



## ACTION COMMITTEE FOR TRANSIT

# Transit Times

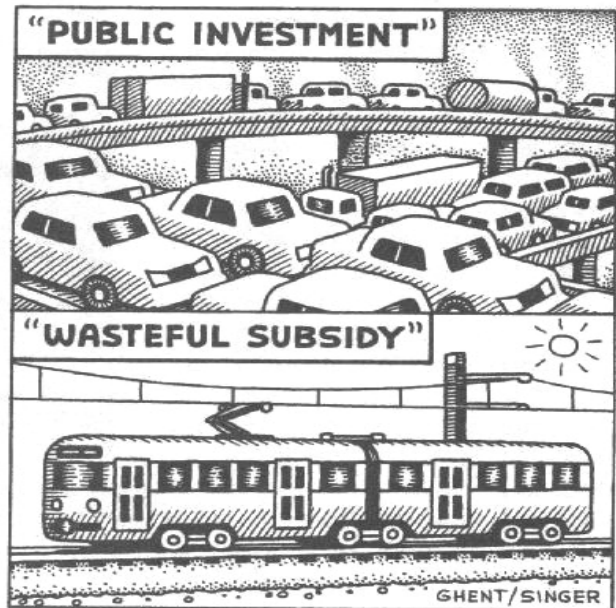
The Newsletter of the Action Committee for Transit of Montgomery County, Maryland  
Volume 18, Number 1, January 2004

ACT's next monthly meetings will take place at 7:30 PM, the second Tuesday of each month, at the Silver Spring Center, 8818 Georgia Avenue:

Jan. 13: Election of ACT Officers (see p. 8 for nominations); Rodolfo Perez, ACT Secretary and Engineering Advisor to Inspector General, U.S. Dept. of Transport. - "Rebuilding Transit Beneath the World Trade Center Site: An Eyewitness Report."

Feb. 10: "DC's Transit Future," (Speaker - TBA).

March 9: Quon Kwan, ACT Member and Federal Transit Admin. - "Report to Congress: Bus Axle Weight Study"; Richard Hoyer, ACT Vice Pres. - "Proposals to Encourage Transit Oriented Development in Bethesda's Woodmont Triangle."



### Feature Articles

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## Join ACT Now

You can join ACT by remitting membership dues. Your membership dues are based on the category of membership that you choose:

\$10 [rider (code R on mail label)]  
 \$25 [activist (code A on mail label)]  
 \$50 [conductor (code C on mail label)]

[the two digits after your category of membership code indicates year paid]

Send your check for the chosen category of membership to:

**Action Committee for Transit**  
**P.O. Box 7074**  
**Silver Spring, MD 20907**  
**[www.actfortransit.org](http://www.actfortransit.org)**

You may also give your membership dues to Treasurer John Carroll at the next ACT meeting. The address on your check will be used as the mailing address unless otherwise indicated.

Your dues support ACT Activities and this newsletter.

Would you like to receive your copy of Transit Times by email? If you would, send a note with your email address to:

[Cindy@innerpurpleline.org](mailto:Cindy@innerpurpleline.org)

Paper copies will still be available upon request to those who receive the newsletter by email.

## Transportation Funding Needed — But Be Fair to Transit !!!

ACT Vice President Jim Clarke

Action Committee for Transit Vice-President for Legislative Affairs Jim Clarke joined County Executive Duncan and other county leaders in calling for the Hellmann Commission to recommend a plan for transportation revenue that meets the state's need for a balanced program of transit and highways.

Clarke pointed out that currently unfunded transit needs include the "Metro Matters" program to maintain and fully use the existing Metro system, the light rail Inner Purple Line between Bethesda and New Carrollton, the Baltimore Rail Plan, and capacity expansions in Ride-On and other county bus systems. Failure to fund these programs will leave the transit system unable to cope with rising demand and force commuters who want to use transit onto already overcrowded highways.

ACT urges the Hellmann Commission and the legislature to adopt a transportation funding plan only if it devotes half of new funds to transit, jump-starts the Purple Line and the Baltimore Rail Plan, keeps transit in the Transportation Trust Fund, and eliminates the sunset provisions of the state's 40% farebox recovery rule. ACT volunteers have begun distributing leaflets at Metro stations asking "Should you pay higher taxes for worse transit?" and asking commuters to insist that their legislators vote against any revenue plan that fails to meet these needs.

The ACT website has a new look!

Check it out at:

[www.actfortransit.org](http://www.actfortransit.org)

## Statewide Coalition Formed to Promote Transit Funding

ACT President Ben Ross

Transit advocates from all parts of Maryland, representing riders, environmentalists, and labor unions, have joined to form a Maryland Transit Coalition. Formation of the group was triggered by cutbacks in state funding of transit and the prospect of more severe cutbacks to come.

