Area Advisory Committee One Meeting #7 Summary
Thursday, March 26, 2015, 7pm
Lakelands Clubhouse
960 Main Street
Gaithersburg, MD 20878

Members	
Joseph Allen	David Rosenbaum
Marilyn Balcombe	Steve Scharf
Stuart Barr	Francine Waters
Brian Downie	Michael Watkins
Michael Janus	Ronald Welke
Erik Morrison	Kam Yee
Apologies	
Girum Awoke	Anita Schweinfurth
Cherian Eapen	Lynne Tucker
Peter Henry	James Woods
Staff	
Facilitator – Holly Storck	**Public Involvement Task Lead** – Crystal Saunders
Station Architecture – Todd Connelly, Kyle Kramer	**City of Gaithersburg** – Gregory Mann
Traffic Engineer – Elizabeth Andrew	**Senior Environmental Planner** – Erron Ramsey
Segment Engineer – Denny Finnerin	**Logistics Staff** – Lineta Duren, Tori Leonard
General Public	
Richard Arkin	

Handouts:

Meeting packets included: Meeting Agenda, Meeting #6 Summary, Environmental Overview presentation, Helix Concept Progression handout, and station examples.

Introductions and Overview:

Facilitator **Holly Storck** welcomed attendees and presented an overview of the meeting agenda: a review of the CCT's environmental documentation and a follow-up from November's meeting on station architecture. Attendees introduced themselves, and she reminded members of the policy regarding public participation at the meetings—the public was welcome to observe the meeting, but only members could participate in the discussion. Holly noted that Richard Arkin's emailed questions on ADA compliance had been shared with Kyle and Todd and they would address ADA in the station architecture presentation.

Holly then provided information on issues members had asked about at the last meeting. There is no new information to report on project funding; the project continues to proceed and the CCT

project team continues to evaluate different ways to procure the CCT project. Regarding the independent transit authority proposed by the Montgomery County Executive, he withdrew the bill for further internal discussion.

Environmental Documentation:

Erron Ramsey walked the group through the Environmental Overview presentation. Because the MTA is seeking federal funding for the CCT project, documents are prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). The environmental documentation for the CCT project is an Environmental Assessment (EA). The project does not require an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) at this time because of the project's long history of alternatives analysis and the identification of a locally-preferred alternative. An EIS conducts an analysis of all alternatives considered and because the CCT component has been part of three previous NEPA documents that considered a broad range of alternatives and modes, the MTA felt an Environmental Assessment was appropriate. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) agreed. One difference between an EA and EIS is that a public hearing is not required for an EA, but it is for an EIS. However, the MTA has agreed to hold a public hearing for the EA.

The EA covers the nine-mile Phase 1 portion of the project. It also includes a draft Section 4(f) evaluation component, which looks at impacts to publicly owned parks, recreation areas, and wildlife or waterfowl refuges, and any publicly or privately owned historic site listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The EA is currently being reviewed by the FTA. Once it is approved by the FTA, they will give MTA permission to release the document to the public for comment online and at locations throughout the corridor. A public hearing to solicit public comments will be held during the review period.

The document includes an executive summary and five chapters: purpose and need; alternatives considered; environmental resources, consequences, and mitigation; draft Section 4(f); and public information and outreach.

Two alternatives are evaluated in the EA: the no-build, which analyzes future conditions if the project is not built, and the build alternative, which is the nine-mile alignment with 14 stations and an operations and maintenance facility (to be constructed in the AAC 1 area).

The EA is based on a 15% level of design. This means the project will evolve and change as the design progresses. However, throughout the design process, the team will look for ways to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts to resources along the corridor.

There are 28 specific resources discussed in the EA, and they are divided into four major categories: socioeconomic resources, cultural resources and draft Section 4(f) evaluation, natural resources, and physical resources.

Socioeconomic resources include land use, neighborhood, parks, economy, and environmental justice (low income and minority) communities. The CCT project does have some socioeconomic impacts. They include the conversion of residential, commercial, industrial and institutional uses to transportation use; neighborhood impacts such as strip right-of-way impacts, two residential relocations, low to moderate visual impacts, and moderate noise impacts in

specific locations; non-park amenity impacts to Washington Woods and Muddy Branch Park; and one business displacement (the now vacant Absolute Mac store on Quince Orchard Road). There are no disproportionately adverse impacts to low-income and minority communities.

