



ACTION COMMITTEE FOR TRANSIT

Transit Times

The Newsletter of the Action Committee for Transit of Montgomery County, Maryland
Volume 19, Number 4, October 2005

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 (near the intersection of Georgia Avenue and Spring Street).

The Silver Spring Center is a ten minute walk north of the Silver Spring Metro Station; it is a two-block walk from the nearest Ride-On #5 stop; and, the Metrobus "Q" and "Y" routes pass in front of the Center.

Please sign in at the Security Desk in the lobby when attending meetings. For meeting updates check our website listed on pg. 2.

Oct 11: Jeff Dunckel, MC DPWT – "Bus Stop Improvement Program"
(This is rescheduled from Sept. 13)

Nov 8: Shri Gondhalekar, MC DPWT -
"Interim Bus Operations during
Construction of the Silver Spring
Transit Center"

Dec 13: TBD

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Transportation Bill Helps Purple Line

ACT Press Release

The six-year transportation authorization [aka Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU)] adopted by Congress at the end of July marks a significant step forward for the Purple Line. The law includes an earmark that authorizes "Alternative Analysis and Preliminary Engineering" for a transit line connecting Bethesda, Silver Spring, and New Carrollton.

No specific amount of money is guaranteed, but funding for Purple Line studies is already available from a variety of Federal programs as well as the state

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

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.

Transportation Trust Fund. The earmark is a significant step forward for the project because it represents recognition of its importance at the Federal level and by our state's entire Congressional delegation.

More help for the Purple Line could come from a sentence that was tucked into another part of the law with little public notice. This provision says that any project

authorized by the bill for alternative analysis and preliminary engineering is also, effective in October 2007, authorized for final engineering and construction.

At that point, if the preliminary engineering and analysis is complete, the Purple Line could move forward into the Federal Transit Administration's rating process. If rated highly enough (and its rating will be helped by other provisions of the law which increase the importance of land use and economic development), it would be eligible for a Full Funding Grant Agreement without further action by Congress.

In addition, the managers' report on the bill contains important language about the bike trail that will accompany the Bethesda-Silver Spring portion of the Purple Line. This language undercuts the efforts of Purple Line opponents to divide transit supporters from their natural allies among advocates of pedestrian and bicycle transportation. The exact wording of the report is as follows:

"Bi-County Transitway.-- It is the intent of the managers that any alignment of the Bi-County Transitway along the Georgetown Branch right of way should be designed and constructed in a manner to ensure a safe and accessible pedestrian-bicycle trail. The Maryland Transit Administration should consider a range of options include placing the rail line underground through cut and cover."

This text is a victory for common sense over obstructionism. It establishes a clear goal for Purple Line planners -- to make the trail "safe and accessible," not to satisfy the esthetic demands dreamed up endlessly by light rail opponents. This implies that:

- The trail should have an asphalt pavement that is safe to ride on. Some Purple Line opponents call for a gravel surface that will keep bikers going slow.

- Of the two potential trail alignments through downtown Bethesda identified in the Master Plan, the street-level route along Bethesda and Willow Avenues is preferable to an inaccessible elevated bike trail that lacks direct access to the lively streets of Bethesda Row and is squeezed beneath the roof of the tunnel under Wisconsin Avenue.

Connector (ICC) EIS. Effort has been minimal to involve the larger community into win-win solutions.

In the meantime, in order to show the value of the proposed Purple Line, I am developing a chart of travel times with and without the Purple Line. Travel times are already available for trips by transit, car, and Purple Line for 7 origin/destination pairs. The transit trip times are from the Ride Guide of the WMATA web site (rideguide.wmata.com). Car trip times are from the Mapquest web site. Purple Line trip times are calculated using an average travel speed for a high-end (grade-separated) and low-end (mixed traffic) option. A sampling is in the table below.

