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TRANSIT TIMES

Volume I, Number 1. Spring, 1987. We're not fancy enough for an ISSN number yet.

NEWS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

FIRST ISSUE! This is the first issue of ACT's newsletter. In this voluminous tome will be included news, summaries of meetings and perhaps an editorial or two. I, Tom Fuchs, am the editor/publisher of the newsletter for the moment. I have never done anything like this before, so I am looking forward to yet another learning experience. The title was chosen as a pun (these are the TIMES for TRANSIT to MULTIPLY).

AMTRAK ISSUES NEW SCHEDULE on April 5. This editor noticed no significant changes for rail service in the Washington area. I was just looking for an excuse to solicit contributions for the "News And Upcoming Events" section. If anybody out there has any transit information that might be of interest to ACT, please feel free to contribute it. Amtrak, MARC, Ride-On, Metro, or for that matter Greyhound or Trailways are all fair game, as long as the carrier deals with Montgomery County.

A METRO PUBLIC HEARING was held on Wednesday, April 22 to receive public comments on the subway's winterization project. Ted Gordon of ACT attended the public hearing but did not testify.

A RIDE-ON FORUM was held on Wednesday, April 29. Topics for discussion included the elimination of all service on routes 52 (Olney Mills - Rockville), 66 (Germantown - Rockville Express), and 69 (Germantown MARC feeder). Elimination of midday service on the 44 as well as selected reductions on the 27, 37, and 68 were considered. Tom Fuchs attended the forum as an observer. The changes, if any, will go into effect next July.

METROBUS NEWS. Metrobus is installing new fare collection equipment. The chief advantages of the system are that it counts the change for the driver and that the system can keep track of ridership. Even those of us that use a flashpass can be counted. Also, bus routes that go to Wheaton Plaza were rerouted due to the shopping center's expansion (see bus committee report below for details). The changes went into effect on April 19.

RIDE-ON CHANGES IN MAY. Beginning Monday May 4, Ride-On service will change, mainly up-county. The principle changes include a revision of route 43, which will be rerouted in the area of Shady Grove Hospital and route 91 (Lakeforest -

Damascus), which will be eliminated. Midday service on route 90 (Shady Grove Metro - Damascus) will take its place. Spot extensions of certain runs, deletions of other runs and minor schedule adjustments are being implemented.

DEMOLITION The Bethesda Freight Station and the track adjacent to it have been demolished to make way for an extension of Woodmont Ave. This editor has been unable to determine the age of the station (the track dates to 1910). John Sery of the Georgetown Branch Preservation Group protested the demolition of the track. One can only wonder why this was never mentioned anywhere (is a diner in Silver Spring really more newsworthy?) It seems to this editor that this is precisely the sort of news of which ACT and Transit Times should be aware.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

RAIL COMMITTEE

The ACT rail committee met Wednesday, March 18th at the Silver Spring Center. The main discussion point was the proposal of the Georgetown Branch Preservation Group. Their proposal, presented by John Sery, is to run excursion trains using historic cars between Bethesda and Georgetown. The group envisions revenues from donations, concessions, charter excursions and freight operation. The proposed service is to operate without subsidy, but it will require an outside investor or the county to purchase the right-of-way. The ACT rail committee felt their proposal should be supported.

The rail committee also continued discussion of what ACT should recommend for a future Rail Network. The committee agreed that a portion of the right-of-way (ROW) of the Inter-County-Connector (ICC) should be preserved for a future rail use. The most likely use would be to connect Shady Grove Metro to the Glenmont Metro Station. The main purpose would be to provide cross-county travel as well as being a feeder line to both ends of the Metro Red Line. Note: ACT's position on the ICC expressway is that too much money is going into highway construction and that ICC funds should be diverted to transit projects that provide an effective alternative to automobile commuting.

The rail committee also decided that use of the ICC ROW was a lower priority for a rail network than the four previously agreed upon elements:

1. The Georgetown Branch from Silver Spring to Bethesda.
2. Silver Spring to Fairland (along US 29)
3. Upgrading MARC service to include off-peak trips and counterflow trips (Silver Spring to Rockville)
4. Transitway from Shady Grove north to Germantown/Clarksburg

COMMUNITY OUTREACH COMMITTEE

A slide show has been prepared which illustrates the contemporary concepts of light rail transit and also includes a few nostalgia items such as the last days of streetcars in Washington, Baltimore and St. Louis, and the still-functioning Charles Street Line in New Orleans. A first duplicate copy of the show has been completed and several scripts for differing audiences are in preparation.

A recruiting pamphlet, to replace the current one-page flyer, is undergoing final revisions. The final form will include photos and 700 - 1000 words, much like the one done by George Tyson for his Baltimore-based group.

