



## **ACTION COMMITTEE FOR TRANSIT**

# Transit Times

The Newsletter of the Action Committee for Transit of Montgomery County, Maryland  
Volume 18, Number 2, April 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:

April 13: Greg Walker, WMATA -  
"DC's Transit Future".

May 11: Quon Kwan, ACT member -  
"Report to Congress: Bus Axle  
Weight Study".

June 8: TBD

### **Feature Articles**

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### **Citizens Form Prince George's Transit Advocacy Group**

Harry Sanders

Several Action Committee for Transit members have worked with concerned citizens of Prince George's County to form a transit advocacy group. The name of the organization is "Prince George's Advocates For Community-Based Transit" or in shorter form Prince George's ACT. The mission of the organization is to provide a unified Prince George's voice for livable communities. It supports linking the County with the larger metro region by advocating for sustainable, accessible transit and community development policies and facilitating the mobility of its diverse populations, particularly low-income persons and persons with disabilities.

Priorities for the group are:

1. Rail on the Wilson Bridge
2. Increased and improved bus and Metrorail service
3. Blue Line Metro extension to Largo
4. Inner Purple Line with future extension to Largo
5. Quality transit-oriented development

ACT members and Prince George's residents, Todd Reitzel and Dahiti Htun, have assisted in drafting a brochure/flyer. One of the co-chairs, Jimmy Allen of Bowie, has worked with ACT on advocacy at the state

## 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.

level. The other co-chair, Karren Pop-Onwukwe, was the 2003 chair of the Citizen's Advisory Committee of the COG Transportation Planning Board and has worked with Harry Sanders and Jim Clarke on regional issues.

Prince George's ACT began a series of forums on March 17th in southern Prince George's County, with future events planned for the central and northern part of the county later this year. If you are interested in joining, send a note to Prince George's ACT, P.O. Box 22, Hyattsville, Maryland 20781, or an Email to [sandersh@verizon.net](mailto:sandersh@verizon.net).

## Strathmore Hall Parking Subsidized by Metro Riders

Ben Ross

In a February 19, 2004, letter to Mr. Robert J. Smith, Chairman of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Board of Directors, ACT President Ben Ross calls attention to the fact that WMATA and its riders may be forced to subsidize the parking of attendees to the new Strathmore Hall. A pedestrian bridge connects the Hall to the Metro garage located adjacent to the Grosvenor Station on the Metrorail Red Line. This bridge has been the recent subject of controversies about running over budget for acoustics and County Executive Doug Duncan asking the County Council to renege on its promise of "not a penny more" for Strathmore Hall. However, ACT does not take a position on these controversies.

The ACT letter notes that Eliot Pfanstiehl, the Director of Strathmore Hall, stated that people buying tickets to concerts at the Hall may park free at the garage. However, the garage is built on land owned by WMATA, and its construction was paid for by a special parking fee levied on people who park there to use Metrorail. Thus, WMATA and Metrorail riders are subsidizing parking for attendees at Strathmore Hall who do NOT use the Metro. ACT is opposed to a subsidy that comes from transit to support driving and parking for non-transit purposes.

To remedy the situation, the ACT letter urges levying a parking charge for visitors to Strathmore Hall. The charge should be at the full market value – equal to the fee to park (without a rail transfer) at White Flint, Twinbrook, or Rockville. Furthermore, the charge should be collected until closing time for Strathmore Hall. Metro riders who enter the garage after 5 PM, presenting a valid rail transfer should not be charged for parking.

## **Transit Supportive Development in Olde Towne Gaithersburg**

Excerpt from *The Returning City: Historic Preservation & Transit in Age of Civic Revival*

In September 2003, the Federal Transit Administration and National Trust for Historic Preservation published, *The Returning City: Historic Preservation & Transit in Age of Civic Revival*. This study demonstrates how transit and historic preservation work together to revitalize communities nationwide through transit-oriented or transit-supportive development.

Three revitalized communities are exemplified from the Washington, DC metropolitan area: downtown Washington, DC, Arlington County's Metrorail Orange Line corridor and Olde Town Gaithersburg. This article focuses on transit-supportive development around the Maryland Area Rail Commuter (MARC) station on the CSX tracks in Olde Town Gaithersburg.

In 1997, the City of Gaithersburg decided to request proposals for infill development possibilities around the MARC commuter parking lot and another city-owned lot in the vicinity. In response, the DANAC Corporation, a local developer, proposed an office project to bring daytime employment.