Purple Line Update – Volunteers Needed for Transit Time Study

Harry Sanders

The Purple Line (Bi-County Transitway) Environmental Impact Study (EIS) continues to move at a slow (Terrapin-like) pace. The Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) study team is starting community/business focus groups to review design options prior to an EIS hearing next year. However, the study lacks any energy or resources compared to the InterCounty

A problem with this analysis is that the car trip times are during non-rush hours, and therefore, are overly optimistic. **I am looking for volunteers to document car trips made for the following origin/destination pairs during rush hour periods.** This could be as part of a regular commute or trips made just for this analysis. If you are interested, contact me at sandersh@verizon.net.

	Today via faster of Metrorail, Metrobus, Ride On bus	Drive time from MapQuest	Original Purple Line - Minimal mixing with car traffic Avg. 25 MPH	Bi-County Transitway - In mixed in traffic via Jones Bridge Avg. 15 MPH
Bethesda Metro to Campus of Univ. of MD at College Park	56 min. (J4 Limited stop Metrobus)	19 min (11 miles)	25 min.	44 min
Bethesda Metro to Langley Park	42 min (J4 Metrobus) -or- 49 min (J3 and 15)	17 min (9.2 miles)	19 min.	36 min.
Bethesda Metro to Silver Spring Metro	24 min (J4 Metrobus)	10 min (4.0 miles).	10 min	20 min or more
Silver Spring Metro to New Carrollton Metro (AMTRAK)	51 min. (Metrorail)	21 min (14 miles)	25 min	40 min

Transportation Planning Board Defends Commuters By Opposing Metro Funding Cap

ACT Press Release

The Action Committee for Transit hailed the unanimous vote on September 22, 2005 by the regional Transportation Planning Board to oppose limitations on Metro funding in a bill introduced by Rep. Tom Davis (R-VA). The Davis bill would forbid states and localities in the area to support Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (Metro) with any funds other than revenue streams set aside by law for that purpose.

The TPB, composed of elected and appointed officials from throughout the Washington area, deleted an endorsement of the Davis bill from a resolution that calls for additional Metro funding. The TPB voted to oppose any limits on the funds that can be used for Metro. The amendment was introduced by Takoma Park Mayor Kathy Porter. Delegate Carol Petzold and County Councilmember Mike Knapp spoke in favor of it.

In the Davis bill, the cap on Metro funding is coupled with an authorization for a potential Federal contribution of \$150 million per year to help pay for 8-car trains, more buses, and overdue maintenance. Davis would also require Maryland, Virginia, and DC to amend the Compact, Metro's constitution, to meet requirements specified by Congress.

"We're glad to see Rep. Davis recognize the need for more Metro funding," commented ACT president Ben Ross. *"But capping Metro revenues would condemn Washington-area commuters to ever-worsening traffic jams."* Ross said that Metro funding legislation should be developed through a consensus process, with all parties including transit riders, environmentalists, and labor as full participants at the table.

Clarksburg Zoning Fiasco Exposes Deeper Flaws

[ACT Testimony before Montgomery County Council]

In County Council testimony about new plans for the Woodmont Triangle area of downtown Bethesda, ACT argued that the current scandal about falsified zoning approvals in Clarksburg results from the same fundamental flaws in our county planning process that have hobbled transit-oriented development around Metrorail stations.

Three basic concepts of the zoning ordinance are segregated land uses, buildings set back from the street, and landowner-subsidized parking. From these principles, suburban sprawl inevitably follows. With neighborhoods hard to walk in and transit hard to reach, we must travel by automobile whether we want to or not. Misconceived planning leads directly to the horrific traffic jams we live with today.

The county recognized years ago that a more urban style of development would be needed around Metrorail stations. But instead of recognizing that what doesn't work needs to be changed, it left the basic structure of the zoning ordinance in place and overlaid it with a system of additional rules and exceptions. In essence, the function of the Sector Plans for central business districts is to try to undo the damage done by the zoning ordinance.

This hybrid system, with the urban goals of the master plans clashing with the suburban spirit of the zoning ordinance, has led to development patterns that succeed only in part. We are starting to achieve urban densities around Metro stations. But while some parts of downtown Bethesda and Silver Spring have become centers of activity, other sections still have much of the feel of sterile suburban office parks.

