..

Q: Did I hear right, 2035, is that when...?

A: That's our forecast year. When you design a highway or transit system, you design for future years so that system is not obsolete within five years.

Q: Henry Kay mentioned the need to minimize parking but there aren't that many people who can walk to these various areas. Essentially you have certain little nodes that you're going to serve and the rest of that whole area is just out of luck as far as riding the CCT, if you don't install parking.

A: I was trying to draw a contrast between the Shady Grove Metro station which is relatively inaccessible to pedestrians, versus CCT stations in the community. You don't want a Shady Grove Metro station in the community—it doesn't fit, it's not appropriate. I appreciate your point and we'll do the best we can.

AAC Member Comment: We have to have parking.

A: You do, but not Shady Grove-style of parking.

Q: Should those people pay a premium then since they have their own private bus line?

A: The CCT is designed to serve both those who drive and those who walk to the stations. It's a challenge for us to find the right balance.

A: The County is also now working to keeping the parking spaces that are there but encouraging more people to live within walking distance of Metro stations. One piece of the puzzle, is trying to get transit closer to where people live while trying to preserve the established residential communities. We have to recognize that there are a lot of folks who are just beyond the conventional walk shed for the CCT but believe that everyone will benefit from that increased access to a place that provides transit service.

Q: I live between Belward and Kentlands. For Muddy Branch and Great Seneca—is there a metric to realign the CCT bus route? Would it add time and would there be a reduction of ridership?

A: The challenge for the MTA is doing travel demand forecasting that takes everything into consideration including noting that people are willing to walk a quarter-mile to a stations. Also, a five-minute time savings really influences new riders to get on transit whereas less than a five minutes time savings makes transit more efficient but doesn't necessarily draw new riders to the system. You really have to take the environment of the place you're planning for and then put all those little ideas together to determine the rule of thumb. That's what was done over the last 15 or 20 years. The conclusion is that the CCT is going to be a better service to areas where development has occurred and where more is expected.

Q: Could you talk a little bit about how locations are identified? As I look at that map, each one of those places is a definable location. There are others that don't have stations, but part of the planning is to put stations on those locations. As we're thinking about what function each station will have, what criteria went into picking each spot?

A: One criteria was to look at land use and transportation together considering big picture items such as market density and zoning. Looking at it from a detailed perspective—what's on the ground now, what do we know is already in the pipeline. What's the number of jobs and residences proposed in each of these places.

Q: Can you err on the side of adding more stations or fewer stations?

A: You have to strike a balance—you really want to get the most ridership possible. There's a tradeoff between accessibility of the service and travel time. Roughly ½ mile to a mile station spacing is sort of a metric. But then it comes down to what are the opportunities for individual places and important nodes that warrant station locations.

Q: At Shady Grove, it's so crowded commuters are standing shoulder-to-shoulder—how are you addressing station capacity?

A: WMATA is looking at two big issues in terms of capacity constraints—one of them is the core capacity issue. What do you need to do downtown to make all these lines that feed in operate more efficiently.

A: We are working closely with the CCT to integrate the system with the Shady Grove station. Funding is a challenge but we are actively working together. We may add a new south entrance to make the station more accessible and safer.

Q: What is the timeline?

A: To be determined, but it is a priority.

Rick Kiegel took a moment to introduce Montgomery County Council President Craig Rice.

What is BRT

Jack Gonsalves, National BRT Practice Leader, Parsons Brinckerhoff

Jack outlined the elements of BRT, its advantages over light rail systems in operation around the country and the world, vehicle amenities, options for running ways, service plans and costs in his presentation. He shared details and photos from systems in Eugene, Oregon; the Orange Line in Los Angeles; the Cleveland Health Line; and Pittsburgh busway.

Q & A

Q: Where spacing is less than a mile and there's a parking issue—are there feeder lines to stations in systems? Can this alleviate parking problems and access to those stations?

A: If you're replacing the existing bus system, you want on average a 1/3 mile spacing. If you're going to keep the existing bus system, but reduce it in scope and scale, you can do a mile spacing like Everett Washington. But it may not be as frequent.

Q: Because parking is a double-edged sword—is there an optional solution to providing access to the stations without parking?

A: The existing Ride On bus network won't be modified except to make additional connections at the stations. There might be some changes to the frequency of that service to better integrate with the CCT.

Q: When the buses go near the Shady Grove Hospital, will there be a control device for emergency vehicles?

A: Yes, there will be what's called pre-emption of signals.

A: Buses will stop and pull over for emergency vehicles. Personal safety is paramount.