To compete with more spacious suburban office parks nearby, DANAC offered higher-quality design and finishes and lower rents provided that the City of Gaithersburg would be a partner in the risk-taking venture. The City selected DANAC's proposal enthusiastically, contributed property to the project, and provided a \$1 million loan. DANAC's design of the 42,000 sq. ft. office building included a streetscape that fitted Olde Town's historic character. By the ribbon-cutting of 1998, the project was 100% leased.

Encouraged by the success of the initial project in partnership with the city, DANAC explored purchasing the adjacent land owned by Southern States. In 1999, DANAC negotiated an agreement with the city to construct a first-floor retail, multi-story rental apartment complex on the south parcel. DANAC later sold this complex to Magruder Companies, an area residential company. DANAC built an office building with space reserved for retail. Although higher in density and scale than the predominant pattern, the project was carefully designed to fit the abutting historic district around the MARC station. Similar quality materials and finishes to initial project were used.

The city was caught between advocates of transit-oriented development who wanted to limit parking in and around historic Olde Town and the practical realities of automobile dependence in Gaithersburg, a commuter town. In the end, the city compromised opting for a strategy that enhances preservation of historic Olde Town and yet supports development around the MARC station. Not quite transit-oriented development, it is called transit-supported development. Consequently, the city bought the north parcel from DANAC and contracted with DANAC to construct on this parcel, a parking garage to be operated by the city. The garage has parking spaces designated for new, multi-family housing, the office project, and for the general public where

MARC commuters also park. DANAC also agreed to construct a pedestrian bridge across the railroad tracks connecting the historic district and the garage and providing convenient access to the MARC station.

By 2001, the retail/apartment complex, office project, and garage were completed. The apartments were snatched up quickly because Magruder Companies actively marketed their location on the MARC line. The offices in the project leased ahead of schedule and met/exceeded rent projections. DANAC reported that some tenants cited the MARC station as a consideration for renting.

Christine Kreyling writes in *Planning* (January 2001), "The bottom line: Today's transit-oriented planners increasingly acknowledge the wisdom of history, that what worked for the train spotters of yesterday holds the best promise of working future rail riders. And in linking transit to users, these planners are connecting to the American past of sensible town planning – and putting increasing weight on the oldest of transportation vehicles: human foot."

### Proposed FY05 Metro Fare Increases

Excerpt from WMATA Press Release

The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) is anticipating a budget shortfall between \$28 and \$36 million. To balance the budget, WMATA's Board of Directors is proposing a series of fare increases. Public hearings will be scheduled to take comments. The total of the proposed plan is above what is needed to compensate for the shortfall, allowing the Board flexibility to make changes based on public input. The

following table shows the proposed increases.

Fare	Current Fare/Fee	Proposed Maximum Increase	Total Maximum Proposed Fare
Metro Base Fare	\$1.20	\$0.15	\$1.35
Metro Peak Max Fare	\$3.60	\$0.45	\$4.05
Metro Off-Peak Max Fare	\$2.20	\$0.15	\$2.35
Metro Bus Fare	\$1.20	\$0.15	\$1.35
Metro Bus Express Fare	\$2.50	\$0.50	\$3.50
Metro Access	\$2.40	\$0.30	\$2.70

The last public hearing was on March 29. Under consideration are (1) annual, biennial, and triennial increases, and (2) whether the basis for such increases should be Consumer Price Index, a fixed government subsidy, a fixed rate of passenger revenue, or a predetermined amount.

Comments were heard on proposals for new advertising to generate revenue to help offset budget shortfalls and keep fares as low as possible: bus shelter and tunnel advertising, partially wrapped-vehicles, advertising banners, video monitors in vehicles, and automatic teller machines (ATMs) in Metro stations.

Jim Clarke, ACT Vice President of Legislative Affairs, submitted written comments to WMATA stating the ACT position on Metro fare increases. This position is there should be no fare increases until WMATA has exhausted all possible federal aid sources that can be used for operating expenses.

## “Father of Metro” Dies

By Wes Vernon

Carlton R. Sickles, a public figure widely admired in the Washington area transit community and longtime champion of the Metrorail system, died in his sleep January 17 at his home in Bethesda. He was 82. Often called the father of the Metrorail system, Sickles—as a state legislator from Prince George’s County—served on the mid-Fifties planning and study commission that ultimately resulted in building the area’s rapid transit system. It was this service that won him the moniker, “*father of Metro*,” a designation officially declared in the mid-Eighties by then Montgomery County Executive Charles Gilchrist who proclaimed February 14, 1985 as “*Carlton Sickles Day*.”

