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TRANSIT TIMES

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NEWS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

RIDE-ON FARE INCREASE. Effective July 10, Ride-On fares went to 75 cents during peak periods and 60 cents during off peak. (The times of Ride-On's peak fares coincide with those of Metrobus). This represents a fare simplification, since now all routes charge the same amount and transfers are (once again) "free". Ride-On regulars recall that the fare for the 48, 75 and 90 had been as much as \$1.00. Also, certain Germantown routes (68, 69, 70) had been free. The price of a Ride-About pass increases to \$14.00, the same as a Maryland-only Metro Flashpass. (Quick editorial; I hope this will allow Metro and Ride-On to accept each other's passes).

LOTS MORE LOTS. A public hearing was held on July 13 regarding the submission of a Federal Grant Application for expanded Metro parking. Nineteen persons, organizations or public agencies presented testimony (including ACT). Specifically, this hearing was for UMTA grants for the US 29 lots, Glenmont lot and Shady Grove Phase II garage. Foster Morrison of ACT testified in favor of all three. The lot at Glenmont was the one that received the most testimony. It was viewed as a necessary provider of parking for the Wheaton Metrorail station, but concerns were expressed as to whether the existing roads could handle the additional traffic. SHA plans to study the situation and implement new signals, turn lanes, etc when the project is built.

OUTGOING MAIL. The last few months have found Ross Capon busily writing letters, on behalf of both ACT and NARP. One was to the editor of the New York Times and was in response to a report by Peter Applebome. In response to Mr. Applebome's claims, Ross stated that rail ridership has declined at a far slower rate than bus ridership has over the last 4 decades. Also, on new rail lines, ridership on rail service has seen significant ridership gains over the bus service it replaced. A second letter was written in a similar vein. This time it was written in response to an article about ozone written in the Montgomery Journal. The statement was simple; there is no better way to reduce pollution than to reduce dependence on the automobile. The third, and longest, letter was written to the chairman of the Montgomery County Planning Board. The letter affirmed ACT's support of transit in general and LRT in particular. Specifically, the letter strongly urged increased transit service to Silver Spring and a light rail line along the Rockville Facility. Also expressed was ACT's concern that the new Marriott headquarters in Germantown has no option but to be auto dependent.

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

### Rail Committee

#### Statewide Study

The interim report of the Maryland DOT light rail applicability study was published on June 7, 1988. It contains an expanded statewide list of 22 travel corridors to be studied, including Bethesda to Silver Spring. The report outlines the corridor evaluation process that will be used to complete the study and discusses transportation alternatives to be considered in that process. These alternatives include commuter, light and heavy rail; HOV lanes, road widening and highway access controls; busways and carpool/park-n-ride lots. The report offers no real surprises from the standpoint of study methodology. However, the rail sections in the modal discussions contain restrictive language and unsubstantiated conclusions which tend to diminish the objectivity by which the rail alternatives can be approached. For example, light rail ridership capabilities and service flexibility are understated, and safety characteristics of light rail are construed as less than desirable. Ed Frevert will follow this study through its scheduled completion in October.

#### Upcounty Study

Foster Morrison is following this "Corridor City Transit Easement Study" for ACT, although Harry Sanders sat in on a meeting in Silver Spring. This meeting took place July 11. The Park and Planning Commission has paid for a ridership and alignment study to be done by DeLeuw/Cather and Parsons/Brinckerhoff. They are looking at eight alignments between Shady Grove and Clarksburg on both sides of I-270. Modes to be analyzed are: metrorail, light rail, busway and Automated Guideway (AGT). Commuter rail was eliminated since it did poorly at providing intra-regional trips. Ridership estimates ranged from 25,000 to 41,000 depending on mode and alignment.

#### Georgetown Branch

On August 17, The Interstate Commerce Commission set the price it expects Laurel Sand And Gravel to pay for the Georgetown Branch. That price is \$25.7 million for the entire branch, or \$9.2 million for the Montgomery County section. Dick McCartle and Ed Frevert have both drafted a statement on how the Georgetown Branch will fit into a statewide light rail network.

