



ACTION COMMITTEE FOR TRANSIT

Transit Times

The Newsletter of the Action Committee for Transit of Montgomery County, Maryland
Volume 20, Number 3, July 2006

ACT's monthly meetings are held 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), in the Woodside Conference Room.

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 p. 2.

Aug 8: A chance to meet candidates for the upcoming elections who are Purple Line supporters. Details to be announced. They will be posted on the ACT website (p. 2)

Sept 12: Meeting cancelled - Primary Elections. Be sure to Vote!

... Transit Ridership Hits Records (p. 4)

... Metro's Many Creators – A Lesson for ACTivists (p. 4)

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ACT Victory on Inner Purple Line/ Red Line Connection!

John Carroll

Our man at the scene, Harry Sanders, reported on May 18, 2006 that the Montgomery County Council gave its final approval this afternoon to the FY 07 budget package that appropriates \$5 million for design of the Red Line/Purple Line connection in Bethesda.

Thanks to the more than 500 people who sent letters to the Council on this issue. In addition, special thanks to the 50 volunteers who distributed leaflets on this issue at Metro stations during the morning rush hours and in Bethesda from 3:30 to 8 pm, both during the week of April 23, 2006.

The victory resulted from seizing the opportunity to persuade the Montgomery County Council to devote some of proposed \$80 million budget for transportation projects (which would ordinarily be funded by state and federal money) to transit. County

Feature Articles

... ACT Victory on Inner Purple Line/Red Line Connection! (p. 1)

... Work Proceeds on Refining Purple Line In College Park (p. 3)

... Third East Silver Spring Alignment Gains Traction (p. 3)

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.

Executive Duncan had suggested that all this money go to highways – with not a penny for transit. ACT, with business, civic, environmental, and labor allies decided to lobby the County Council to for a Purple Line/ Red Line connection, which will cost \$50 million, in this program. The connection will include a new access via elevators.

The elevators can be built without waiting for the decision to build the entire Purple Line because they will also open a new south entrance into the Red Line's Bethesda station. The elevators will open on the sidewalk at Wisconsin Ave. and Elm Street, in front of the movie theater, and in the tunnel beneath Wisconsin Ave. where the future Purple Line station will be. Even before the Purple Line opens, they will enable thousands of current Metro riders to reach the station faster, and attract hundreds of new riders. For details, go to:
<http://www.innerpurpleline.org/Bethesda.htm>

Volunteers Needed to Help Promote Transit in the 2006 Elections

The ACT Board of Directors has sent Questionnaires on transit issues to all the candidates filed for the 2006 elections. With the responses to the questionnaire the Board will be creating a scorecard to rate the candidates on their support for ACT's transit goals.

We need LOTS of volunteers to help distribute these scorecards door-to-door in selected neighborhoods during the month of August and to help pass them out at the Metro stations September 6, 7 and 8.

Please mark your calendar and contact Cindy Snow at cindy@innerpurpleline.org or 240-308-1208 to volunteer. Thanks.

Erratum: Jim Clarke was astute to point out an error in the article "How Does FTA Select Rail Projects for Funding?" in the previous Transit Times Newsletter. The 2005 Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) mandated that FTA change its rating system of "New Start" rail projects so that (i) there are five instead of three ratings and (ii) the use of the phrase "not recommended" has been dropped.

Work Proceeds on Refining Purple Line In College Park

Webb Smedley

The Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) has held several Focus group meetings for the Purple Line segment extending from University Blvd to Kenilworth Avenue. Several options have been dropped as planning progresses.

For the University of Maryland at College Park, the focus of attention is on options crossing Campus on Campus Drive. A center campus station will be either in the vicinity of the Stamp Student Union, Cole Field House or Hornbake Plaza. A tunnel under Campus Drive is still under consideration.

A College Park stop will also be included in the East Campus area, near Route One. An all day charette, sponsored by the Student Government Association, netted some interesting concepts about how the light rail stop could be the focal point for the proposed public-private redevelopment project for the East of Rt. 1 area.

In addition to a transfer stop at the Green Line Metrorail Station, MTA is now studying a stop on River Road. This would serve the developing M-Square Research Park as well as nearby Riverdale Park. From there, the line would go south on Kenilworth Avenue before heading on East West Highway towards New Carrollton.