Our land use regulation system has created a procedural maze that creates a systematic disincentive to urban redevelopment, and makes mixed-use construction on small parcels prohibitively expensive:

- The landowner near a transit station, who wants to build what public policy has determined is desirable, often goes through an expensive and time-consuming rezoning process. Unwanted sprawl-type development does not face this hurdle. When master plans are enacted, the land is not rezoned to conform to the plan; zoning on which we have agreed is wrong stays in place.
- Urban-style development requires expensive and time-consuming reviews and approvals, with developer-provided amenities. If the zoning ordinance conformed to the goals we proclaim, transit-oriented projects would be developed "of right," while strip malls and tract housing would be an optional method of development that requires special permission and expensive amenities.

The very complexity of the zoning ordinance has itself become an enemy of good land use. Bethesda and Silver Spring are not enlivened by small-scale mixed-use development because approvals are too expensive. In Clarksburg the rules are not enforced, because they are so complicated it is nearly impossible to enforce them. On our highways sprawl development creates ever-worsening traffic congestion. It is time to remove the fundamental flaws from our zoning ordinance instead of overlaying it with ever-more-complicated stopgaps. We must recognize that the land use theories of the 1950s have failed.

With Gas Prices Soaring, Transit Alternatives Needed

ACT Press Release

With gasoline prices soaring past three dollars a gallon, the Action Committee for Transit called on government leaders to protect commuters' pocketbooks by acting quickly to expand mass transit alternatives.

ACT asked Governor Ehrlich and County Executive Duncan to accelerate the Inner Purple Line light rail project from Bethesda to New Carrollton, as well as proposed rail lines north of Shady Grove and over the Wilson Bridge.

ACT also urged added monitoring of bus ridership, with service added immediately on routes that become overcrowded. *"Three-dollar-a-gallon gas is a financial emergency for many families,"* said ACT president Ben Ross. *"More bus service is needed right away for the immediate relief of those hardest hit. And we have to move ahead quickly on the only real long-term solution, an expanded Metrorail system."*

In Memory

Long time ACT member **Don Barclay** died peacefully in his sleep on August 26th after losing his battle with brain cancer. Don was a pedestrian advocate and a member of the County's Pedestrian Safety Advisory Committee. As an ACT member, his interests were in the environment and in pedestrian safety. Our condolences go out to his wife Lynn Barclay. We will miss Don.

Public Transit in New Orleans After Hurricane Katrina

Reprint from *Light Rail Now!*

Reconstruction of New Orleans and its public transport system – and facilitating the return and safe resettlement of evacuees – are clearly major challenges now facing the city.

While some public transport commentators have suggested that restoration of the streetcar system will be far down the list of major reconstruction tasks, other transit supporters argue that such a "defeatist" approach should not be accepted. "*Streetcar service can and should be restored as soon as possible in New Orleans – in my opinion, as a national priority*", argues longtime public transport professional Tom Matoff.

Matoff notes that, after the siege of Sarajevo, it was the restoration of streetcar service in the city that symbolized to the people of Sarajevo and to the whole world, that the city was coming back. The streetcars were synonymous with the life of the city, and their reappearance gave everyone hope and heart for the future.

The same will be true in New Orleans. Nothing less than complete restoration of service should be considered – although it can be done in stages as cars and track become available.

As soon as there is enough dry trackage, usable cars, repaired overhead and traction power, access to Carrollton station, and trained operators, service should be started. Even a partial service would give the city a great psychological boost. There should be an effort to get something moving as soon as practicable. This is a high priority and not a frill.

Several commentators also emphasize that restoration of the streetcar system, as well as additional extensions, and

the restoration of other public transport infrastructure and rolling stock, should be funded 100% by federal disaster relief as an economic revitalization tool. This would require a very serious commitment by the federal government including the demonstration of good faith with the people of New Orleans.