#### US 29

The US 29 coalition has a draft of a position paper which Ross Capon and Harry Sanders have reviewed. Dick McCartle will be calling the group to offer his perspective.

## Bus Committee

The Transportation Action Task Force, a newly-formed group in Bethesda, held meetings on July 21, August 18 and September 9. One focus of the group is to investigate the possibility of a special, possibly unique, vehicle to serve the transit needs of the Bethesda Urban District (BUD). Tom Fuchs attended their meetings, as did Mr. Aoyagi and several members of the Bethesda Chamber of Commerce.

There were two preliminary proposals. One was offered by Barwood, Inc., which would use 12-passenger vans during peak periods as a commuter express. The vans would then provide a midday intra-CBD circulator. Fares would range from \$1 to \$3, depending on distance traveled. The other proposal was for a "trolleybus." This would be a diesel-powered vehicle built to look like a vintage streetcar. The Task Force also proposed to conduct a survey to determine potential ridership, acceptable fares and optimum route.

It was finally decided that both the "trolleybus" and the survey would be too expensive. However, they still visualize some sort of special bus or van service for the BUD. Any suggestions would be appreciated.

At the outset, the Task Force mentioned the Bethesdabus. This was a reduced-fare service that was operated by Ride-On when the Bethesda Metrorail station was first opened (August, 1984). Ridership on the bus route was poor (actually, miserable would be more accurate) and the service was terminated within a few months. The Task Force was quick to point out that implementation of the service was premature (many unopened buildings still under construction) and poorly publicized.

Other groups and activities being pursued are the Silver Spring-Takoma Traffic Coalition and the Silver Spring Transportation Management District.

A letter dated July 18 was written to the County DOT asking them which bus routes, if any, might have a high priority for service increases. The letter also suggested that transfer time might be one factor to include in the location of bus shelters. Another question concerned how routes were laid out when public reaction to service adjustments was mixed. As of mid-August, no response to the letter had been received.

## Community Outreach

Nick Brand, chairman of this committee, had a discussion with the president of one of the key groups of the Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail. Bill Silverman of the Washington Area Bicyclists Association (WABA) was given our viewpoint on the Georgetown Branch and a general explanation of our activities. He agrees that bicyclists and the trolley could coexist, although he noted that a strong radical bicyclist-only (even to the point of excluding walkers!) faction was the core of opposition to a trolley within the group. Nick plans a follow-up conversation with Peter Harkin, who is with "Rails To Trails," and a V. P. of WABA.

One high priority is to have this kind of conversation with all of the groups in the Capital Crescent Coalition which have an interest in transit to determine their attitudes. The other group with which transit was discussed is the Audubon Naturalist Society, whose executive director was similarly inclined. The trick will be to find one of the Capital Crescent group who feels strongly enough about the issue to start a more moderate course going on the inside.

A second priority is to touch base with community associations between Bethesda and Rock Creek Park, and to expose them to our point of view. Nick has made presentations to Section 3 of Chevy Chase and to Rollingwood. In both instances, in informal polls of those present after the discussion, around half of the audience thought the trolley would be a good idea, and half favored a trail only. There are plans to contact each of the managers or council presidents and ask for a chance to make a short presentation at their next meeting.

Finally, Nick has been trying to keep up with what's going on in the Citizen's Advisory Committee for the Georgetown Branch.

#### UPCOMING MEETINGS

It's official! ACT meetings are now scheduled for the fourth Wednesday of each month. MARC your calenders now for September 28 and October 26. Since the fourth Wednesday in November falls the day before Thanksgiving, the ACT meeting has been rescheduled for the 30th.

The Montgomery County Government is going to host a Chautaugua on September 28 beginning at 6:00 pm and concluding around 9:30. The Chautaugua will take place in the Council Hearing room, 100 Maryland Avenue, Rockville. The Chautaugua is primarily for those who have registered. ACT encourages your attendance. You will hear some interesting debate about the future of Montgomery County and you will have the opportunity (if you wish) to express your own opinion. Harry Sanders has registration forms, so give him a call (his home phone number is 587-1323) if you would like more information. For those ACT members not attending the Chautaugua, there will be an ACT officer at the Silver Spring Center on the 28th to discuss the latest Montgomery County and state transit events.