Sickles modestly avoided acknowledging being the sole “father” of Metro, but did say he would accept partial credit for having “*husbanded it through the early growing pains*.” Metro historians have given equal credit for Metro’s “fathering” to Sickles, the late Virginia State Senator Charles Fenwick of Arlington and Robert E. McLaughlin, District of Columbia Commissioner during the Eisenhower administration.

After the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) was created in 1967, Sickles represented Prince George’s

County on its Board of Directors. Since 1981, he had been an alternate board member from Montgomery County. Sickles served a stint as Maryland’s Congressman at large (1963-1967). During that period of his long public service career, he championed Metro and also a high-speed railroad between Washington and Boston (a dream that has advanced in increments over the years with the Metroliner in 1970 and Amtrak’s Acela Express which was launched in late 2000). Congress has never provided adequate funding for the truly high-speed rail system Sickles envisioned, although Amtrak’s current Chief Executive Officer (CEO) David Gunn—himself a former Metro CEO—is attempting to reach that goal with small improvements over time, as the money allows.

Upon learning of Sickles’ demise, Metro’s current CEO, Richard White commented in a published report, “*It is a sad day. Our father has passed away*.” D.C. Council member Jim Graham described Sickles as “*a gracious and intelligent man who believed deeply*” in mass transit in general and Metro in particular. Those of us who arrived in the Washington area during the 14-year gap between the last streetcar in the city and the opening of Metrorail in 1976 could see the transportation and general social problems that Carlton Sickles was trying to eradicate by focusing like a laser beam in building a “subway” for the community.

### Join ACT’s Pedestrian Committee

A Pedestrian Committee has been formed. New members are welcome. If you can help on this committee, please contact:

Richard Hoyer at [rhoeye@erols.com](mailto:rhoeye@erols.com).

## ***America's Transit System Stands at the Precipice of a Fiscal and Service Crisis***

Excerpts from "Metro Matters"

The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) is facing serious funding challenges caused by aging infrastructure and burgeoning ridership. At a minimum, WMATA requires \$1.5 billion over the next 6 years to protect the existing \$9.4 billion investment in the Metrorail system. (WMATA's actual assets including Metrobus at today's value are worth \$24 billion). A recommitment of the Federal, state, and local partnership that created WMATA in 1967 is urgently needed to address these issues.

In November 2002, the WMATA Board of Directors adopted a comprehensive 10-year Capital Improvement Plan totaling \$ 12.2 billion; unfortunately, the program funding level has been scaled back to \$1.5 billion over a 6-year period. This means that for Fiscal Year 2004, WMATA can only spend \$265 million for basic recapitalization. This spending level is far from enough to protect the system from deterioration.

WMATA's first priority over the next 6 years is to protect the transit system investment by replacing and rehabilitating trains, buses, elevators, escalators, passenger and maintenance facilities, and supporting infrastructure (such as, track and power traction cables).

Second priority is to leverage the transit system investment to add capacity to accommodate increasing ridership. Fiscal Year 2003 marks the seventh consecutive year of increasing ridership. The Metrorail system is only using 58% of the system's maximum design capacity; to use the full capacity, it needs to buy 120 additional cars to run 8-car trains instead of 4 and 6-car

trains. The Metrobus system needs to buy 185 additional buses and to build facilities to allow penetration of markets not currently being served and decrease the average age of the fleet (thus, increasing service reliability).

The third priority is securing the investment in WMATA. WMATA needs \$150 million to provide critical infrastructure protection and to enable WMATA to carry out its key role in regional emergency transportation and Continuity of Operations.

Why "Metro Matters" to this region? The reasons are economic development, congestion relief, air quality improvement, and significance to Federal workforce. The highest and best use of land encouraged by the presence of Metrorail has been a key factor in economic development in the Washington, DC region. More than \$25 billion worth of economic development exists at or near Metrorail stations.

In a region ranked third nationally for traffic congestion, Metro removes more than 325,000 cars/day – equivalent to 1,400 highway lanes. The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments forecasts that transit work trips will grow by 36%. However, unless a significant increase is made in funding for rail and bus capacity improvements, only half of the forecasted work trip growth can be accommodated.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency classifies the Washington, DC metropolitan region as a "severe" non-attainment area for ozone. The American Lung Association has assigned this area a grade of "F," its worst rating for the impact of air quality on the population. Metrorail and Metrobus services annually remove 10,000 tons of pollutants and save the region 75 million gallons of gasoline.

