

Transit Times

The Newsletter of the Action Committee for Transit, Montgomery County, Maryland

Volume 13, Number 2, May 1999

ACT's next monthly meetings will take place at 7:30 PM, June 8, 1999 and July 13, 1999 at the Silver Spring Center, 8818 Georgia Avenue.

June Topic: Metro Expansion Plan

July Topic: How to Encourage Development Near Metro Stations with Michael Replogle, Environmental Defense Fund

Chevy Chase, where the opposition has been centered.

Late in April, the Edgewood - Glenwood Citizens Association became the 38th sponsor of the Campaign for Better Mobility. This civic association represents the neighborhood along Old Georgetown Road in Bethesda, just north of Edgemoor and southwest of the National Institutes of Health. Thanks to Richard Hoyer for efforts on behalf of these two endorsements.

Allied Civic Group Endorses Georgetown Branch Harry Sanders

On Monday, April 26th the membership of the Allied Civic Group voted 23-2 to support the Silver Spring-Bethesda trolley as the first leg on the inner Purple Line. The Allied Civic Group is one of Montgomery County's largest umbrella group of civic associations. Pam Lindstrom of the Citizens Planning Association, John Matthias of the Montgomery County Planning Board, and Harry Sanders of ACT were speakers at the meeting.

Pam Lindstrom spoke about better land use planning and the Transportation Solution Group study (see separate article below) that Maryland Governor Glendening initiated to deal with east-west transportation (such as the InterCounty Connector) between Montgomery and Prince George's Counties. John Matthias reviewed the Planning Board's Transportation Planning Study of ten major transit and road options in order to determine priorities for funding. At 7 PM on Tuesday, May 25 at the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission auditorium, a workshop will be held to discuss prioritizing these projects into low, medium, and high investments. Harry Sanders then spoke about the need for a future commitment to transit and why an inner-Beltway rail transit line is preferable.

ACT member and civic leader Webb

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Georgetown Branch Trolley & Trail

Harry Sanders

In April the Town Council of Somerset (just north of Friendship Heights) reversed its previous decision to oppose the Silver Spring - Bethesda trolley/trail. It terminated its membership in the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Coalition, the group leading the opposition to the transit line. Mayor Walter Behr says the Council decided that the trolley could help alleviate worsening traffic congestion.

This event has an importance beyond the small number of residents in the town because it shows that support for light rail is growing in

Smedley spoke to the transit endorsement resolution, which he co-authored with Harry Sanders. The resolution was met with only minimal opposition. Allied also endorsed redevelopment of South Silver Spring as part of those projects as well as urged a better design for the Silver Spring Transit Center. The text of the resolution most relating to transit is given below. Thanks go to Allied Civic Group President John Robinson who guided this resolution through the discussion.

THE TEXT OF THE ALLIED TRANSPORTATION RESOLUTION:

BE IT RESOLVED THIS 26TH DAY OF APRIL 1999 THAT: The Allied Civic Group believes that the future well-being of our area depends on the development of a coherent long range plan for improving east-west transportation in the Allied service area this year.

Highway Construction: Allied opposes the widening of the Beltway through our area. This will not solve transportation problems and will have a negative impact on adjacent neighborhoods and overall air quality. Any development of HOV lanes must occur within the current alignment of the highway through conversion of existing highway lanes, and that no additional lanes are to be added.

Transit Expansion: Allied supports the construction of the Georgetown Branch Light Rail Transitway (LRT) linking Bethesda and Silver Spring as the first link in an inner Purple Line. The project should be extended to College Park and New Carrollton as soon as possible. A thorough study of a transit upgrade on the US 29 corridor is another priority for eastern Montgomery County with emphasis on encouraging the shift from the auto to transit mode is recommended. Allied reiterates its opposition to any busway as the transit solution in this corridor.

Have you paid your membership dues for 1999 yet?

If not, they are \$10 (regular), \$ 25 (activist), and \$ 50 (conductor).

