

ACTION COMMITTEE FOR TRANSIT

Transit Times

The Newsletter of the Action Committee for Transit of Montgomery County, Maryland
Volume 22, Number 2, April 2008

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.

April 8: To Be Announced

May 13: "Service Issues on the Red Line."
Speaker: To Be Announced

June 10: Chris Weber, Federal Realty and Steve Pinkus, Gorove-Slade Associates
"Wisconsin Avenue from Friendship Heights to Rockville: Highway or Urban Main Street?"

PLEASE NOTE: This meeting will be at the **BETHESDA LIBRARY, 7400 Arlington Rd.,** instead of our usual meeting place; regular time.

Feature Articles

- Purple Line Moves Forward with Votes by Montgomery County Council & College Park Undergraduates (p. 1)
- ACT Decries Weekend Delays on Red Line Single Tracking (p. 3)
- Metro Reply to ACT Press Release RE: Weekend Delays on Red Line Single Tracking (p. 3)
- Purple Line That Doesn't Go To Prince George's County Pushed By Chevy Chase Influentials (p. 4)
- Time to Go SmarTrip (p. 5)
- Letter on Selecting New Transportation Planning Chief (p. 5)
- ACT Blasts Proposed Ride-On Cuts After System Gets New State Aid (p. 6)
- TTI Congestion Report Shows the Benefit of Transit (p. 6)
- Treasurer's Report for 2007 (p. 7)

Purple Line Moves Forward with Votes by Montgomery County Council & College Park Undergraduates

ACT Press Release of Mar. 13, 2008

Transit advocates hailed two votes on consecutive days that mark important progress for the Purple Line.

Did You Know?

If you missed the Purple Line Now! Fund-raiser in October, you can view the video of the speakers at: <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-8788127839613199280>.

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.

On March 11, the Montgomery County Council, in response to a bill proposed by Councilmember George Leventhal, gave tentative approval for spending \$55 million to build a new entrance to the Bethesda Metro. This facility will be the future connection between the Red Line and the Purple Line, and even before the Purple Line opens it will speed travel to and from the southern part of downtown Bethesda. A final decision on the budget will be made in May.

The next evening, the Student Government Association of the University of Maryland in College Park voted to endorse the Maryland Transit Administration's plan to route the Purple Line through the university along Campus Drive. The Campus Drive route is favored by transit supporters because it is faster and closer to the busiest campus destinations, but the university administration has raised objections.

The Campus Drive route was previously endorsed by the other two major student organizations, the Graduate Student Government and the Residence Halls Association; the vote by the undergraduate student government shows that student sentiment is near-unanimous for the Campus Drive option. The Campus Drive option is also favored by the City of College Park and local neighborhood groups.

Special Election - Council District 4

Cindy Snow

The Special Election for Montgomery County Council District 4 will be held Tuesday, April 15 for the Primary and Tuesday, May 13 for the General Election. ACT has sent questionnaires regarding Montgomery County transit issues to the candidates running for this seat.

We will keep members posted of the results of the questionnaire, which will also be posted on our website, www.actfortransit.org.

In Memoriam

ACT is saddened by the recent loss of several Purple Line supporters. Marilyn Praisner, Montgomery County Council District 4, and Eugene Lynch, Montgomery County Planning Board, both long time supporters of the Purple Line, and Gwendolyn Britt, Prince George's County State Senate District 47.

ACT Decries Weekend Delays on Red Line Single Tracking

ACT Press Release of February 24, 2008

ACT sent the following letter of complaint, signed by President Ben Ross, to Metro General Manager John Catoe about bad service on four weekends in February and March on the Metrorail Red Line:

Dear Mr. Catoe:

Trains ran on 30-minute headways Saturday night on the Red Line due to single tracking between Friendship Heights and Dupont Circle. I was on an inbound train last night that was offloaded at Friendship Heights and told to wait for the next train coming in 15 minutes. This is an unacceptable level of service at a busy time for Metro; boardings at Bethesda on Saturday nights are half of what they are in the weekday morning rush hour.

Metro could easily have provided 15-minute headways. The single tracking was caused by switch maintenance at Van Ness. Trains could have single tracked on the blocked track from Friendship Heights to Tenleytown and from Dupont Circle to Cleveland Park and returned on the same track to the switches within 15 minutes. A shuttle on the open track between Tenleytown and Cleveland Park could have met the turned-back trains and made the round trip comfortably within 15 minutes.