A: In Portland and also Seattle, the guideways themselves increase the response times for emergency vehicles. The guideways can be used by emergency responders if necessary.

Q: If you look at the three examples you've got, there's no curves in the one in Orange County, right? There's a nice straight line so, of course, it's going to run like rail. Do you have any examples of routes that have as many curves in it as ours, especially in a low-population density area?

A: Articulated buses can take curves better than a regular bus. Eugene has curves whereas York (Canada) is pretty straight. You could try and make it as straight as possible but a line that's straight can't serve the maximum amount of people.

Q: Wherever you put down transit, you're going to get urban sprawl. So if we're thinking about being more efficient and we want straight route, will the growth at these nodes be more remote?

A: In planning, you have to think about where you want to encourage growth. You have to have ground rules and draw the route where you will get the most ridership. I'm less concerned with circuitous routes than I am about getting ridership.

Q: All the successful BRTs that you presented to us didn't have anything like ours. I'd like to see the plagiarism that we have of their lines.

A: Plagiarism, as discussed in the presentation, was referring to design elements—guideways, station concepts, not alignments.

AAC Member Comment: You're not comparing apples to apples.

A: There are a lot of different examples that we could bring forward and talk about along the way.

Q: Could you also talk more about the traffic issues?

A: Based on the planned frequency, there will be plenty of opportunities to cross the guideway.

Q: You mentioned in your presentation that initially there were quite a few vehicle-bus accidents?

A: Not a lot. There were some on the Orange Line when it first started out due to driver error and signal issues. It does take time to get used to.

Q: For our system, what do our studies and projections say about how the CCT - either in Phase 1 or Phase 1 and 2 combined - will relieve traffic off of I-270 itself or just the general roadway network around the system?

A: I don't expect much of a reduction in travel on I-270. Local streets are going to see a reduction in traffic because of the CCT. Note that this won't be on opening day.

Q: The ridership for Cleveland was 12,300 per day; for LA it was 23,900 and if I recall, the ridership you're expecting on the CCT is 43,000 per day?

A: it is 35,900 in 2035.

Q: Do you think you're overselling?

A: There's no variation in what we present you. These numbers are directly from the actual analysis based on inputs by others. The computer models that are used for this area will actually tell us what that ridership is.

Q: How many people use the Shady Grove Metro station?

A: About 14,000 trips/boardings per day.

Q: What can we do to encourage ridership of a bus in an upscale community? What does it take—is it travel times, sexy bus drivers?

A: It's the rider experience – clean, safe, ride quality, reliability, real time information, wi-fi on the bus, quiet.

Moving Forward

Complete Streets

Greg Slater, Planning Director, Maryland State Highway Administration

Greg gave an overview of the complete streets concept as practiced by SHA. It is a community centered approach and driven by safety considerations for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users and motorists. A formal policy on bike safety is now incorporated into all SHA activities and outreach has been done to promote safety.

Q & A

Q: How do you coordinate bike sharing organizations with your planning?

A: What we would normally do is work with the local governments on where the stations are going to be and get a sense of where the destinations are going to be. We'll work with that to make sure we have good, safe bike infrastructure connecting the place where people come and go. A lot of the folks using those bikes are not your hard-core cyclists. They're the amateur, the everyday cyclist.

Q: Is there a way to have the Capital Bikeshare representative part of this planning process?

A: Capital Bikeshare doesn't do the planning. The County does. We have identified areas on maps and will work with MTA regarding the CCT and bikes.

Q: In the streets planning process, how do you address environmental contingencies like the winter we've just gone through?

A: It's a continual challenge and snow is a great example. For instance, that's why I'm a big fan of the on-road pavement bike accommodations. You can make that part of your plowing system. You do get to a point with snow where you just don't know where to put it. This winter was brutal for all of us and trying to find a safe spot you can put that snow is always a challenge. But we do recognize that there are issues with snow on sidewalks when we're plowing.

Q: The two charts showed a drop in injuries in cyclists and deaths in cyclists—I just wanted to get some clarification from you despite the fact that ridership is going up tremendously. Is it actually safer per mile to ride a bicycle in Maryland?

