



Area Advisory Committee Two Meeting #2 Summary
Wednesday, May 2, 2014, 6:30p.m - 8:00 p.m.
Universities at Shady Grove
9630 Gudelsky Drive, Rockville, MD 20850

Attendees:

Members

John Brandt	Rosalind MacLennan
John Dunlop	David McDonough
Marilyn Fleetwood	Tami Mensh
Kara Guthro	Melanie Weerakoon
Jeff Jex	Sims Zhou
Toby Lehman	

Apologies

Donna Baron	Tim Henderson
Wayne Berman	

Staff

Facilitator - Cathy Smith	Public Involvement Task Lead – Crystal Saunders
Station Architect - John Bull	Montgomery County DOT – Edgar Gonzalez
Traffic Engineer - Charles Freeman	Logistics Staff – Jordan Vann
Segment Engineer - Karen Kahl	Logistics Staff – Carl Williams

Handouts:

Meeting packets included: Meeting #1 summary, Kick-Off Meeting summary, Meeting #2 Agenda, proposed meeting schedule, CCT overview map, an aerial map of the AAC #2 area, typical sections, traffic (interactions at intersections), station prototypes, and an operations planning summary.

Introductions and Overview:

Facilitator Cathy Smith introduced herself, AAC Two project staff – Karen Kahl, John Bull, Charles Freeman, and Edgar Gonzalez, representing Gary Erenrich of Montgomery County DOT. She then explained that the AAC meeting schedule has been compressed. Rather than meeting once a quarter, the AAC will meet every other month due to the possibility of the engineering schedule being compressed. Cathy briefly reviewed the topics for discussion at the next several meetings based on the proposed meeting schedule handout.

As an update, Cathy explained that Project Manager Rick Kiegel and Traffic Engineer Kevin Permisohn visited the Mission Hills community and staff conducted a traffic count, as requested at a prior community meeting.

Cathy introduced the evening's meetings topic, the CCT alignment, as it is intended to provide project information and details rather than obtain input on how to change the alignment. She also explained that the project team is still studying the placement of the CCT alignment along Muddy Branch Road. The project team will meet with the Mission Hills community on May 20, 2014 to present the findings of the study that the community requested.

Transitway Alignment:

Karen Kahl gave an overview of the alignment and noted that Charles Freeman would provide details regarding traffic and intersections and John Bull would give information on the stations. Karen explained the CCT alignment with the greatest focus on the portion of the transitway through the AAC Two area. She explained there will be curbs on both sides of the CCT and she referred to the "Typical Sections" handout for a visual reference. In some places where there is adequate space, a planted area will be provided between the CCT and the adjacent roadway and the trail or sidewalk will be located outside the CCT. Questions were raised about the proximity of the transitway to the roadway and whether there would be space for pedestrians to stand when crossing the transitway and roadway. Karen indicated the transitway would be a minimum of six feet from the roadway, which is an adequate width for pedestrians to wait before crossing the next lane of traffic.

The CCT alignment in the AAC Two area will begin along the southwest side of Great Seneca Highway just after crossing the Muddy Branch stream. The current plan will continue along Great Seneca Highway and cross Muddy Branch Road at the signalized intersection, to run down the east side of Muddy Branch Road. Questions were raised whether the parking spaces of the Vistas at Washingtonian Woods, close to Great Seneca Highway, would be impacted by the CCT. Karen responded that the parking spaces would not be impacted. Further discussion arose about sufficient right-of-way at that corner of Great Seneca Highway and Muddy Branch Road – whether the existing right-of-way will be enough space for the transitway, whether additional private property may need to be acquired from a private homeowner in the Vistas and whether the property owners are aware of the potential acquisition. Karen indicated if additional property is needed beyond the existing right-of-way, it is a very small amount. The team has met with the community and they are aware of the potential acquisition. A member of AAC Two confirmed the CCT team had met with the various HOAs of Washingtonian Woods several times.

Karen reviewed the alignment as it is currently planned to run down the east side of Muddy Branch Road, indicating this alignment would require acquisition of the first house on the corner of Mission Drive and Muddy Branch Road. This acquisition and the potential traffic impacts of the transitway on the Mission Hills community spurred the community to request additional studies of the transitway alignment in the vicinity of Mission Hills. Karen reviewed the various alternatives under study, including an option to move the CCT to the center of Muddy Branch Road and multiple options that would continue along Great Seneca Highway and enter Belward Farm just past the Mission Hills Community. This spurred a question as to the location of

stations on Belward Farm. Karen noted there is only one station Belward LSC, but the location of the station would depend on the option selected.