Send your dues to Action Committee for Transit, P.O. Box 7074, Silver Spring, MD 20907 or give them to ACT Treasurer John Carroll at the next ACT meeting!

Transportation Solutions Group Supports InterCounty Connector

Quon Kwan

The Transportation Solutions Group (TSG) is a 15-member group of transportation experts appointed by Maryland Governor Glendening in April 1998 to find a solution to east-west travel in suburban Maryland after the having deferred a decision on the InterCounty Connector (ICC). At the January 11, 1999 TSG meeting, Chairman Thomas Deen spoke of the possibility of building the ICC as a High-Occupancy Toll (HOT) road. The TSG agenda at its February 18, 1999 meeting allowed 10 minutes per speaker for three such speakers opposing the ICC while allowing as much as two hours and forty-five minutes per speaker favoring the ICC for eight such speakers. By coincidence, Montgomery County Executive held a press conference announcing the need for the ICC. Not surprisingly, a straw vote (9 to 4) taken at that particular meeting supported the ICC.

The draft preliminary TSG report was discussed at the April 15, 1999 meeting. Copies of the 55-page report were released to the public at the meeting. The Executive Summary of the draft TSG Report astutely omits any mention of the ICC. Instead, it mentions support for an east-west, value-priced, limited-access "highway." Only by reading the fine print does one find that the report recommends that the "highway" alignment be in the same vicinity as the ICC alignments. Anyone who has been on the Baltimore Washington Parkway knows that a parkway is prohibited to trucks. The TSG Report erroneously calls the highway a "parkway" throughout the text even

What is disturbing is that the TSG Report ignores the recent resolution passed by the Montgomery County Council on April 6 to oppose the ICC and to implement the Network of Improvements Alternative consisting of transit enhancements and intersection improvements. Also disturbing is that the Report ignores the concerns of Federal agencies over the impacts to wetlands, endangered species, and fragmentation of forest habitats. Pam Lindstrom says a minority report will be prepared to reflect the concerns of the ICC opponents.

ACT members should also be aware that TSG Report uses transit as a smokescreen to propose a highway solution. The highway is a high-occupancy toll lane with free passage for transit buses and interspersed with park-and-ride lots. There is no data to show that a busway-like facility would be justified. A reason that transit is used as a smokescreen is that according to the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1991, no new highways may be built in ozone nonattainment areas with Federal subsidies unless they incorporate a transportation control measure. Note that Montgomery County is classified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as an ozone non-attainment area. Also, transit counts as a transportation control measure.

ACT opposes the ICC because its cost of over \$1.5 billion will compete with much more urgently needed transit projects. If the ICC is approved, it will take away money from the Georgetown Branch trolley and light rail for I-270.

ACT members are encouraged to speak out against the ICC at the next TSG meeting on June 1, 1999. The public input session starts at 7 PM at the Inn and Conference Center of University College at the University of Maryland at College Park. Speakers sign up at that time. The new Metrobus initiated by ACT, route C8, stops in front of the building.

Did you know a full:

- Van removes 12 cars off the road?
- Standard-size (40-foot) bus removes 60 cars off the road?
- Commuter rail car removes 200 cars off the road?

— American Public Transit Association
Public Transit Works for America,
May 1992

Silver Spring Transit Center Needs a New Look

Webb Smedley

ACT recently sent a letter expressing some concern about the design of the Silver Spring Transit Center to Mr. Kassa Seyoum, Project Manager with the Montgomery County Department of Public Works and Transportation. The program for the center goes back nearly five years, and ACT is concerned that the design has not been adjusted to reflect new opportunities and needs. One such new opportunity is the "Purple Line." ACT believes the project should be built to work with a future "Purple Line" rail connection between Bethesda, Silver Spring, and College Park. Preliminary design work should ensure that the transit center can accommodate an eastward rail extension toward College Park via University Boulevard. Also, the preliminary design work should ensure that the transit center includes the Silver Spring segment of the Georgetown Branch light rail line. To accommodate the Silver Spring segment, the transit center needs to incorporate a bridge over Colesville Road to carry the future regional hiker/biker trail and light rail line.