The initiative in forming this coalition was taken by the state's two major rider organizations, ACT and Baltimore's Transit Riders League, along with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. New transit advocacy groups have also emerged in Howard, Anne Arundel, Prince George's and Frederick Counties. Other affiliates include the Metropolitan Washington AFL-CIO, Amalgamated Transit Union Locals 689 and 1300 which represent WMATA and MTA employees, Maryland Public Interest Research Group, 1000 Friends of Maryland, Washington Regional Network, and the Baltimore Regional Partnership.

The coalition has put together a five-point platform:

- Devote 50% of all new state transportation revenue to transit.
- Repeal the sunset provision of the 40% farebox recovery rule.
- Keep transit in the Transportation Trust Fund.
- Move the Purple Line forward and break ground within two years.
- Move the Baltimore Regional Rail Plan forward and break ground within six years.

The group is urging legislators to oppose any transportation revenue measure that does not meet these critical transit needs. The importance of this effort became clear when the Hellmann Commission,

appointed by the Governor to examine transportation funding, endorsed an agenda that was 90% roads and included no funding for construction of new rail lines in either Washington or Baltimore.

Coalition actions to date include meetings with legislative leaders, participation in public hearings held by the Hellmann Commission and a statewide day of leafleting at transit stations on November 17. Numerous ACT volunteers helped out by leafleting Shady Grove, Silver Spring, and Takoma Metros and by attending the Hellmann Commission hearings in Greenbelt and Silver Spring.

## ACT Testimony on Annual Growth Plan (AGP)

*. . . ACT has reviewed the AGP Policy recommendations of the Montgomery County Planning Board, and we are supportive of many of those recommendations. We generally agree that the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO)'s Policy Area Review formulas declare transportation capacity to be adequate in many geographic areas, and school capacity to be adequate countywide. However, these formulaic results do not square with the daily experience and common observation of most county residents.*

*Traffic congestion has reached unacceptable levels in most areas of the county . . . I-270, I-495, and U.S. 29 will not be unclogged in the foreseeable future. The only solution is to provide high-speed rail transit alternatives that enable travelers to bypass the congestion. For this reason, ACT has been a long time backer of the Inner Purple Line, Corridor Cities Transitway, and bus improvements. Only transit can offer a long-term alternative to the congestion experienced by our residents. . .*

*The value of fixed guideway transit is not just to offer alternatives to congestion, it is also to encourage people to live in Transit-Oriented Developments (TODs). These TODs will usually be in our region's activity centers, whose residents have nearby access to many retail and job opportunities. In transportation terms, the vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per capita will be less than average for these people. Transit is one of the "carrots" to help people move into a TOD community. In other words, we need to focus on Metro station areas and other transit-oriented areas not just because of transit but because in these TOD areas most people still drive a lot but the trips are short and don't require major road facilities.*

*. . . We also strongly agree with the Planning Board recommendation concerning Allocating Preliminary Plan Approvals: ". . . The preliminary plan approval rate [should] be allocated in a way that permits the most efficient land use pattern to move forward first. To achieve this, the Planning Board recommends allocating approvals to sub-areas of the County based upon expected transit usage; that is, allowing more approvals in areas with higher transit usage and fewer in areas with lower transit usage."*

*We must understand, however, that not everything that is built next to a Metro station is transit-oriented development. The Planning Board's recommendations will not succeed unless we redesign our urban infrastructure to support transit and pedestrian access. In Metro Station policy areas, main entrances to buildings must open directly onto the sidewalk. Pedestrians must be enabled to cross all four sides of every intersection. Lanes must be narrowed to slow traffic and make it easier to cross streets. Free right turn lanes must be eliminated. On-street parking is needed to separate pedestrians from speeding traffic. We must abandon the idea that streets are built for automobiles and design our streets for people.*

*We have two more specific concerns with the Planning Board's recommendations. First, we think that the "Metrorail Red Line policy areas" cover too large an area. We support the concept: some parts of the county are reasonably well-served by transit even though they are not in walking distance of Metro. However, we believe that this designation should be limited to areas with good bus service and, in addition, a style of urban design that encourages transit access. We suggest that the designation be limited to areas with bus service 16 to 18 hours per day, with 15-minute or better headways in peak and mid-day, and buildings that open directly onto sidewalks along bus routes. Office parks and shopping malls where the buildings are separated from the streets by huge parking lots or garages should be excluded from the "Red Line policy areas".*

*Second, we believe that the current development approval process has built-in biases that make neighborhood-enhancing mixed-use projects more difficult and costly to get approved than blight-inducing sprawl. The Planning Board proposals address this problem, but we would ask the Planning Board and Council to pay continued attention and ensure that these biases are fully eliminated.*

## **Shady Grove Sector Plan**

Harry Sanders

At the December meeting, ACT members discussed the Shady Grove Sector Plan, now being debated at the Planning Board. This plan will guide the future development around this Metro station.