BUS COMMITTEE

The ACT bus committee met Friday evening, March 17, with all members present. David Bone (accompanied by Dzung Duong) of the county's DOT transit staff gave a most informative presentation.

US 29 LIKES TRANSIT! The county began free bus service on US 29 in December, 1985 in order to alleviate highway congestion (Z-11 Silver Spring - Briggs Chaney Lot) and in the Germantown part of the I-270 corridor. Growth of US 29 ridership was "beyond anyone's expectation:" the southbound AM Z-11's handle 750 people and ridership in the entire corridor grew 45% in a year. This is presumably because jobs are concentrated in downtown Silver Spring (SS) and DC. (The Germantown busses were less effective because jobs are widely dispersed. Transit gets a good share of Germantown residents who work in Bethesda and DC but they constitute a small portion of all Germantown Residents). US 29 bus service is focussed on fringe lots because most residential streets are designed to minimize through traffic, so buses can't use them either.

GEORGIA AVENUE: While US 29 bus ridership has grown, Georgia Avenue's has dropped. The Y-9 express handled 1,500 passengers per day in 1980 versus 950 in 1986. Ridership on the Y locals has dropped as well.

WHEATON PLAZA WOES: The fringe parking lot, capable of handling more than 200 automobiles, was closed December 1, 1986. More rider inconvenience began on April 19, 1987...

Passengers will no longer be allowed to sit on Ride-On busses during layover time - a particular hardship in bad weather - because the layover point is being moved to near the just-mentioned parking lot. Except for arriving Ride-On busses, all busses will handle passengers at the side formerly used by northbound Q and Y busses, meaning an extra loop consuming more time for southbound Metrobusses. (For example, southbound Y's will come down Reddie, turn left on Veirs Mill, turn right into the Plaza by the old fringe lot, stop at Woodies heading north, then return to the Reddie/Veirs Mill intersection, turn right and keep going). (Editor's note; Metro's flier on the route revision contemplates no change in schedules, a fact confirmed by the Metro information agent to whom I spoke). Many passengers who now escape bad weather by sitting just inside Woodie's have to wait to see and catch their bus. Stops at Wards will be discontinued. (Currently there are about 100 boardings per day there versus 2500 at Woodie's).

As for bus patterns when the Wheaton Metrorail station opens (expected in late 1990), tentative plans are for the Q4 and Y9 to terminate at Wheaton. The Q2 and Y locals are to continue to SS. This is subject to change and possibly influence. (The growth planned for SS and the concern about maximizing transit use would argue for continuing Y9's through to SS).

Also when Wheaton gets rail service, it seems likely that Woodies would continue to be served directly by through-routed busses (e.g., Q2 and Y locals if above plan adopted, plus C2) as well as busses coming in from the west (most current Ride-Ons and the L's).

SYSTEM-WIDE ITEMS: There will be a new Montgomery County Transit map out in a few months. The hope is to update it periodically rather than let it go several years as with its predecessors. The County DOT has hired a marketing firm to promote transit. A rail/bus transit pass study is underway. The issue was raised of having a Metrobus/Ride-On combined pass if the rail/bus pass proves infeasible. It seems that most of the "pass" pressure is coming from

rail/bus commuters who work in DC. RIDERSHIP CRITERION FOR BUS OPERATIONS: minimum 10 passengers per platform hour (time spent in service plus deadhead time to the garage) during off-peak periods and 15 passengers per hour during peak. Ride-On busses cost the county \$30-\$35/hour; county pays \$60/hour for metrobus. If a new route doesn't perform adequately on a 30-minute headway, it is likely to be dropped rather than tested at 60 minutes, since the county has a 30-minute headway standard. There is concern that service reductions to 60-minute headways could spread to other routes if implemented on a new route.

SATURDAY SERVICE on the Randolph Road Line (Z-4) needs to generate 500 passengers per day if service is to continue. Ridership was 230 passengers per day during the first month. Similar ridership levels must be maintained on the Aspen Hill Road Line (C-8) if Saturday service is to be retained. No official ridership figures were available for that route, but this editor's personal observation is that ridership is light.

EDITORIAL POLICY

It is the editorial policy of this newsletter to 1) report items which are unlikely to be covered by the general media and 2) to not make disparaging remarks about local agencies or officials.

A REMINDER

The next general meeting of ACT is scheduled for Thursday, June 18. We request the honor of your attendance. The committee meetings are scheduled for May. Please contact your committee chairs for location and time.

Next ACT Meeting:

8:00 P.M. Thur. June 18th
Silver Spring Center
8818 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring

For details contact:

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