It seems that inflexible train control may degrade service in other situations as well. On the New York subway, crowded trains frequently skip stops when another train is directly behind them. Our members have seen this on Metro only rarely in incident recovery situations and almost never during times of simple rush-hour crowding. Skipping stops could significantly alleviate loading delays caused by train overcrowding and prevent following trains from being delayed behind the first crowded train.

It is possible that Metro's automated control system limits the flexibility of train control. If that is the case, Metro should evaluate the merits of more frequent use of operator control during track maintenance, incident recovery, and other times.

At a time when Metro is stressed by increasing ridership, insufficient financial support from Maryland, Virginia, and D.C., and aging infrastructure, everything should be done to provide the best service possible within these limitations.

Metro Reply to ACT Press Release RE: Weekend Delays on Red Line Single Tracking

03/13/2008

Dear Mr. Ross:

Thank you for your recent media release addressing John Catoe, General Manager of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (Metro), about weekend Red Line delays caused by single-tracking and suggesting that Metro provide an alternative to single-tracking. I have been asked to reply.

We apologize for the recent inconvenience you have experienced while traveling on the Red Line. Unfortunately, the current track maintenance projects are absolutely necessary and vital to the future reliable operation of the Metrorail system. Because of the competing fiscal priorities faced by the federal government and the area jurisdictions that fund Metro, capital spending did not receive adequate focus for several years. Due to the efforts of the Metro Matters initiative, Metro received an infusion of cash directed at rehabilitating our aging infrastructure and accommodating ridership growth. As part of the effort to ensure safe and reliable service, Metro has undertaken a major track rehabilitation program on the Red Line.

The most recent project has begun at our Van Ness-UDC Metrorail station. This specific project is scheduled for completion during the weekend of March 14. To minimize customer inconvenience, we schedule all construction projects during the weekends and off-peak hours, when ridership is considerably lighter. Once the work is complete, we will take a couple of weeks off from construction during the Cherry Blossom festivities. However, we do have a final project outside our Friendship Heights station, and construction should begin shortly after the Cherry Blossom Festival concludes. Once these projects are completed, construction crews will move to other lines, and Red Line riders will experience fewer delays.

Your suggestion to provide rail shuttle service for customers traveling between Tenleytown and Cleveland Park is an interesting one; however, such a maneuver would cause considerable inconvenience to many of our Red Line customers and perhaps delay them even further. Your suggestion about skipping stations is a good one, and Metro does occasionally "express" trains through some stops to help clear significant delays after the original incident has been resolved. We will continue to use this tactic when appropriate; however, in planning all Metrorail service, we must consider the effects on all customers, not just those at a particular site.

We hope this addresses your concerns. Please let us know if you have additional questions, and thank you for your patronage of Metrorail.

B. J. Jones
Director, Red Line

Purple Line That Doesn't Go To Prince George's County Pushed By Chevy Chase Influentials

ACT Press Release of Jan. 15, 2008

Well-connected Chevy Chase residents and golfers have launched a renewed push for a Purple Line route that would avoid their affluent neighborhoods and an exclusive country club – and wouldn't go to Prince George's County at all.

The aim is to revive a "Purple Line Loop" route proposed in 2003 and rejected by Maryland transportation planners. Under this plan Purple Line trains would share the Red Line track through D.C. but cross from Medical Center to Silver Spring on elevated tracks built above the Beltway. From Silver Spring, the Purple Line trains would go back into D.C., bypassing Prince George's County entirely.

A letter-writing campaign aimed at Governor O'Malley, Lt. Gov. Brown, and Montgomery County officials began this past Saturday, January 12. Participants include J. Paul McNamara, a vice president of Columbia Country Club. The Purple Line route now under study follows old railroad tracks that adjoin Columbia Country Club's golf course.