ACT voted to endorse the basic objective of the Planning Board -- replacing the ugly sprawl-style landscape of parking lots and driveways that now surrounds the Metro with a community. Key features of the draft plan that we support include 4,000 more housing units, pedestrian features, and transit

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improvements, notably the Corridor Cities Transitway with a stated preference for light rail.

However, ACT believes the plan should be modified to provide more housing in combination with strong pedestrian design features and amenities. Shady Grove needs to be an urban village, not just a collection of buildings. This is the only opportunity in the county to build from scratch a new transit village at an existing Metro stop. ACT supports the following recommendations for the plan:

- Implement light rail on the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT)
- Increase frequency of MARC service
- Retain the 50 foot easement on the west side of CSX
- Study of additional rail mode going north of Shady Grove Metro

However, this rail extension study needs to be done in the short term while the Planning staff recommends delaying the study until the CCT begins operation. ACT also recommends:

- Implement best practices for design of station bus shelters, including a continual roof from the rail station
- Examine putting a stop for some MARC trains at Shady Grove
- Provide a shuttle from the Metro station to offices in the area similar to the Silver Spring or Bethesda Central Business District shuttle.

ACT suggests ending the I-370 expressway at Shady Grove Road and adding at grade intersections to the roadway. In addition, extend the road under the rail lines to provide a continuous route for buses.

The additional housing proposed close to the Metro station is good but could be increased without resorting to high rises. In some places, e.g. parts of the WMATA

property, the density for housing allows 4 stories while that for parking garages is 6 stories. A few of these lower height restrictions could be raised. ACT supports Pam Lindstrom's suggestions to obtain additional housing by reducing jobs, making use of TDRs, and/or putting some parking underground.

Parking garages are not the best use of the space directly adjacent to the Metro station. In the long run, the garages should be relocated and housing put in those spots. In the short term, retail on the first floor of the garage should be considered.

## **Is Mass Transit Or Freeway Expansion More Expensive Per Mile?**

Rodolfo Perez

Years of experience auditing transport projects of both modes, leads me to conclude that many site specific factors can make a project outrageously expensive regardless of the mode chosen: geologic conditions, specific environmental mitigation needed including improvements to pacify communities next to those projects, and issues of construction, especially honest enforcement of contract specifications and plans to control cost overruns due to change orders and contractor claims.

Nonetheless, there is the powerful argument that in transit projects the taxpayers get both infrastructure plus the vehicles to use, whereas in highways they only get the infrastructure, which to be used requires the "entry fee" of \$20,000 or more in a car plus all the other sunken costs: gas, insurance, maintenance, depreciation, etc. The taxpayer enjoys the use of a transit fleet far longer than his own car.

## ***A Taste of the Purple Line – Drawing Winners***

Cindy Snow

Congratulations to the winners of the drawing held at our September fundraiser, *A Taste of the Purple Line!* :

- Grand Prize Winner - \$100 gift certificate to Jerry's Seafood in New Carrollton - Melinda Salzman
- Certificates for lunch buffet at Seven Seas Restaurant in College Park - Barbara Sanders, Nick Brand, Scott Mitchell, Bill Wilson, Lew Winarsky

The ACT Board of Directors appreciates the generosity of all the restaurants that contributed to our fundraiser. You can find out who they are and where to enjoy their great food on the ACT website at <http://www.actfortransit.org/fundr.html>. We would also like to thank our co-chairs for the event and all our sponsors. Finally, of course, thank you to all those who attended the event as well as those who could not attend but still contributed; it was a great success and a lot of fun.

## **2003 Urban Mobility Report**

Quon Kwan

Every year in September the Texas Transportation Institute (a unit of Texas A&M University) publishes the Urban Mobility Report. The report is sponsored by the American Road and Transportation Builders Association's Transportation Development Foundation and the American Public Transportation Association. Because of a two-year backlog in gathering and analyzing data, the 2003 Annual Report presents the mobility conditions for 2001.

The report uses statistics from generally available data sources to analyze information about mobility trends at the urban

level of detail. It ranks cities in terms of congestion. This year, for the first time, it presents the effect of mass transit on congestion.

The Washington, DC metropolitan area ranks fourth nationwide in terms of congestion based on the Travel Time Index (TTI). The TTI is the ratio of the time needed to make a trip during rush hours to that during non-rush hours. The TTI for this area is 1.47 [compared to 1.83 for Los Angeles, which has the highest TTI nationwide.] The annual hours of delay per person in this area is 34 [compared to 52 for Los Angeles, which has the highest value nationwide].