The bridge over Colesville Road would also enable some bus routes to stop on Colesville Road instead of going inside the transit center. This would reduce traffic delays for bus riders. ACT asserts that the plan to put 44 bus bays inside the transit center could create back-ups where buses enter the station. It is also questionable whether so

many bays are needed if the light rail line is in place and bus stops are used on Colesville Road. ACT recommends that the transit center bus layovers of over ten minutes should be positioned away from the transit center. A smaller number of bus bays would make it possible to design a more attractive and usable transit center.

Finally, because ACT strongly supports mixed use development, ACT suggests that the center be redesigned to include more retail stores oriented to serve riders (beyond the 10,000 square feet already planned).

"The MTA (Baltimore) and WMATA must meet 50% of its operating expenses from the farebox. This is one of the highest farebox recovery ratios in the country, with many systems having a recovery ratio only in the 20 -30% range. In fact, other smaller transit systems in Maryland only achieve about 20% of their costs from the farebox."

— *Report of the (Maryland State) Transit Advisory Panel, January 1999, pp. 29 - 30.*

WMATA Service Expansion

Quon Kwan

The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) proposes a 25-year plan to expand transit service. Its basic goals are as follows:

- Double ridership by 2025
- Include transit in the regional transportation system
- Use transit to enhance community livability

To meet the above goals, WMATA intends to improve Metrorail access and capacity, increase Metrobus service, add stations and new entrances to existing Metrorail lines, extend Metrorail service, and add busways.

To improve Metrorail access and capacity, parking will be expanded where demand exceeds supply. Pedestrian and bicycle access will be improved. New rolling stock will be added.

To increase Metrobus service, service will be enhanced in core areas. New suburb-to-suburb routes will be identified. Reverse commute (including access-to-work) markets will be located. Tourist markets will be recognized. In Montgomery County, new express bus service has been identified for the I-270 corridor (Frederick, Clarksburg, Germantown) to Shady Grove and for the US 29 corridor (Howard County to Silver Spring).

A new station is proposed for the Blue & Yellow lines at Potomac Yard. New entrances are proposed for Foggy Bottom (east). A new passageway is proposed between Farragut North and Farragut West stations as well as between H Street and the north end of Union Station. Station capacity will be increased at Mt. Vernon Square (new convention center), Rosslyn, Crystal City, and Pentagon City.

Planned as new Metrorail extensions are Addison Road to Largo and Tenleytown - Georgetown - Mt. Vernon Square. Rail projects (not known if heavy or light) include the Woodrow Wilson Bridge, and Purple Line. Light rail projects include (Route 5/Route 301 (Branch Avenue to Charles County), Ft. Lincoln to Mt. Vernon Square (via New York Avenue), Georgetown to Mt. Vernon Square (via downtown), Adams Morgan - Minnesota Avenue, Pentagon - Bailey's Crossroads, Pentagon - Alexandria (via US 1), and Upper Georgia Avenue - Barney Circle. Busway projects include Franconia-Springfield to Lorton (via Ft. Belvoir), Vienna to Centreville (via I-66), and Dulles to Tysons.

"The primary recommendation of the panel is to nearly double ridership from 570,000 to at least one million transit riders a day by the year 2020. The panel believes that increasing transit ridership over the next 20 years is essential to meet the mobility challenge facing the state."

— *Report of the (Maryland State) Transit Advisory Panel, January 1999, p. 25.*

ACT Member Proposes UM Transit Pass Program

Quon Kwan

ACT member and University of Maryland (UM) student, Evan Scot Lewis, is advocating a proposed UM Transit Pass Program. In a presentation before the ACT membership on April 13, 1999, Lewis described the key feature of the program -- unlimited access to all WMATA bus and rail upon payment of a student fee of about \$60/semester. The fee was calculated based on the Chicago Transit Authority UPASS and is yet to be negotiated with WMATA.