When evaluating cultural and archeological assessments, the project coordinates with the Maryland Historical Trust. There are no effects to archeological properties, and the only historic property with a likely adverse effect is the Ward House/Belward Farm. This area is planned for development, but is still considered historically sensitive. The project expects to do mitigation there and the MTA will continue to work with the state historic preservation officer. The draft Section 4(f) evaluation has looked at Muddy Branch Park, Washingtonian Woods Park, Metropolitan Branch/B&O Railroad, NIST, Ward House/Belward Farm, and England/Crown Farm. The MTA has met with the City of Gaithersburg Parks Department to discuss ways to minimize and mitigate impacts to the Washingtonian Woods and Muddy Branch parks.

There are several natural resources in the corridor that will have temporary or permanent impacts. Of particular interest to AAC One are the forest impacts associated with the operations and maintenance facility, which is near the I-270 interchange with MD 124 on property owned by the City of Gaithersburg near the county impound lot. The site is now forested and the project will remove many of the trees. The MTA will comply with the mitigation requirements of the Maryland Reforestation Law that calls for a one-to-one replacement of any trees removed. The project is looking for sites to plant replacement trees. Sites need to be public property of an appropriate size. The team first looks for land within the corridor, then the watershed, and then the county. **Denny Finnerin** said that there may be a couple of opportunities for reforestation throughout the corridor.

A member asked if the MTA would work with the city and county to help identify sites, especially since stormwater management is a big concern. Erron explained that the team has met with Gaithersburg, which had just recently released its watershed plans. A member asked if the CCT was in competition with other projects, like the Purple Line, for reforestation sites. Erron pointed out that the Purple Line is much further along than the CCT and has already identified sites. In addition, the CCT could possibly take advantage of some of the smaller sites that have not met the requirements for the Purple Line mitigation.

A member asked if the operations and maintenance facility site is the largest amount of land to be acquired. Denny said yes and noted that the City of Gaithersburg owns 80 to 90 percent of it. A member asked how close the site was to the Parklands development. Denny said that the developers have bought property all the way up to Metropolitan Grove Road and continue to develop concepts to expand there, with possible office space along the southern end. The operations and maintenance facility will be on the southeast side of Metropolitan Grove Road. A member asked if compatible uses for the Parkland site have been determined. Denny responded that the team is coordinating with the city, which is aware of the operations and maintenance facility.

Physical resources include noise and vibration, air quality, energy, hazardous materials, utilities, and indirect and cumulative effects. The other resources do no not have negative impacts and may improve air quality and reduce regional energy use. The noise analysis shows moderate

impacts to three receptor sites along Great Seneca Highway: one in Upshire Circle in Washingtonian Woods and two at The Vistas, located near the Muddy Branch Road intersection with Great Seneca Highway. The AAC in that area is aware and actively monitoring MTA's evaluation of impacts. The MTA is working with the communities. A member asked if 'moderate' referred to a certain decibel level. Erron explained that it is a sliding scale based on FTA criteria showing a range of decibels based on existing noise levels. The data is collected over a 24-hour period to get the full range of changes in noise levels throughout the day.

There would be temporary and long-term noise impacts. Different types of noise would be generated during the different project phases. Construction equipment is an example of a temporary noise impact. There will also be noise during operation of the system. Since CCT vehicle noise cannot be isolated from adjacent roadway noise, both CCT vehicle and future traffic are included in the noise model.

Mitigation measures are prepared based on the long-term impacts. Noise mitigation is typically a barrier, but certain criteria have to be met. Building a barrier has to be reasonable in terms of costs and feasible in terms of physical constructability. The project is discussing potential mitigation measures with affected communities. If a barrier is proposed to be near homes, affected residents have the right to vote whether or not they want a barrier. If 51% respond that they do not want a barrier, the barrier is not constructed. It is not possible to build a noise barrier with breaks for opposing homes. A member asked whether a berm at The Vistas was being considered. Denny responded that the project is considering a variety of solutions in both locations.

A member asked if Ride On needs to do a similar type of noise analysis when it chooses to put buses on a route. Erron replied that the CCT is a federal and state project, which means it follows both federal government and State Highway Administration policy. Ride On adding buses to a route is a local decision so doesn't need to comply with these other rules.

Erron concluded the presentation by outlining the environmental documentation schedule. The FTA is now reviewing the document and when it is satisfied that its concerns have been addressed, the document will be ready for distribution to the public. The MTA will advertise its availability for a 30- or 60-day comment period. There will be multiple ways to comment on the document including public hearing testimony, email comment forms through the project website, letters, etc. The scheduling of the public hearing is subject to the time it takes the FTA to complete its review, but it is anticipated that a public hearing could be held in late June. The MTA will then finalize the document based on comments received from the public and agencies and send it back to the FTA for review and approval. Once the final environmental document is issued, which is expected to occur in the fall, the project is able to move into final design, right-of-way acquisition, and construction.

A member asked when and how ACC members will learn the date of the public hearing. Holly assured members they would be notified when the date was set.