The savings per person in annual hours of delay due to public transportation for this area is 14.8 [compared to 22.4 for New York–New Jersey, which has the highest value nationwide]. The total annual cost of congestion for this area is estimated at \$2,490 million (i.e., \$690 per person) [compared to \$12,840 million (i.e., \$1005 per person) for Los Angeles, which has the highest value]. The total annual savings in the cost of congestion due to public transportation for this area is \$1,072 million (i.e., \$287 per person) [compared to \$7,660 million (i.e., \$446 per person) for New York – New Jersey, which has the highest value].

Since 1982, the Washington, DC metropolitan area has grown 38% larger in population size while the TTI has grown 25% and annual hours of delay per person has grown 240%. The growth in the savings per person in annual hours of delay due to public transportation cannot be calculated because this is the first year that this value has been determined.

The report states that in the 75 urban areas studied, there were about 43 billion passenger-miles of travel on public transportation in 2001. If all these riders did not take public transportation, they would add one billion hours of roadway delay, an amount that is 30% of the total delay. At the local level, a very large area (i.e., over 3

million in population), such as the Washington, DC area, would experience about an additional 85 million hours of delay, an amount that is about 40% of the total delay. This is the result of the significant public transportation ridership in very large areas.

Another way of seeing the role of public transportation is to examine the amount of service required to address the growing delay problem if this were the *only* solution. Assuming a constant growth per year equivalent to that in 2001 of 46.9 million additional miles of daily person travel in the 75 urban areas of the U.S. [i.e., million trips per day], mass transit capacity nationwide would have to be expanded by more than one-third of the current ridership each year. A very large urban area, such as Washington, DC area, would have to accommodate increased transit trips by 20% to keep congestion levels the same.

**The Sierra Club, Coalition for Smarter Growth, ACT, and others invite you to hear Wolfgang Förster, Department of Housing Development and Renovation, City of Vienna (Austria).** A panel of local officials and development industry representatives will respond.

Tuesday, January 27, 2004, 7:30 PM.  
Montgomery County Planning Board  
Auditorium, 8787 Georgia Avenue, Silver  
Spring

For more information, call Laura Olsen,  
Coalition for Smarter Growth, 202 588-5570  
or Pamela Lindstrom, 301 869-7139.

## **Housing for a Livable City: Vienna, Austria**

Pamela Lindstrom

Vienna has been a leader in municipal provision of housing since World War I and the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It continues to lead both in quantity and quality today. The original 1920s housing settlements have been in good repair, and the tradition of innovation, excellent architecture, and the “gee whiz” project continues.

The municipal housing program is a major part of an ongoing effort to keep the city attractive and competitive with its hinterlands as a place to live. Some 75% of residents of the Vienna region live in the city, an unheard of number for the U.S. The story of social or public housing in Vienna has many interesting chapters: history, original architecture and design, communal aspects of the housing settlements, current status of the old buildings, recent projects, development, and management of new housing. Housing integrates well with other components of a model city: mixed use, especially integration of retail into the urban fabric, transit service and limiting access by car; and attractive public facilities and spaces. Where else do public housing projects, transit amenities, and even the municipal incinerator attract tourists?

Wolfgang Förster, of the Vienna City agency charged with producing this housing, will visit Washington in association with an exhibit on Viennese housing at Catholic University. His presentation will include housing and other innovative programs and projects of interest to environmentalists, transit advocates, and proponents of urban development alike [see textbox this page].

## Thank You Volunteers

Cindy Snow

Our volunteers were very active this past quarter. Thank you to our volunteers who helped: staff ACT tables at hearings, hold up ACT signs and the ACT banner at hearings and other functions, leaflet at Metro stations, post and distribute ACT flyers, and sign/stuff/distribute neighborhood letters. Your effort makes a difference.

## Editorial Remarks

Your Transit Times editor is Quon Kwan. Cutoff date for receiving materials for the next publication is March 14. Send your materials to him at: [siufung@erols.com](mailto:siufung@erols.com) or call him at: (h) 301-460-7454.

## ACT Officers Nominated for CY2004:

President: Ben Ross

V. Pres. (Legislative Affairs): Jim Clarke

V. Pres. (Land Use & Pedestrian Matters):

Richard Hoye

V. Pres.: Jessica Mitchell

Secretary: Rodolfo Perez

Treasurer: John Carroll

Board Member (At Large): John Fay

Board Member (At Large): Harry Sanders

Come to the Jan. 13 meeting ready to vote; Nominations from the floor will be accepted.

Staff Member: Cindy Snow

[cindy@innerpurpleline.org](mailto:cindy@innerpurpleline.org)

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P.O. Box 7074

Action Committee for Transit, Inc.

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