A: Absolutely—it's safer every year. There are some national advocacy groups that rate states on their bike friendliness and how great they are to cycle. But they really only have one data set to work with so they rate them on the amount of federal dollars that are spent through a transportation alternatives program in the bike category. If you have the highest number of expenditures, you get an A. We're not an eligible recipient of the federal transportation alternative dollars program so we work with the locals jurisdictions on that. We spend about half of the available funds on bike programs. We also have two state-funded bike-specific programs that are several million dollars a year. We have a \$10 to \$15 million a year pedestrian program that's just about sidewalk improvement and sidewalk reconstruction. And then we have everything that we do in many projects including bike infrastructure and sidewalks, none of which is ever counted in the equation. We could spend six times more than one state and get ranked 20 times less.

Walkable/Livable Communities

Stu Sirota, Principal of TND Planning Group

Stu defined walkable/livable communities as those that are designed to be less car-oriented, that offer new transportation choices and are more transit-friendly. His presentation highlighted how the development of

'drivable suburbia' has had a negative impact on a range of issues including obesity rates. He noted Kentlands, Lakelands and King Farm as examples of a paradigm shift away from the automobile and that the CCT wants to integrate with these best practices.

Q & A

Q: For those of us who live here near the CCT, we're stuck with cul-de-sacs and dead-end roads in an unwalkable community. Is the State working with the City of Gaithersburg to spend money to create walking paths and bike paths from the neighborhoods to the CCT?

A: We are certainly working with the local jurisdictions to make sure that the connectivity between the transit and the local communities is well-defined and fairly easy to use. As it relates to a cul-de-sac community, all of that is private property. Opportunities are very limited in terms of trying to make those connections between houses and to the transit station.

Q: Getting across Darnestown Road is a challenge. Montgomery County and the SHA have control over Darnestown Road. Both the previous speaker and you were talking about street concepts. How does that concept get implemented? Do you have a four-lane highway that's very heavily traveled that separates the community?

A: There's a lot of talk about this very hot issue - retrofitting streets that were first built in the '60s, '70s, '80s. They were never thinking about walkability so the streets may be very wide and there may be a lot of traffic. Opportunities may exist to do 'road diets' which is a process of actually narrowing lanes or taking lanes away—as long as the locals feel that is an acceptable trade-off.

A: Opportunities are on a case-by-case basis. We did it on MD 193 for the Purple Line.

AAC Member Comment: With regards to Great Seneca and Sam Eig Highways, I hear complete streets but then I hear the SHA wants to make them higher capacity which means less walkable and little connectivity.

A: Just to clarify, the Master Plan efforts are done through the County. Through that effort, potential interchange locations are defined. The SHA will respond to the County's request to study, and ultimately construct, an interchange if the County sees that as a need. All of the changes that may ultimately occur on State highways go through and are managed by the SHA.

AAC Member Comment: If the development goes forward in the Great Seneca Science Corridor Master Plan, it was said at one of the meetings that even with the roadway and transit improvements, the traffic on Great Seneca Highway at that point is expected to travel nine to 11 miles an hour. So we can't really talk about taking road capacity away (road diets) with those speeds given the current 55 MPH speeds.

A: That may be a good example of a place where that wouldn't be able to happen. But there may be other opportunities where it could.

Station Design and Amenities

Otto Condon, Principal of ZGF Architects

Otto reiterated the value of stakeholder input, noting that it always improves the quality of design opportunities. He outlined the various types of stations for consideration, but stressed that stations should primarily be pedestrian walk-up. Shelter architecture should provide security, lighting, protection from weather, seating, and way-finding and not obscure nearby businesses. Station design and amenities can also be opportunities for gardens and green spaces, public art and stormwater management, provide unifying civic architecture and be sustainable. Otto emphasized that stations should be thought of not just as transit investments, but also opportunities to connect and influence.

Q & A

Q: In regards to design, do you think it's more important to have continuity in station design or have stations reflect neighborhoods?

A: There have been cities like Minneapolis and Boston who thought that every station should reflect the neighborhood. There should be some sense of unity, but then you figure out a way to let the community

influence the design of the shelters. For the systems that have used different stations, from an operational and maintenance point of view, it can be a real problem having ten stations and ten different elements that you have to deal with.

A: At this point, that's what we're thinking about—having unifying and consistent core elements at each station and then having unique aspects to customize each. Imagine Washington Metro's system. If all the downtown underground stations did not have that arching appearance, all of them very different one from another, you would lose that unifying aspect of it. We think that's very important.

Rick Kiegel announced to attendees that all of the speaker would be available after the session to answer additional questions.

Q: Can you give us an update on the outcome of the value engineering study?

A: I can't really give you an update because there is nothing to report at this point. We are probably within three weeks of finalizing it.

After closing remarks and thanks to the AAC members who participated, the session adjourned for lunch at 12:20 p.m.

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