Station Design Update

Todd Connelly told the AAC that the intent of the station update is to show AAC members how the station design has evolved since the November meeting. At that meeting, two concepts were presented – Helix and Framework. Based on feedback from the AACs and ongoing discussions within the project team, the team has decided to move forward with the Helix concept. However, the project team has tried to incorporate strengths identified with the Framework concept, such as its "presence" and sense of creating a "room", into the refined Helix concept as it extends beyond the canopy design.

The Helix concept is felt to be more dynamic and adaptable and has less of a presence, which the project team feels helps it complement the areas in which the stations are placed. However, a member commented that the Helix concept's reduced presence and adaptability makes the stations seem more like bus stops than stations and considered the modifications to be a downgrade. He felt that the Helix concept is less unique and the Framework concept offered a sense of identity. Todd replied that he believed the stations designs were substantive and would be different from a regular bus stop.

The station design includes a number of safety elements. The plans include a 2-foot high perimeter wall to serve as a barrier between adjacent traffic and the transitway and station area. This will protect the station, provide a crash barrier; allow landscaping with ornamental grasses; and minimize mid-block pedestrian crossings. The grasses and wall will help guide people to the proper station entrances and define the station area.

Adjustments have been made to the steel and glass canopy. The canopy is lower and has smaller columns to give the station area a more intimate feel. The overhang across the transitway, which in the original design was high enough to allow emergency vehicles to pass under, has been removed. This allows the canopy to be lower.

The platform layout, including access, has become more developed. Crossings to the station will be at the roadway level and lead to an entrance area that will have a station pylon with signage. The crossing, pylon, and signage will be ADA-compliant, including having the signage in Braille. The ramp from the roadway level to the platform level will be approximately 30-feet long to connect to the platform, which will be 14 inches above the roadway surface. The slope of the ramp to the platform varies at each station. Some will be over five percent, the ADA's definition of a ramp, and some will be less. None of the ramps will have a slope of 8.33 percent or greater, which would make the slope non-ADA compliant. In addition, there will be a 5-foot clearance from the platform center, not counting the 2-foot wide detectable warning strip at the edge of the platform. The actual station amenities are still being developed, but goals include having a small footprint for ticket vending machines and other on-platform elements. All of the elements on the platform will be ADA-compliant including trash and recycling bins, variable message signage, and emergency phones.

A member asked if the stations would be heated. Todd said that stations are typically unheated unless the project is dictated to provide heat. With a wait time of six minutes between buses, hopefully it will not be necessary to have heat. However, the Helix concept incorporates an

angled windscreen and lowered canopy to protect riders and station elements from wind and driving rain, using a standard rain angle of ten degrees.

The mostly transparent windscreen is a major element of the platform and incorporates seating, a leaning bar, signage, and interactive information such as next bus information. It will also feature a gutter system for rainwater runoff. While no decisions have been made about whether to accommodate advertisements, the team is identifying locations, including the windscreen. It could also be used to incorporate artwork, signage, maps, etc.

A member asked whether the glass canopy would provide shade. Todd said the team was looking at the translucency for the panels and the use of a ceramic frit (an etched pattern on glass) to reduce transparency and provide some protection from heat and glare.

The station lighting will likely be integrated into the Helix structure itself and will reflect down to reduce light pollution. The team is currently developing lighting layouts and locations on the canopy. The project will follow established industry standards for light levels on the platforms and approach areas. A member asked if solar power was a practical consideration. Todd responded that placing solar panels on the canopies would not allow for the canopy transparency the project was going for. However, the team is open to discussion on the issue and noted that the energy requirements for a station are not as great as one might imagine. Another member asked about using Piezo (harvesting energy from mechanical movement) to power the stations.

The platforms show two canopies, which cover approximately 60 percent of the platform area. This is a high percentage for a transit system. Members wondered why there were two canopies rather than one long one. Todd explained the canopies are located at the bus loading areas, the area of the platform that most people will use. **Kyle Kramer** added the station elements will be covered as much as possible and it is expected that fewer people will be using the center of the platform. A member raised a concern that the gap in coverage could reduce the through-put of the platform and the ADA clearance if users had to keep umbrellas raised in rainy weather.

A member asked why the canopy was a parallelogram instead of a rectangle. Todd explained that the diagonal design emphasized movement and is not dictated by any functional requirements. The member responded that transit architecture frequently emphasizes movement, but noted that the station is a place of stopping and that there is something to be said about resting. Todd explained that this idea of a stop or “room” was explored with the Framework option.

A member asked about bike loading, and Kyle said that bikes would be loaded inside the vehicle rather than on the outside on the front of the vehicle. A member wondered if the operations model included dwell time for bike, wheelchair, etc. loading.