Undoubtedly, a major political effort – perhaps involving major celebrities and community figures – would need to be mounted, with an initial focus to bring the city's Congressional delegation on board. Together with lobbying assistance from other interested parties, directed to their own political representatives, perhaps America's obligation to the restoration of the city of New Orleans – including its public transport system – can be fulfilled.

A Parable

Ben Ross

The City of Tonwashing had a water problem. The city center had pure water, as did a few neighborhoods near the water mains that led downtown from the lake. But in the rest of the suburbs, the tap water was infected with cholera, and it contained dangerous chemicals too. Anyone who could afford it drank bottled water, and most people cooked with bottled water too.

There was a solution: Build a bigger treatment plant on the lakeshore, so everyone could have clean water. But skeptics abounded.

"Too expensive," said some. "Almost no one drinks tap water anyway. For much less money than the treatment plant would cost, we could buy a lifetime supply of Perrier for the tap-water-dependent."

"Don't ruin our beautiful lake views," said others. "And what happens if the trucks that bring in chlorine get into accidents?"

The lakeshore residents were rich and influential, and so politicians found their arguments persuasive. Another study was ordered to look at alternatives to the treatment plant. The people of Tonwasing went on drinking bottled water... Bottled water, people began to say, must be the American Way of Life.

APTA Condemns Remarks Of Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff

APTA Press Release

After the July 2005 terrorist attacks on the London subway and buses, U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff remarked that a terrorist attack on a subway is less important than an attack using a commercial airliner because of the open nature of mass transit and the closed nature of aviation and because the number of lives lost in an aviation incident does not compare with that involving mass transit.

The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) condemned Chertoff's remarks on public transportation as follows:

To say that a terrorist attack on a subway is less important than an attack using a commercial airline, is another example of how the federal government treats the millions of public transportation riders as second class citizens when it comes to security.

Thirty two million times a day people use public transportation. That is sixteen times more than use domestic airlines. However, in the period from September 11, 2001 through May 31, 2005, aviation has received \$18.1 billion for security from the federal government while public transportation has only been allocated \$250 million.

Transit security is a national security issue and our national leaders, including DHS Secretary Chertoff should make a commitment to protect all American citizens to the fullest extent and in the most appropriate way possible.

According to the Government Accountability Office (GAO), one-third of all the terrorist attacks around the world have occurred on public transportation and catastrophic attacks on public transportation have already occurred. An example of a catastrophic attack on transit occurred on the Tokyo subway system in 1995 when the deadly poisonous gas Sarin was unleashed, resulting in 6,000 casualties, including 12 deaths.

On behalf of the millions of people who depend on and use public transportation every day, the APTA calls on the DHS Secretary Chertoff and the Bush Administration to make transit security a higher priority.

Paying to protect American citizens, including transit riders, from terrorist attacks is the responsibility of the federal government. Local governments, with their extremely limited tax base, cannot cover the costs. To purposely not adequately fund public transportation is not a responsible position for our federal leaders to take.

Come Help In The Parade

ACT will be participating in the Silver Spring Holiday Parade being held on Sat., Nov. 19 at 10 am. We need volunteers, the more the merrier, to help in the parade (carry the banners, hold signs, pass out literature & purple kisses or just walk). If you are able to help, email cindy@innerpurpleline.org or call 301-963-5222. If you don't want to walk in the parade, then just come on out to show your support from the sidelines.

Volunteers and Supporters

Cindy Snow

Kudos to all those ACT members who took action and responded to the action alerts that were sent out via email. Especially to the Takoma Park members who contacted Takoma Park Mayor Kathy Porter as a member of the Transportation Planning Board, asking her to oppose any restrictions on what money local and state governments can give Metro and to oppose amending the WMATA compact. [see related article (p.4), *Transportation Planning Board Defends Commuters By Opposing Metro Funding Cap*]. Don't forget to thank Mayor Porter, as well as Delegate Carol Petzold and County Councilmember Mike Knapp, for supporting our position.

Also a big Thanks to all those volunteers who made themselves available to help hold the ACT banners and pass out Purple Line flyers early in the morning.

Editorial Remarks

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

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