Remember Montgomery County Service Day? Yes, folks, it's coming up on Saturday, October 15. The events will begin at 9:00 am at the county office building, 101 Monroe Street in Rockville. From 10:00 am till 2:00 pm ACT members will be helping to clean up the Georgetown Branch from Silver Spring to Rock Creek. Please feel free to show up even if you can only spend a couple of hours. The meeting point for cleanup is at Stewart Avenue and the railroad tracks just off Brookville Road. Again, contact Harry Sanders for details. (See the paragraph above for Harry's home number; Harry's office number is 226-6260).

## MEETING MINUTES (JULY)

The speaker at our July meeting was state senator Frank Shore (District 17). He started by describing how he was able to use public transportation to go home from Baltimore after being stranded when his car was locked in a garage. He is a strong supporter of the MARC system and believes the state doesn't market the trains enough. He also stated MARC trains have (or will) run this year such as the Preakness or Savage River.

During last year's General Assembly session, he reported that the legislators had been approached by the BCC coalition and they were given a hearing. He sees a definite problem with Montgomery County making a decision on the Georgetown Branch. He suggested letters to the County Council, and Senators Larry Levitan and Ida Ruben - the new head of the Senate delegation. He also suggested writing Governor Schaeffer.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

At the end of May, 1988, Mary Burke, a civic activist and resident of Bauer Drive Apartments at 14635 Bauer Drive, Rockville, submitted a petition to the Montgomery County government seeking Sunday service on Metrobus route Q4. About 100 people signed this petition, including proprietors and merchants in the Rock Creek Village Shopping Center, residents of the Bauer Drive Apartments, users of the Bauer Park Recreation Center, and elderly and handicapped residents of the manor woods area. She notes that a number of petition signers are young women who would like to be relieved of chauffeuring duties and others who are transit-dependent but unable to get to religious services on Sunday. It is noted that Burke is the instigator responsible for obtaining Saturday Q-4 service which began a year ago.

Unfortunately, this petition has fallen on unresponsive and insensitive bureaucrats at the county. Gordon Aoyagi, the county's chief of transit services, is quoted as saying that, "the chances of getting the service are not very good." He added that several other routes or areas deserved precedence over Q-4 Sunday service.

In an editorial on May 25, 1988 of the Rockville Gazette, the local newspaper called for setting up a 3-month experiment for Sunday Q-4 service. If the service is not used, the newspaper suggested, it should be dropped. Again the county was unresponsive and insensitive. The county still did not respond.

One of your new fellow members, Mr. Quon Y. Kwan, has written two stinging and hardhitting letters - one to county executive Sid Kramer and the other to county council member William Hanna. These letters basically supported the petition and stated dismay as to the county's cavalier, if not callous, response (or a better word is nonresponse) to this petition. Second, these letters challenged the claim of the county that other areas deserve precedence. Without the county presenting any proof, all we can say is that it is not rational for the county to thrust transit service down the throats of communities that do

not care for it and to deny it from communities that petition for it. We citizens are being subjected to the arbitrary and capricious whims of an ivory-tower bureaucracy in dictating what we need instead of listening to what we need. No response to these letters were received.

Fellow members interested in pursuing this issue should write as individuals to Aoyagi, Kramer and McGarry. Please also discuss this issue with Quon Kwan at 459-3711 (w) or 460-7954 (h). Advice would be appreciated on getting the county to respond to this issue.

Quon Y. Kwan, Rockville

ACT's Bus Committee appreciates your sense of frustration with the county's inability to implement the service improvements you request. As has been mentioned in Transit Times, several letters have been sent to the county Department of Transportation suggesting service increases. None of the changes has been implemented. The advice of the Bus Committee Chairman is simple: the best way to convince people is through means such as the petition. Please feel free to begin attending meetings regularly so we can map out a list of priorities and how to best implement them.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR TO ALL CONTRIBUTORS

"Thanks for your support"