When Todd presented Firstfield station, a side-aligned, center platform, he noted that the station elements and the size would be the same as median-aligned, center platform station. However, the approach and amenities would be slightly different. A member wondered why the bike parking was far from the transitway crossing. Todd and Denny explained that the bike parking shown in the design is a placeholder and the project team is currently conducting a study with Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning, Montgomery County, and the City of

Gaithersburg to determine how much bike parking is needed at each station and the preferred locations for bicycle parking. The station prototype shows 20 spaces, but decisions about bike parking are still being made. **Crystal Saunders** said that the bike study is on-going and there are no updates to share presently, but more information on bike access and parking will be presented at the next meeting.

A member asked how the mechanical/electrical system box shown on the drawing would be protected from potential vandalism. Todd explained that an architectural fence could be installed around it. Denny reminded the group that the design decisions about how the systems equipment would be protected could change as the project advances and noted that a wall could provide a larger surface for graffiti.

At Kentlands station, Todd said that not much had changed from the concepts shown in November. However, the size of some structural elements has been reduced and decisions about circulation elements to the Great Seneca Highway level have been refined. The project team recognizes that Kentlands is a unique site and represents an opportunity to "do something special." Because ridership at this station is high and it is an aerial station, the platform is 27-feet wide and has an elongated canopy. At the Great Seneca Highway level, the current design shows simple landscaping and a pathway to access the Kentlands level.

A member asked if the architectural code for the Kentlands community has been incorporated into the station design. Todd explained that at the user level, the team was trying to soften some of the station elements using materials described in the architectural guidelines such as masonry. However, the project team has little leeway from MTA on the materials it can use as MTA operations wants stations to use the most durable materials possible such as steel and glass.

The canopy is the dominating element and will be uniform throughout that system. That is, the columns of the structure cannot be brick at one station and stucco at another. The project team has made a decision to create architectural continuity throughout the system that ties the stations together and brands the line. However, there may be opportunities to use paver patterns and artwork to reflect the community in which the station is located. In addition, at Kentlands, the Great Seneca Highway level could be an opportunity to use the Kentlands architectural code, but that ownership and maintenance presented challenges.

Todd then presented a new station element – the pedestrian bridge at Metropolitan Grove station that crosses the CSX tracks at the MARC station. The bridge design had to meet the requirements of CSX and also create an identity for the CCT. The objective is to limit pedestrians' ability to cross the tracks at grade and to provide an acceptable alternative. Plans include two stairs, a glass elevator tower, and an open-air bridge clad in a material perforated with openings no more than two inches in diameter (a CSX requirement designed to keep people from throwing things off the bridge and onto the train tracks). The bridge has a helix-like structural design, with a varied pattern of openings in the cladding. A member asked whether the perforated pattern would provide wind protection. Todd said that studies have shown that a perforated metal skin is a great wind baffle and will provide some protection from rain and snow. He went on to say that additional studies are ongoing to see how well the design will protect the walking surface from moisture and freezing.

Todd concluded his presentation with a description of the stations at DANAC and USG. Neither station is in AAC One, but the concepts were presented to show a general idea of how side-platform stations function. The DANAC platform is similar in size and canopy structure to the stations presented earlier. The team is working on site plan elements for this station and the challenge for this station is the underpass at Key West Avenue as the alignment is below-grade. The USG station, which is part of the CCT via USG service and operates on regular roads rather than the transitway, features a split side platform. The platform is 75 feet long and has one canopy structure. However, the canopy design and platform elements are same as those included in stations on the transitway.

General Discussion/Closing

The next, and final, meeting of the AAC is Wednesday, May 20. However, it is possible the project could ask members to reconvene if there is need for input on specific issues.

If there are specific issues members would like to discuss in May, please contact Holly. Bicycle and pedestrian planning and station naming were raised as two topics of interest.

As noted earlier, the CCT project team has been meeting with Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning, Montgomery County, and the City of Gaithersburg about bicycle and pedestrian access and will hopefully have information to share in May. A member thought that on April 20 there is a public meeting on bikeways, possibly including representatives of the county and cities of Rockville and Gaithersburg. Holly asked the member to send her that information and she would relay it to AAC members.

With regard to station naming, Holly reminded members that they have a copy of the MTA's facilities naming policy. The AACs and the wider community will have input into the station names, but the final decision rests with the MTA and/or the Governor. If people have suggestions for station names, anywhere on the route, please send them to Holly so that they can be assembled in advance of the May 20 meeting. However, there will be opportunities to propose names at the meeting itself.

A member asked if the CCT was still scheduled for opening in 2021. Holly said yes, the team has not been told otherwise, and Denny said that the team has been directed to continue as before.

The meeting adjourned at 8:43 p.m.

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