The key benefit of the program is assured ridership of a particular market to a transit agency as well as increased awareness of mass transit alternatives by students. Lowering the cost of public transit makes the transit agency a partner in the student's education as well as it provides incentives to reside, work, shop, and visit near transit.

In order to implement the program, the student population must vote to approve it, the UM administration must concur, and WMATA must agree. (When the UPASS was voted on in Chicago universities, it generated the highest voter turnout of any student initiative.)

There are other university transit pass programs in effect around the country because Chicago. The model for the UPASS program came from the transit pass for the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee. The University of

California at Los Angeles (UCLA) has a transit pass program in cooperation with Santa Monica Municipal Bus Lines ("The Big Blue Bus"). (Note that while the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Commission is the major transit operator in the area, UCLA is closer to Santa Monica than downtown Los Angeles.) At UCLA the need for additional parking required the administration to build parking structures at a cost of \$25,000/space.

At the University of Colorado at Boulder, the transit pass program reduced parking demand by 750 spaces. A recent student referendum to continue the transit pass program passed by an overwhelming 15 to 1 margin. At the University of California at Santa Barbara, participation in the transit pass program remains strong while parking structures are demolished to make way for more campus buildings. Evan Scott Lewis may be contacted at (301) 405-7490 (school) or (301) 468-3297 (home) and e-mail to ecostar@wam.umd.edu.

Dharm Guruswamy Studies Induced Travel

Quon Kwan

Former Transit Times editor Dharm Guruswamy was acknowledged by Robert B. Noland of the Office of Policy, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for his technical assistance in compiling the data for a study of increased highway capacity and induced vehicle travel. (Increasing highway capacity means building new highways and/or expanding existing highways; induced travel means new and/or additional trips generated as a result of increased highway capacity.) The study was presented at the 78th Annual Meeting at Washington, DC of the Transportation Research Board (TRB) in January 1999.

Transportation is generally regarded as a derived demand in that it is not an end in itself but demanded as a means for carrying out other economic activities. Consequently, the consideration of travel as an economic commodity that is consumed has not influenced overall transportation policy. This study finds that increased highway capacity induces demand for

vehicle travel (as opposed to a derived demand). Because generally the models used by metropolitan planning organizations to forecast travel (and in turn to justify new highways) do not take into account induced travel, the results of this study makes the use of those very models questionable.

The study determines that (with population, per capita income, and gasoline costs controlled for) increasing highway capacity by 1% as measured by the number of lane miles is significantly correlated with an increase of 0.25% in induced travel.

To dispel the claim by critics that demographic factors are the predominant factors that drive the increase in vehicle miles traveled, the study correlates lane mile growth and vehicle miles traveled by controlling for (i.e., freezing) demographic growth. The study results show that in the first year after lane miles are added, induced travel accounts for 24% of the total growth in vehicle miles traveled. Over a five year period after lane miles are added, induced travel accounts for 29% of the total growth in vehicle miles traveled. This signifies that over time, the induced travel effect becomes more important, relative to other factors affecting growth.

Companion EPA Study Correlates Transit Ridership and Headways

Quon Kwan

A study conducted by the same author, Robert B. Noland, examined the correlation between transit ridership and headways. (Headway is the interval between the times that a point is served by a transit vehicle; it is the inverse of frequency of service.) This study was also presented at the 78th Annual Meeting of the Transportation Research Board.

This study is a companion study to the aforementioned study of induced travel. Just as models used by metropolitan planning organizations to forecast travel and justify new or expanded highways do not take into account induced travel, they neither take into account

transit headway, the degradation of transit from adding highway capacity, nor the effect of transit headway on modal split. (Modal split is the division of commuters driving cars versus those riding transit.)

While it is intuitive that the larger headway, the less attractive is transit service to riders, this study confirms that relationship quantitatively. An 1% increase in headway correlates with a 0.88% reduction in ridership. (No assumption is made about whether the transit rider is captive, that is, whether the rider has other means of transportation, but a situation of captive riders would, of course, give way to an even lower correlation factor.)