ACT participated in the “**Save Our Climate**” Rally co-sponsored by the Coalition to Build the Inner Purple Line (CBIPL), held in Silver Spring on June 15th. The Purple Line was presented as a local project that serves as a model toward the effort to “Save Our Climate”.

Pictured from left to right are Webb Smedley of CBIPL and Montgomery County Council President, George Leventhal

Third East Silver Spring Alignment Gains Traction

Webb Smedley

ACT continues to be proactive in working with Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) to develop viable options for the Purple Line. In the face of opposition to the Sligo Avenue options for the project, ACT co-founder Harry Sanders suggested consideration of the use of a utility right of way located between Silver Spring and Thayer Avenues.

MTA has developed this concept. The option would go south from the Silver Spring transit center in coordination with the Metropolitan Branch Trail and the revitalization of the surrounding Ripley District. It would descend into a tunnel and turn eastward under Silver Spring Avenue. The tunnel would swing north and then east again under an alley between Fenton and Grove Streets before following the utility right of way towards Piney Branch.

This option would ensure good travel times and result in a project that does not intrude in a compact, revitalizing, inner suburban neighborhood. While construction would be disruptive to about 50 adjacent homes, the easement would be restored to open green space after construction.



Photo by John Carroll

Transit Ridership Hits Records

Ben Ross, Harry Sanders, Jim Clarke

On Thursday, June 22 Metrorail passed the 200 million ridership mark for the fiscal year July 1, 2005 to June 30, 2006. This is the first time in Metro's 30-year history that Metrorail has carried more than 200 million riders in a single fiscal year. Total Metrorail ridership for this fiscal year was over 204 million, an increase of 9.8% over the previous year.

Metrorail also saw its second and fourth highest ridership in its history this year in April, 821,283, and March, 808,108. The first Clinton inaugural was 811,257 and the Reagan funeral was highest at 850,000. Records were made in June with 4 consecutive weekdays of ridership in the top 10 and this was only broken by another record of the 10 highest weekday ridership on June 28. With ridership like this we are likely to see records continue to be made.

It wasn't long ago that the Washington Post was writing repeated articles about how Metrorail was falling apart and staff was incompetent! Unfortunately the Post never investigates why ridership remains so high despite this and why there is such strong support for expansion.

Ride-On had a record 1 million boardings in February. What makes this even more impressive is it is a short month with a major holiday. Ride-On's ridership keeps growing, averaging over 90,000 boardings a day. What this means is that the majority of Ride-On's riders are "choice" riders. Ride-on is now the third or fourth largest suburban bus system in the country.

Metro bus has an average of 52,000 boardings a day in Montgomery County, not including the Georgia Ave corridor where several Metro routes start and end in the District. Metro rail boardings in the County average 150,000 per day. For an affluent

suburban county, with a design primarily aimed at being auto oriented these figures show that if you provide the service they will come.

Metro's Many Creators – A Lesson for ACTivists

Quon Kwan

Zachary Schrag, an assistant professor of history at George Mason University, recently published a book, *The Great Society Subway: A History of the Washington Metro* (Johns Hopkins University Press). This book is not just good historical reading for ACT members; it has a lesson to offer for today's ACTivists.

Schrag's book reports that the creation of Washington's Metro was fraught with many difficulties, not the least of which was overcoming the obstinate and outdated thinking that city planning was a technical matter for technicians and that there was no role for citizen input. Harold Bartholomew, a civil engineer-turned-city planner, epitomized that thinking as Chairman of the National Capital Planning Commission. Bartholomew's style was for the technocrats to claim absolute authority, "we will build all the highways we want, but don't blame me for the consequences." In the 1950's, Bartholomew attempted a mass transportation study for the National Capital region, but he ran out of time and money. Thus, he proposed 300 miles of highway that would have severely disrupted Washington, DC.

If President Nixon had continued in the White House, Bartholomew would have gotten all 300 miles of highway. President Kennedy changed the thinking that city

planning or for that matter, any kind of public planning, was a technical matter for technocrats. Kennedy did not trust the technocratic experts, and instead, appointed citizen activists who criticized the technocratic experts. One such appointment he made was Darwin Stolzenbach, a Montgomery County anti-highway activist. Stolzenbach opposed Bartholomew's plan for 300 miles of highway. Stolzenbach hired experts who turned Bartholomew's plan on its head. Stolzenbach's experts recommended building a rail system for Washington, DC and using whatever was left over to building highways in spite of staunch opposition from the American Automobile Association and its allies in Congress. Stolzenbach's rail plan failed to pass the 1963 Congress. However, the 1965 Congress approved a less ambitious rail plan proposed by Stolzenbach.

