

ACT January General Members meeting

ACT members and supporters are Men and Women of Action. So, for those that were unable to attend the last meeting, the following is a summary of what took place. We hope you will be able to attend the next meeting on March 11th. Meetings begin at 7:30pm, at the Silver Spring Center, 8818 Georgia Ave. The Center is a ten minute walk from the Silver Spring Metro Station and Metrobus "Q" and "Y" routes pass in front of the Center

Ride On #5 stops two blocks away at Spring St.

The meeting began with the election of new officers for the upcoming year. Each nominee was seconded and put to a vote. The new officers for 2008 are:

President: Ben Ross (Bethesda) 301-913-2849

VP: Jim Clarke (Rockville) 301-340-8994

VP: Hans Riemer (Silver Spring) 301-589-3124

VP: Miriam Schoenbaum (Boyd's) 301-528-6650

Secretary: Tracey Johnstone (Chevy Chase) 301-951-8963

Treasurer: John Carroll (Silver Spring) 301-588-7606

Board Member: John Fay (Wheaton) 301-946-5599

Board Member: Jason Waskey (Rockville) 301-801-4687

Staff: Cindy Snow (Germantown) actfortransit@mail.org

Topics discussed:

- Potential Ride-On service cuts by Montgomery County and how this plan relates to recent funding received from the state.
- Proposed Changes in Ride-On discount privileges.
- WMATA fare increases.
- Plans for the Rockville Pike in the area of White Flint and Montrose Road
- BRAC plans for the merger of the National Naval Medical Center [‘Bethesda Naval’] and Walter Reed Army Medical Center and proposals for dealing with traffic. The County’s open meetings for review of the Environmental Impact Statement for the merger were discussed.
- Upcoming Bombardier presentation

Ride-On Service Cuts: Nearly simultaneous announcements that the State had granted Montgomery County \$?M in long-sought funding for Ride-On bus service and plans to cut that service left many observers confused. Ride-On had received only flat funding during Governor Ehrlich’s tenure. The timing of the cuts in service and efforts to determine which routes are threatened were discussed.

For proposed routes to be cut see:

<http://www.actfortransit.org/buscuts.html>

It was suggested that those who attended the meeting write/e-mail Monty County manager, Ike Leggett to express their opposition to this plan.

Potential Changes in Ride-On Discount Privileges: The plan to cut free afternoon service for public school-age riders and to expand free rides for senior citizens was discussed. It was agreed that the proposed cuts in free rides for students had enough advocates and infrastructure supporting it that it is not a priority for action by ACT members.

WMATA Fare Increases: WMATA recently enacted fare increases for both rail and bus service. Ride-On has always adjusted its fares to match those of WMATA, but no such announcement has yet been made.

Plans for Rockville Pike in the area of Montrose Road and White Flint: This was a wide-open discussion of transit and development plans for the stretch of Rockville Pike between the Beltway and Rockville.

- Montrose Road: Feasibility of an underpass under Rockville Pike was discussed.
- White Flint metro: Metro's plan to evaluate the cost of a 2nd entrance to the station is evidently in the works was discussed. The Metro tracks' impact on the plausibility of more high-rise housing nearby was also evaluated.
- MARC: There has been speculation about the feasibility of making use of the CSX tracks for the MARC commuter system.
- Pedestrian-friendly enhancements: feeder lanes separated from the main road, a la K St. downtown, in addition to having angled parking on one side of the Pike.
- Development: More apartment buildings and retail over the next 20 years in an effort to make it a living space and not just a workplace or destination.

BRAC: The discussion touched upon traffic, housing and security issues.

- The big news was The Gazette's report the day before the ACT general meeting that the Navy had come out *against* the construction of a Capital Beltway exit dedicated solely to Bethesda Naval.
- Other issues discussed were the options for housing hospital personnel in order to cut down on the number of commuters entering the base daily. Limitations on the base led to a discussion of options such as using the former site of Walter Reed as a location for military housing.
- Plans for a large increase – in both absolute and relative terms - in parking facilities for the additional hospital employees was discussed. One spot for every three employees is the current standard at NIH as well as for Bethesda Naval.
- It was also mentioned that medical facilities now at Andrews Air Force Base were being down-graded in favor of facilities run by the Army and Navy.
- Security issues were discussed in reference to how it slows down the process of driving onto the base and also how it affects housing alternatives. Large back-ups on both Rockville Pike and Jones Bridge Road are directly tied to security measures. As for housing, it is not clear if at all or to what degree military

housing is covered by new, tighter regulations on security perimeters for all Dept. of Defense buildings.

Bombardier presentation: Members were encouraged to make a strong effort to be at this presentation by a Bombardier representative about their light rail systems. The meeting will be on March 11th and members were encouraged to bring interested people they know.