Montgomery County representative, Edgar Gonzalez, raised the point that Montgomery County's Master Plan indicates Muddy Branch Road is to be widened from four lanes to six lanes and the study team should keep this in mind when deciding on the alignment of the CCT on or in the vicinity of Muddy Branch Road. When asked what sections of Muddy Branch Road would be widened, Edgar indicated the portion between Great Seneca Highway and Darnestown Road is the most important, particularly given the development at Belward Farm.

Karen continued describing the CCT alignment pointing out that the orange areas along the alignment will be segments of shared use trails slated to be built in conjunction with the CCT project. These trail segments will connect with existing and planned bike trails to ultimately provide bike connectivity through the Life Science Campus. She described how the CCT alignment will operate along a new road that will be built through the existing Public Safety Training Academy (PSTA) (located between Key West Avenue, Darnestown Road and Great Seneca Highway). Questions arose regarding the new road. Edgar Gonzalez explained that Montgomery County would be seeking bids from developers to purchase and develop the PSTA property including the new road that will run through the property. The CCT will be built in the median of the new road that will also be used by vehicular traffic.

The CCT will exit the PSTA property, cross Great Seneca Highway onto Medical Center Drive utilizing a new median and make a left turn onto Broschart Road. The alignment will travel along the east side of Broschart Road from Medical Center Drive up to the Children's Institute. At a new signal behind the Children's Institute, the CCT will cross Broschart diagonally to the west side of the road and then gradually transition to an underpass below Key West Avenue where it will remain on the west side of Diamondback Drive. At the intersection with Discoverly Drive, the CCT will cross diagonally to run in the median of Discoverly Drive. When it reaches Fields Road, the CCT will turn right and operate in the median of Fields Road. It will begin to rise on a structure to cross over the Washingtonian Boulevard intersection and then cross I-270 on a bridge structure. The CCT will return to street level at the west edge of King Farm Boulevard.

Traffic Signal Overview:

The discussion of the various alignment alternatives in the vicinity of Muddy Branch Road spurred questions about traffic signals. Charles Freeman reviewed the traffic signal layout in the intersection handout for the two types of intersections along the CCT (median aligned and side aligned) with specific details in the vicinity of Muddy Branch Road.

For the median-aligned intersections, the CCT vehicles would move concurrently with the adjacent through and right turn traffic (middle box, left side of handout). The conflicting traffic movements, left turning traffic and crossing traffic, would have to stop. When these left turning

vehicles or crossing traffic on the side streets are moving (bottom box, left side of handout), the CCT vehicles would stop.

For side-aligned intersections, the CCT vehicles would also move with the concurrent through traffic (middle box, right side of handout), but right turns would be prohibited to cross the CCT alignment. Similarly, conflicting traffic movements, left turning traffic and crossing traffic, would have to stop. When these left turning vehicles or crossing traffic on the side streets are moving (bottom box, right side), the CCT vehicles would stop.

Questions were raised about how a traffic signal on Muddy Branch Road at Mission Drive/Midsummer Drive would operate. Charles responded that it would be a full traffic signal controlling all traffic movements on the four approaches. Currently, Mission Hills residents must try to enter northbound Muddy Branch Road between the cars backed up from the signal at Great Seneca Highway. The new signal would help create breaks in the traffic to allow residents to safely exit and enter their neighborhood.

In response to questions raised about the use of gates at intersections where the CCT crosses, the study team noted that they would not be used. Motorist and pedestrians need to respect the roadway traffic signals when crossing the CCT and the roadway. Motorists should not wait in the transitway in anticipation of entering the regular traffic lanes, the transitway is considered a lane of traffic for CCT vehicles. Additionally, a question was raised regarding signal priority by the CCT vehicles. It was noted the CCT vehicles will not take full priority over all traffic movements. The CCT will utilize “transit signal priority.” For example, if a CCT vehicle is approaching and the light is green but about to turn yellow, the light could be extended a few more seconds, or if a CCT vehicle is approaching during the red phase, it could turn green a couple seconds earlier than other traffic. However, the traffic will not be stopped every time a bus comes through. Karen noted the meeting topic for the July meeting will be Traffic and the team will go into greater detail on traffic movements and impacts during that meeting.

Stations Overview:

Karen introduced John Bull to discuss access to the stations, and approximate station layouts. Karen reminded the committee there would be two future meetings dedicated to the stations but, at this meeting, John would provide general information on how the stations are incorporated into the alignment.

John explained that the station locations were developed based on planning and ridership projections that have been ongoing for many years. Urban design features such as safety, visibility (of people on the platforms), functionality, and connection to the surrounding areas helped to determine the locations. Using the “Station Prototypes” handout, John then described how the stations would function.

The LSC Belward Station is proposed in a centrally located area of the proposed development and it will be a center-aligned platform with the CCT lanes running on both sides of it. The

station will have ramps on both ends to connect pedestrians to the adjacent streets. All platforms will be 14 inches above the ground elevation to provide a level walking surface from the platform to the CCT vehicle. John explained that the LSC West Station will operate similar to the LSC Belward Station.

The LSC Central Station will feature a center-aligned platform in the middle of the CCT, on the side of Broschart Road. After passing under Key West Avenue, the CCT will enter the DANAC Station, which will have side-aligned platforms, with the CCT lanes running between the platforms. The Crown Farm Station was initially adjacent to the intersection of Fields Road so it could serve the development at Crown Farm and Washingtonian Center. However, a decision has been made to pull the station back along Decoverly Drive by about a half block to better serve the heart of the Crown Farm development.

Operations Plan Overview:

Karen reviewed the Operations Plan Overview with the members. Operating hours for the CCT will be 4:30am - 1:00 am Monday through Thursday; 4:30am -3:00am Friday; 6:30am – 3:00am Saturday; and 6:30am – 1:00am on Sunday, to coincide with Metro operating hours particularly for those commuting to and from Shady Grove. The schedule provided in the handout is for the peak year 2035, but is expected to be somewhat less in the opening year of 2021.

In 2035, CCT vehicles will run every three-and-a-half minutes during peak periods (morning peak: 6am-9am, evening peak: 3pm-7pm). Midday, vehicles will run every six minutes, and every 10 minutes before the morning peak and after the evening peak. The vehicles will also run every 10 minutes on the weekends. Karen explained that this is the operations schedule for the main service, called the “CCT Direct Service”.

In addition to the main service, additional vehicles will make two stops in mixed traffic at Traville Gateway Drive and the Universities at Shady Grove. It will run every 15 minutes during peak periods and midday, and every 30 minutes before and after the morning and evening peak periods. This service will be called “CCT via USG Service”. It will operate the full length of the CCT and also serve Traville Gateway Drive and USG.

Questions arose whether the payment systems will be on the platform rather than on the vehicle. Karen responded that the fare collection machines would be located on the platform to allow for quicker boarding at the stations. Similar to METRO, riders will be able to walk directly onto the CCT vehicle. A question was raised whether additional stations are planned but will not be built initially. At this time, there are no additional stations planned, all of the stations shown on the alignment maps will be built at the time of initial construction.

Miscellaneous Questions:

The group asked if there was a sense of the type of ridership the CCT would draw – are they all headed to Shady Grove or Metropolitan Grove to take METRO or MARC south? Karen

explained riders destined directly for the METRO and MARC Stations from outside the study are unlikely to utilize the CCT from one end point to the other. We estimate that more riders would board or depart the CCT vehicles somewhere along the CCT. We also expect to see riders transferring to the CCT from METRO or MARC to travel to an employment center along the CCT route.

A member asked when the construction would start and how it would be phased. Karen explained if full funding is provided, the construction could begin in 2018. The current schedule, however, only includes 15 percent design this summer and 30 percent design in 2015. The State will then evaluate how the project will be constructed – under one contract, broken into several contracts, start at one point or several points and work concurrently. That decision is still several years away.

Karen explained as part of this effort, the project team looked at the bicycle Montgomery County Master Plan and others to determine how the CCT can connect to or enhance trails by building a section of the trail along Quince Orchard Road. The project is specifically for the transitway with accommodations for a future bike trail. One member noted it would be helpful to overlay the bike Master Plan on the station network to see the connectivity and perhaps discuss with the county a bike sharing plan as the CCT crosses multiple jurisdictions (the City of Gaithersburg, the City of Rockville and Montgomery County).

A question arose about the Noise Study, whether any conclusions had been made regarding noise barriers along the CCT alignment. The noise study is ongoing and we anticipate the findings will be shared in October.

Next Steps:

Cathy re-addressed the proposed schedule for the future meeting dates for July, September and November of this year, and January and March of 2015. The logistics team will work to set the meetings on the preferred dates and we will share the schedule once the dates have been confirmed.

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