What bolstered Stolzenbach to succeed in 1965 was a new spirit. This was a spirit articulated by President Johnson, "*We have the power to shape the civilization that we want*" in his 1964 "Great Society Speech." The Great Society would be "*a place where the city of man serves not only the needs of the body and the demands of commerce but the desire for beauty and the hunger for community.*"

In 1967, President Johnson called for the power to plan Washington, DC to be moved from the Federal government to the local government, allowing the activists even more say-so. Instead of the smallest, cheapest rail system, the biggest, most expensive rail system was advocated for Washington, DC. However, in 1968, the city planners came up with a much more constrained rail plan that appealed to all – the Adopted Regional System was approved by the local jurisdictions. Originally approved at 33 route miles, it was expanded to 89 miles, then to 102, and is now 106.

History goes to show that if it were not for activists, who took advantage of good opportunities, rail would not have achieved its promise. ACTivists for the Inner Purple Line need to seize the day. *Carpe diem!*

Latest WiFi Transit Service

Quon Kwan

Your Transit Times editor had the privilege of attending the Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) World Congress, Nov. 7 – 10, 2005 in San Francisco, CA. Attendees were given a token to ride a special bus. Unveiled for the first time to the public was the SUPERBUS -- a transit bus equipped with the latest wireless fidelity (WiFi). Your editor rode the SUPERBUS through downtown San Francisco along a specially designated portion of Municipal Railway (Muni) route 30.

The SUPERBUS was a collaborative effort between Motorola (mobile radio mesh networking technology what is this), Trapeze Group (ITS software provider), and San Francisco Municipal Railway (transit agency). The bus, that was equipped with wireless fidelity, was actually an electric trolleybus (otherwise known as a trackless trolley).

Wireless fidelity, mobile broadband technology allows both passengers aboard or waiting for the SUPERBUS to surf the internet. In other words, the specially equipped bus served as a roving mobile internet café. In addition, the wireless technology allowed location-based multimedia (i.e., both audio and visual) announcements to be made. For the purposes of demonstration, the announcements provided historical information about the landmarks at each major bus stop.

Not visible to the passengers of the SUPERBUS, the WiFi technology featured instantaneous ridership reporting (also known as passenger counting) and vehicle tracking. These two features provide information that the transit agency can use to evaluate loading and to balance loading across buses. The vehicle-tracking feature does not rely on the more costly global positioning satellite tracking system. Another feature provided by the technology, also not visible to the passengers, is security; video surveillance

cameras mounted in the interior of the bus allow for real-time, remote security monitoring of activities on board the bus.

Following the footsteps of San Francisco's Municipal Railway SUPERBUS are Cedar Rapids, IA and Cincinnati, OH. Five transit buses that travel along Cedar Rapids' most heavily traveled corridor are equipped with the same wireless fidelity, mobile broadband technology. On March 1, 2006, the Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority, better known as Cincinnati Metro, offered free wireless internet service on two specially wrapped "Project Lily Pad" buses on a trial basis.

Cities of Knowledge – An Antithesis of Transit Oriented Development

Quon Kwan

A previous article examined how Federal government policies, especially those of supporting Interstate highways, hurt transit [see *Transit Times*, v. 19, n. 2, p. 5]. Overlooked was the early role of defense spending in decentralizing cities, spreading urban sprawl, and hurting transit. Margaret O'Mara has recently written a book, *Cities of Knowledge: Cold War Science and the Search for the Next Silicon Valley*, published by Princeton University Press, 2005, on this very subject.

At the turn of the century, most Americans would find it hard to believe that more would commute to work in cities of knowledge than in the central city in 2000. Yet, no one questions today how it came about that tens of millions of Americans go to work in cities of knowledge, hardly served by transit.

Cities of knowledge are also known as "high-tech regions" or "science clusters." Cities of knowledge are basically research parks occupied by high-technology industries that spring up outside metropolitan areas. Examples are Silicon Valley (San Jose, CA) and Rte 128 Corridor (Boston, MA).

Cities of knowledge did not emerge spontaneously but were planned during the Cold War. The Cold War defense complex created a giant new source of capital, prompted new political attention to science, and fueled research in universities. Defense spending turned university science into "big science." Pork-barrel politics compounded the situation, steering most Defense dollars to certain regions – especially suburbs in the Sunbelt. Furthermore, concerns about vulnerability of central business districts during nuclear attack encouraged the trend towards the suburbs. [Similar concerns are now the impetus for relocating defense facilities from Washington, DC to outlying exurbs, such as Ft. Belvoir and Ft. Meade.]

American universities were at the heart of not just the location of these cities of knowledge but also at the heart of this whole process, thus, giving rise to the term, "knowledge," in the phrase, "cities of knowledge." Universities have always had extensive research capacity, luring Defense funding at the beginning of the Cold War. With their influential position created by Defense funding, universities became big players in state and local politics, masters of land management, and engines of economic development. Stanford University set an early example, building a research park adjacent to its campus, the origin of Silicon Valley.

Consequently, universities spurred the growth of exurban office parks, freeway commutes, and proximity to residential subdivisions. Universities and researchers have long preferred low-rise, intensively landscaped, sprawling campuses – not suited for mass transit.

The rise of cities of knowledge “served to shift the focus of economic activity away from central cities that dominated the regional economy up until the middle of the twentieth century and turned sleepy agricultural areas and bedroom suburbs into internationally renowned concentrations of industrial production and commercial capital.”

O’Mara concludes “Cold War research and economic development policies joined other public programs that ‘pulled’ people and jobs to the suburbs by creating economic incentives . . . While consumer preferences and market trends already favored urban decentralization and would have likely effected some decentralization even without this public intervention, government incentives accelerated and widened this process by making the automobile-dependent suburb a much more economically sensible location choice. . .”

Unfortunately, cities of knowledge – a quintessential American form – are being copied in Europe and Japan, threatening the role of transit and transit-oriented development there too.

ANNOUNCEMENT

ACT Program Chair, Richard McArdle, who has taken on this duty for many years is planning to retire from the position.

As Program Chair Richard arranged and coordinated the speakers for the monthly membership meetings and made the agendas that are handed out. We appreciate all the good work Richard has done.

Thank you Dick for your long service to ACT! We are now looking for a new Program Chair.

Any members interested in helping with this position please contact Cindy Snow, 240-308-1208 or cindy@innerpurpleline.org, to submit your name to the Board.

Remember, as a grassroots volunteer organization, we depend on the support of our members.

ACTion Notes

Cindy Snow

This has been an extremely busy quarter, but well worth the effort with our landslide victory of getting funding set aside by the County Council for the design of the South Entrance of the Bethesda Metro Station - the 1st step to construction. We see this entrance, which is the connection between the Purple Line and the Red line, as the first piece toward building the Purple line.

Thank you to all who helped make this idea a reality. So many members have helped with the volunteer efforts this quarter that space won’t permit listing them all. Our dedicated regular crew of volunteers was out there working hard, as well as new volunteers and the occasional volunteers that are there to help with the big efforts. Give yourselves a pat on the back, you deserve it.

What did these volunteers do? They leafleted at the Metro Stations, at the Bethesda Row Theaters and a few other miscellaneous places. We had volunteers helping out during the morning rush hours in Silver Spring and Chevy Chase to promote the Purple Line and hold the ACT banners, as well as at other events too. Volunteers ran the ACT tables at the 4 Purple Line Open Houses held in June. And then there were the envelope stuffers. We could not have accomplished what we have without this great help.

And we could not have accomplished what we have without so many involved members writing letters in response to our ACTion alerts, like the one for the Bethesda Metro South Entrance asking the County Council to set aside funds for the design of the entrance.

“Don’t ever question the value of volunteers. Noah’s Ark was built by volunteers; the Titanic was built by professionals.”

Council of Governments' Study on the Web

At the March membership meeting speaker John Swanson of the Council of Governments (COG)/Transportation Planning Board (TPB) presented COG's "What if....Land Use and Transportation Studies." If you missed this interesting discussion you can still learn about these "What if" scenarios. COG has posted them on the web at: www.mwcog.org/transportation/activities/regional/.

*“What if more housing were built closer to future jobs?
What if new jobs
and housing were concentrated closer to public transit?
A TPB study is
looking at these and other questions.”*

Check it out.

Editorial Remarks

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

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