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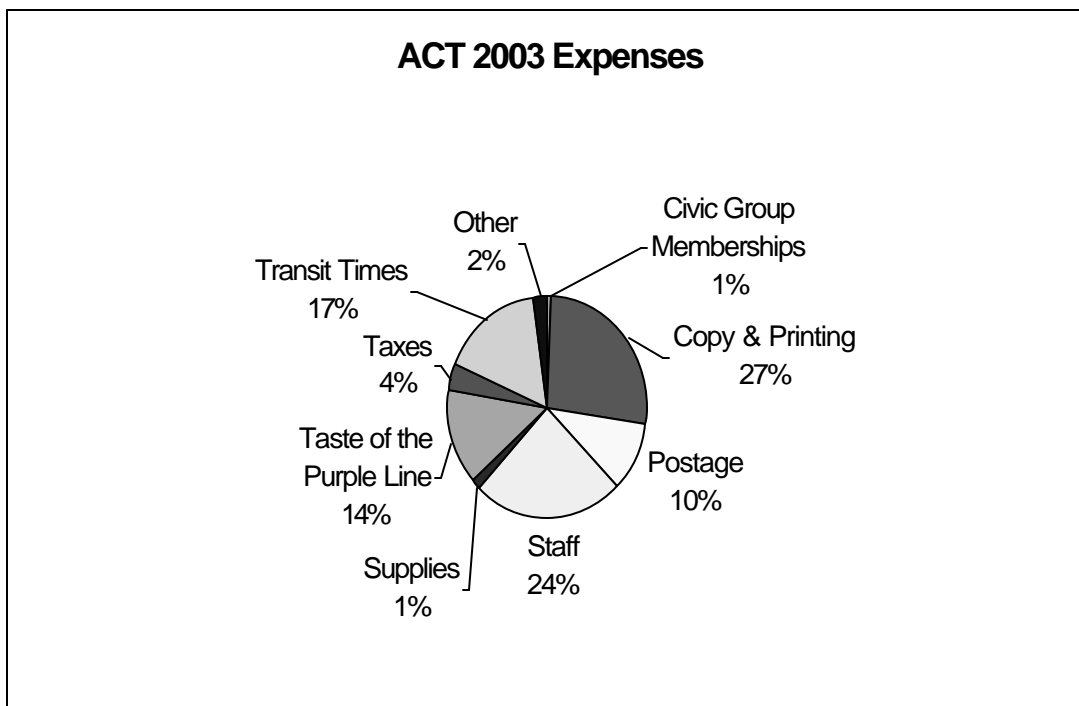
Metro makes it possible for the Federal government in the Nation's capital, as well as those doing business with the government, to get to work. Forty-seven percent of Metrorail's peak period riders are Federal employees. More than 50 Federal agencies are located adjacent to Metrorail stations. In fact, General Services Administration requires that proximity to Metrorail be considered in relocating Federal office buildings in the National Capital region.

The fiscal crisis that has been looming is now here, and the region is running out of time. Failure to act will result in a significant deterioration of the WMATA system. Now is the time for a renewed Federal, state, and local commitment to the partnership that created WMATA in 1967.

## ACT Expenses in 2003

John Carroll

ACT started 2003 with \$2,686 and ended with \$7,674. In 2003 an income of \$33,020 came from dues, donations, "A Taste of the Purple Line" fund raiser (\$16,898), and a small amount of interest. Our expenses were \$28,032 in 2003. The pie chart shows the distribution of expenses in 2003.



## Thank You Volunteers

Cindy Snow

Action Committee for Transit is very lucky to have a wonderful and dedicated crew of volunteers. Thank you for all your hard work. Warmer weather means more activity and the need for volunteers will increase. If you are able to help please contact Cindy Snow at [cindy@innerpurpleline.org](mailto:cindy@innerpurpleline.org).

### Websites

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

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

## Editorial Remarks

Your Transit Times editor is Quon Kwan. Cutoff date for receiving materials for the next publication is June 13. Send your materials to him at: [siufung@erols.com](mailto:siufung@erols.com) or call him at: (h) 301-460-7454.

## ACT Officers/Staff for CY2004:

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