ACT Member Proposes Bus Service to Mt. Airy

Quon Kwan

ACT member Cindy Snow circulated a petition favoring an extension from Damascus to Mt. Airy. The affected route is Ride-On 90, which currently runs between Damascus and Shady Grove. This extension would be the first regular mass transit route in Carroll County. Commuters from the Mt. Airy vicinity now drive to Damascus and park at a church to catch the bus. The petition was sent to the Carroll and Frederick County legislative delegation.

Mt. Airy Mayor Gerald Johnson has taken up the cause and contacted the Maryland State Department of Transportation to seek funding for the extension. He has already met with the Maryland State Highway Administration, which agreed to expand the Mt. Airy Park-and-Ride lot if the extension attracts sufficient riders.

News from Across the Country and Across Time: Labor as Allies of Transit

Quon Kwan

One can learn from vignettes of history as well as current events. For this article, the editor conducted an exclusive interview with Charlene Zook, President of the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 192, the collective bargaining unit representing bus operators of the transit agency serving the home of the editor's alma mater

-- University of California at Berkeley. The editor learned that organized labor can be management's best friend during a crisis that occurred in 1995.

At readers' request, a brief column entitled "News Across the Nation" will be featured. In the previous issue, light rail proposed for the home of Disneyland and monorail was featured.

The Alameda - Contra Costa Transit District is the bus operator in the East Bay (i.e., San Francisco Bay) area. The East Bay area includes the cities of Oakland, Berkeley, Richmond, Alameda, and San Leandro. The transit agency is better known as AC Transit.

What weakened public agencies started in the '70s with Proposition 13, which throughout California capped property taxes, the main revenue source for local governments. AC Transit was affected more than most other transit districts because of its reliance on these taxes. In the '80s and '90s, retrenchments were made in Federal subsidies to transit. Thus, when hit by a recession in spring 1995, AC Transit faced a deficit of \$12 million. AC Transit planned to cut service by 1000 hours/day. Communities that had 24 hour service would no longer be served after 10 PM everyday, and weekend service on 22 routes was to be eliminated.

Apparently, "near the end of the rope," Charlene Zook rushed to Sacramento, the capital of California. Without notifying the ATU legislative liaison, she made an appointment with the Senate pro-tem and then with the East Bay delegation the next day. She succeeded in securing a commitment for a \$4 million one-time bail-out in summer 1995. Consequently, service cuts were delayed until December 1995. The delay allowed time for making other retrenchments to close the gap between \$12 million and \$4 million.

From then on, the ATU legislative liaison and AC Transit management have formed a coalition. This coalition evolved into collaboration between the California

Transportation Association (transit management) and the California Conference Board (transit labor). Jim LaSalla, ATU International President, has adopted this coalition as a model.

County Council Advances ACT Bus Proposals

Ben Ross

Bus service upgrades recommended by ACT were supported by the Transportation and Environment Committee of the Montgomery County Council when it considered the transit budget on May 5. A final decision will be made by the Council later this month.

The items placed on the Council's "priority list" by committee members Ike Leggett, Derick Berlage, and Blair Ewing were:

- Extend the C8 Metrobus (College Park to Glenmont) to White Flint
- Late night service until 2:00 (most likely routes are J2, 15, and one or two other Ride-Ons)
- Post timetables at 2000 Ride-On stops
- Double Ride-On's marketing budget
- Extend the 29 to Glen Echo Park and run until midnight

The committee also endorsed the Duncan Administration's proposals for three new rush-hour routes and one Sunday route north of Shady Grove. Proposed circulator buses in the Bethesda and Silver Spring CBDs were rejected.

Editorial Remarks

Your Transit Times editor is Quon Kwan (w) 301 621-8432, (h) 301 460-7454; please direct your comments, criticism, and submission of articles to him for the next issue.

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED
