



ACTION COMMITTEE FOR TRANSIT

Transit Times

The Newsletter of the Action Committee for Transit of Montgomery County, Maryland
Volume 21, Number 3, July 2007

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 pg. 2.

July 10: Sheila Hixson, Chair of House Budget and Taxation Committee – "Transportation Funding and the Purple Line"

Aug 14: Speaker TBD

Sept 11: Speaker TBD

- Update on Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) (p. 5)
- "Public Transportation & Petroleum Savings in the US: Reducing Oil Dependence" (p. 6)

ACT Letter to County Council on Planning Priorities

Ben Ross

ACT sent a letter dated April 15, 2007 to Montgomery County Council President Marilyn Praisner regarding the Planning Board's budget.

The Action Committee for Transit reviewed the Planning Board Work Program last month. The Planning Board faces the task of crafting fundamental changes in our land use regulations that are crucial. The automobile-dependent system of segregated land uses has created the present transportation mess that must be replaced with a modern system that promotes urban mixed use and transit.

To that end, the resources of the Planning Board must be focused on land-use regulation, the Zoning Ordinance and growth policy. Master Plan revisions around the Wheaton, White Flint, and Twinbrook Metro stations and other urbanized centers must also move forward. Activities inconsistent with these priorities should be deferred. We

Feature Articles

- ACT Letter to County Council on Planning Priorities (p. 1)
- Results of Survey of Western Montgomery County Riders (p. 3)
- Chevy Chase Residents Oppose Purple Line Re-Study; ACT Sends Letter (p. 4)
- Silver Spring Transit Center News (p. 5)

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.

recommend that the Council address the budget as follows:

- *Increase the allocation of funds and work years for revising the Zoning Ordinance. A comprehensive revision is needed to correct fundamental conceptual errors when the ordinance was drafted many years ago¹. As the negative consequences of our zoning rules have emerged, the county has not repealed bad laws that cause the damage, but by using Master Plans to undo the harm done by the Zoning Code. These two clashing systems have created a mind-numbingly complex regulatory regime that continues to favor traffic-jam sprawl development like strip malls and tract housing. Royce Hanson's initiative to revise the Zoning Ordinance needs a major commitment.*
- *Fully fund the Annual Growth Policy (AGP). In the past, automobile-centric transportation tests in the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO) have contributed to traffic congestion. In the county's urbanized areas, an innovative transportation test is needed to take into account all forms of mobility. We have suggested testing compliance with Master Plan targets for non-auto mode share; other options may emerge from research. The Planning Board needs to identify a proper measure of mobility for the transportation test.*

- *Ensure follow-up to the Centers and Boulevards study. The concepts from these workshops provide a clear direction for future development and have gained*

ACT Welcomes New Staff Member

In May, the ACT Board of Directors approved the hiring of Jason Waskey to job share the ACT staff duties with long time staff member Cindy Snow. Jason comes to ACT highly qualified, with experience in grassroots organizing in the political arena. Welcome aboard Jason.

¹ As just one of many examples, the parking chapter of the zoning ordinance begins by enacting a principle that is directly contrary to everything the county has been trying to accomplish in encouraging non-auto transportation. For instance, it requires two off-street parking spaces for every single-family detached house and four off-street spaces for a two-family house.

wide community support. They should be systematically implemented in future AGPs and Master Plan amendments.

- *Fund ongoing Master Plan amendments. These amendments will maintain the momentum of transit-oriented development that is the key to our county's future livability and economic health.*
- *Eliminate the proposed "Energy/Environment Master Plan" from the budget. Efficient transportation and land use should be the goal of the entire Master Plan. It should not be in a separate plan. Furthermore, recommendations of the Centers and Boulevards study directly address more energy-efficient development and should be implemented, rather than be re-studied.*
- *Suspend the I-270 - 355 - Tech Corridor study. This lost its focus by lumping together transit-oriented and sprawl development areas. After the necessary revisions in the fundamentals of the county's land-use regulation approach have been adopted, this study could be refocused and resumed.*

Purple Line Update

The controversial Sligo Ave. alignment of the Purple Line through Silver Spring has been eliminated. The 2 alignments through Silver Spring being considered at this time are the Wayne Ave. alignment and the Silver Spring Ave./Thayer Ave. right-of-way alignment.

In Memoriam

Our sympathies and thoughts go out to ACT member Dick Arkin, whose wife, Diane, passed away in early June.

Results of Survey of Western Montgomery County Riders

Miriam Schoenbaum

In late winter 2007, Montgomery County Commuter Services (MCCS) mailed about 9,700 brochures to addresses in western Montgomery County. These brochures were based on a sample brochure from Save Maryland Area Rail Transit (SMART) and provided information on MARC service as well as County mass transit services. They also included a survey designed by SMART and intended to gather information on commuting and the quality of MARC service in the area. SMART summarized the data from the returned surveys and presented a report on the results to the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) and MCCS. The main recommendations are summarized below:

For the MTA:

1. Increase the number of trains stopping at Boyds and Dickerson. Because so few trains stop at Boyds and Dickerson, it is difficult for commuters to take MARC from these two stations. Only seven trains a day stop at Boyds and Dickerson – the fewest stops on the Brunswick Line in Maryland. In comparison, 13 trains stop at Point of Rocks, 14 at Barnesville, and 18 at Germantown. Suggested additions are trains P892, P873, P875, and P895.
2. Add a later morning train and a later evening train to the MARC Brunswick Line. Almost a third of commuters in the survey cannot take MARC because they usually leave home after eight a.m., and over one in ten commuters cannot take MARC because they usually leave work after seven p.m. A later train in the mornings and evenings would give these commuters the option of taking MARC.

For MCCS:

1. Publicize the Guaranteed Ride Home program. Although the brochure specifically mentioned the Guaranteed Ride Home program, about one in five commuters

unwilling to consider riding MARC cited “worried about getting home in an emergency” as a reason. Further publicity for the program might relieve their worries.

2. Publicize the MARC/Metro connection. Although the brochure specifically mentioned transfer points from MARC to Metro at Rockville and Silver Spring, several Metro commuters commented that they wished MARC stopped at Shady Grove, that their work location was too far from a MARC station, or that MARC plus Metro was too expensive. Further publicity for the transfer points as well as for the MARC Transit Link Card might persuade commuters to take MARC to Rockville instead of driving to Shady Grove.
3. Market MARC services in Clarksburg. More than a quarter of commuters from Clarksburg did not know where their nearest MARC station was before reading the brochure. Further marketing MARC service in Clarksburg might fix this problem.

Chevy Chase Residents Oppose Purple Line Re-Study; ACT Sends Letter

Ben Ross

At the request of Meir Wolf, the Town of Chevy Chase appropriated \$250,000 on April 11, 2007 for “independent studies” of the Purple Line. This money was tentatively added to the town budget in May. The study would focus on the environmental impact, alignment of rails to the trail and anticipated ridership.

Thirty-seven residents of the Town signed a petition to oppose this appropriation. Reasons cited were as follows:

- 1) The action appears to be an unnecessary use of taxpayer funds since all three of the

proposed topics have been thoroughly studied by other organizations, including the state of Maryland.

- 2) The proposed study amounts to approximately 9 percent of the town’s 2008 budget, more than \$200 per household, to study what has already been expertly and thoroughly studied.
- 3) If the Council action stands, residents at the annual town meeting in May would be presented with a *fait accompli* rather than being given a timely opportunity to research and discuss the issue before the budget is voted on.
- 4) There is no mechanism to ensure that the proposed study or the consultants on this controversial issue would be impartial.

ACT Vice President Ben Ross wrote a letter on behalf of ACT to the Montgomery County Council protesting the action of the Town of Chevy Chase. The letter questions the intended purpose of this money – whether it will be used on objective studies of the Purple Line’s impacts on the town or to stop construction of this desperately needed transit facility.

The ACT letter notes that the Town of Chevy Chase asked for \$1.5 million from the county budget for storm sewer upgrades within the town. County funding of these storm sewers will only free up money for fighting the Purple Line. In practical effect, county taxpayers — who, in the great majority, support the Purple Line — would be subsidizing an expensive campaign against themselves.

Instead, the Town’s storm sewers could and should be funded from the surplus income tax revenue that the Town is not currently using to replace county services. The Town should either remove the proposed Purple Line studies from its budget, or increase its real estate tax rate so that its own residents and not the taxpayers of the entire county pay for the studies.

Silver Spring Transit Center News

Harry Sanders

On Thursday, June 5th, the Montgomery County Planning Board gave preliminary approval to their mandatory referral review of the design of the Silver Spring Transit Center. But there are details to be worked out on the written formal agreement between the parties involved. One of the more important details is replacement park land for the Urban Park at the Silver Spring Metro that will be torn down by transit center construction. One of the proposed replacement parks is under the alignment of the most likely Purple Line alignment. The staff is working out details so that this is not a "4F" legal problem for the Purple Line. The second of the two replacement parks is a jug handle park next to the headquarters of Discovery Communications.

The Planning Board desires more amenities, e.g. 30 foot sidewalk on Colesville Road, while WMATA and the County Transportation Department are more concerned about inflation issues. Better landscaping and bike storage were also discussed but not resolved. Transit users are caught in the middle because while a new transit center is very important, it is something that will be with us for many, many years and good pedestrian access is critical.

Also recently announced was that the interim movement of buses for the Silver Spring Transit Center construction has been delayed until at least September. They have found a way to do more of the site preparation work without closing off the bus area. Upcoming site preparation work seems to be a sidewalk adjacent to Colesville Road. This delay is good since the construction bids haven't gone out yet and the actual transit center site construction won't start until November.

Update on Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT)

Corridor Cities Transitway Coalition

In March the Germantown Alliance hosted the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) and the State Highway Administration (SHA) for a briefing on the status of the CCT and the I-270/US 15 Multi-Modal Corridor Study.

Planning for the CCT has been delayed by approximately one year due to concerns over how the regional model predicts future transit ridership. As ridership projections are a critical component of the viability of any transit project and a key criterion in the Federal Transportation Authority's review and approval process, they must be accurate. The general concerns regarding the Washington area regional model affect both the CCT and the Purple Line. In fact, these concerns are relevant for all the transit projects in Maryland as well as others around the country.

Assuming the current model can be adjusted to obtain accurate ridership projections and the schedule is not delayed further, the project timeline follows:

JAN/FEB 2008 - Alternatives Analysis/
Environment Assessment Document completed

WINTER 2007/2008 - Public Meetings in
Montgomery and Frederick Counties

SUMMER 2008 - Locally Preferred
Alternative Selected

- Request Federal transit funding
through the "New Starts" Program

2012 - Construction Start Date – contingent on
funding

2015 - Construction Completed (estimated)

CHECK

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The State Purple Line Study Has A New Website

<http://www.purplelinemd.com>

Parts of the website are still under development, but, as noted in the opening page,
"The Purple Line study is moving forward with a renewed energy."

MTA reported the results of its analysis of the right-of-way needed for the CCT. It identified every parcel along the transitway route, determined its owner, and assigned the property to three basic groupings. Based on this research, approximately 35% of the transitway right-of-way lies within publicly controlled land (i.e. – within existing street right-of-way or on land specifically dedicated to the Transitway). An additional 25% has right-of-way protection through reservation or easement. The remaining 40% has no protections at this time, although there is no major development existing or planned along this right-of-way. The local jurisdictions continue to work with developers and property owners to obtain right-of-way as it becomes available.

The table below compares the costs of constructing Phase 1 with the total project cost (including final design, right-of-way acquisition, and construction):

CAPITAL COSTS (2006 dollars)

MODE	PHASE 1 Shady Grove to Metropolitan Grove	TOTAL PROJECT: Shady Grove to COMSAT
Bus Rapid Transit	\$320 M	\$528 M
Light Rail Transit	\$521 M	\$853 M

Due to the high construction cost estimates for the transit and highway components of the multi-modal project, the Maryland Department of Transportation is investigating a variety of funding options, including the establishment of a Public-Private Partnership (P3). Under this arrangement, a private group of companies could fund the early construction, operation, and maintenance of the highway and transitway in exchange for revenue generated from the facilities over an extended period of time. Information on this initiative can be found at www.i-270corridor3.com.

“Public Transportation & Petroleum Savings in the US: Reducing Oil Dependence”

Quon Kwan

Issued in January 2007, this independent analysis looks for the first time at what public transportation saves – both for individual households and for the nation as a whole. In addition, it explores a possible future where many more Americans would have the choice to take public transportation. The American Public Transportation Association commissioned ICF International to conduct the analysis.

Using conservative assumptions, the study found that current public transportation usage reduces U.S. gasoline consumption by 1.4 billion gallons each year. In concrete terms, that means:

- 108 million fewer cars filling up – almost 300,000 every day.
- 34 fewer supertankers leaving the Middle East – one every 11 days.
- Over 140,000 fewer tanker truck deliveries to service stations per year.
- A savings of 3.9 million gallons of gasoline per day.

These savings result from the efficiency of carrying multiple passengers in each vehicle, the reduction in traffic congestion from fewer automobiles on the roads, and the varied sources of energy for public transportation.

A two adult “public transportation household” saves an average **\$6,251** per year, compared to an equivalent household with two cars and no access to public transportation service. To put these household savings in perspective, compare them to the following:

- The average U.S. household spent \$5,781 on food in 2004.
- The average U.S. homeowner with a mortgage spent \$6,848 on interest and fees in 2004, and paid off \$3,925 in principal.

These savings are attributable to three factors:

- *Driving less.* The average household in which at least one member relies on public transportation drives 16 fewer miles/day compared to a household with similar income, residential location, and vehicle ownership which does not use transit – saving of hundreds of dollars a year.
- *Walking more.* The 2001 National Household Transportation Survey shows that households near public transportation tend to drive less, independent of their own public transportation use. Such areas tend to have features that encourage more walking and less driving.
- *Owning fewer cars.* The American Automobile Association (AAA) estimated the annual average cost of operating a vehicle in 2006 was \$5,586, including depreciation, insurance, finance fees and maintenance.

What would happen if improved coordination between land use and public transportation could replace even more car travel and public transportation were expanded to double ridership? Total national fuel savings could double to about 2.8 billion gallons per year.

ACTivist in ACTION

Cindy Snow

Congratulations to ACT Board member Miriam Schoenbaum. On May 14, 2007 at the Montgomery County 20th Annual Transportation Awards Ceremony, County Executive Isiah Leggett honored Miriam and Save Maryland Area Rail Transit (SMART) companion, Carol Oberdorfer, for “Achievement In Public Transportation Advocacy.” As noted in a Montgomery County press release, they “*were determined to save two MARC Brunswick Line Train Stations that were slated for closure in 2006. Through their leadership, they developed a comprehensive program of improvements to promote MARC service, organizing the community, briefing state and county legislators, and working with Montgomery County Commuter Services.*” Keep up the great work!

* * *

ACT member John Z Wetmore is the producer of a monthly television series titled “Perils for Pedestrians.” To learn more about Perils for Pedestrians and view episodes online go to www.pedestrians.org. Be sure to check out Episode 101, which contains an interview with ACT’s previous president, Ben Ross.

Tracks, the Musical

Cindy Snow

On February 17, at Grace Episcopal Church in Silver Spring, several ACT members were treated to a demo performance of three songs from a musical in progress titled “Tracks”. This 2-act play, written by transit rider Paul Stregovsky in collaboration with Marshall J. White and Jared Denhard, is about friendship and romance that form among riders of the Purple Line in 2012.

The songs were performed by several students from Bethesda-Chevy Chase and Poolesville High Schools along with Paul Stregovsky. To view the songs online go to:

- Song 1, " With Friends Like These" <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-2643998115651258966&hl=en>
- Song 2, " Third Car, Seventh Row" <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=1288506793511196748&hl=en>
- Song 3, " Rather Like You " <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=5488699985008595435&hl=en>

Please note the sound recordings are not high quality and the performances are in the rehearsal state, but it gives you an idea of what is to come.

Mr. Stregovsky plans to exhibit the progress made on “Tracks” in a second demo performance some time in August or later. Additionally, he hopes to have a local school stage the musical in December 2008.

Purple Line Functional Master Plan

The Montgomery County Planning Board has started the process of a functional master plan amendment for the Purple Line, to include the segment of the Purple Line from Silver Spring to Langley Park. The western segment from Bethesda to Silver Spring is already in the Master Plan, but this eastern segment has not yet been a part of that process.

The Planning Board is seeking applicants for a community advisory committee to work with its planners on this amendment. Representatives from civic groups, businesses, residents, environmental organizations, property owners and the general public are encouraged to apply for representation on the advisory committee. Meetings will run through Fall 2008. To apply, submit a letter of interest by Friday, **July 13, 2007** to: Tom Autrey, Transportation Planning Division, Montgomery County Planning Department, thomas.autrey@mncppc-mc.org, Fax: (301) 495-495-1302, 8787 Georgia Ave., Silver Spring, MD 20910-3760

Editorial Remarks

Your Transit Times editor is Quon Kwan. Cutoff date for receiving materials for the next publication is September 11. Send your materials to Quon at: siufung@erols.com or call him at: (h) 301-460-7454.

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