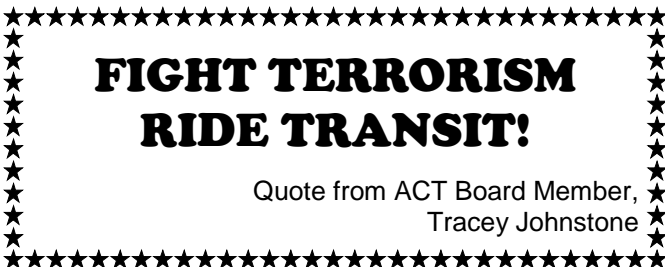
"One of the great things about the Purple Line is how it will bring Montgomery and Prince George's Counties together," said James Allen, co-chair of Prince George's Action for Community Transportation. "This project absolutely must serve both counties."

Ben Ross, president of the Montgomery-based Action Committee for Transit, joined Allen in denouncing the "Loop" plan. "Light rail will be an asset to all the communities it runs through," added Ross, who lives across the street from the future Purple Line station in Bethesda. For more information, visit the following link:

<http://www.innerpurpleline.org/mediacalline.htm>

★
★ **FIGHT TERRORISM** ★
★ **RIDE TRANSIT!** ★
★

Quote from ACT Board Member,
Tracey Johnstone



Time to Go SmarTrip

John Carroll

With the SmarTrip card now usable on RideOn as well as Metrorail and Metrobus, it's time to carry the card in your pocket. I've found the card to be the trouble free way through the gates on rail and an easy swipe at the farebox on buses. SmarTrip cards understand transfers between Metrorail, Metrobus and Ride On. Once in the system, if you transfer within two hours from rail to bus, or bus to bus, the farebox will read the transfer information from your card. No more paper transfers needed.

SmarTrip cards can be purchased online, at some rail stations, and at Giant food. I could not purchase one at the Silver Spring station but Giant was right around the corner. You can add value to the card at rail stations or on a bus. It is easier to add fare at a station. Just follow the steps on the fare machine.

On the bus, the display on the farebox is small and dim. I find it difficult to read so I just touch my card to the target, listen for the "chirp" and move on out of the way. But the bus farebox has two buttons above the SmartTrip emblem. "Add Fare" on the left and "Check Balance" on the right. When using one of these buttons, do it before putting the card on the target. A Senior/Disabled SmarTrip Card operates in the same way but deducts the reduced fare.

SmarTrip cards have serial numbers and Metro has a record of a card's value. This is useful if you loose or damage the card. Both of these things have happened to me and I have promptly received replacements in the mail with the value of the old card transferred to the new card. There was a \$5 charge for replacing the lost card but no charge to replace the damaged card. I would like to see our bus operators encouraging use of SmarTrip. They took the first step in January when the cash fare went up 10 cents but the SmarTrip fare stayed at \$1.25. I'd like to see a second promotion: Metro to recognize a bus-to-rail transfer and give credit as currently given for rail-to-bus transfers.

Increasing use of SmarTrip on the bus would move the boarding queue more quickly, allow the driver to pay closer attention to the road, and reduce litter. Time to go SmarTrip.

Letter on Selecting New Transportation Planning Chief

Joint Letter of January 2, 2008

ACT, along with the Audubon Naturalist Society, Campaign for Smarter Growth, Environmental Defense, and Sierra Club Montgomery County Group, fired off the following letter to Mr. Royce Hanson, Chair of the Montgomery County Planning Board about selecting a new Transportation Planning Chief for the Board:

Montgomery County urgently needs new departures in transportation planning. The design of our transportation infrastructure has followed a traffic-engineering paradigm which emphasizes moving vehicles at the expense of efficient transportation and livable communities. By making automobile travel the primary means of mobility, we have generated ever-worsening traffic jams while creating a built environment that much too often is ugly and pedestrian-hostile. Our auto-oriented communities and policy of expanding roads to meet their needs will make it difficult for the County to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions. We must change direction and make our streets friendly to all users including those not using automobiles. To make our new growth centers work, we must look for opportunities to retrofit the existing pattern of congestion-generating superblocks with livable, walkable, bikeable urban streets, and encourage smarter transportation pricing and management.

The new chief of transportation planning at the Planning Board can play a central role taking the county in the new directions that are required. This position must be filled by someone with broad experience in urban transportation and an understanding of the need to prioritize transit and pedestrians, rather than a narrowly focused traffic engineer. We urge you to conduct a national search to find a leader who can fill this position with distinction.

ACT Blasts Proposed Ride-On Cuts After System Gets New State Aid

ACT Press Release of Dec. 27, 2007

The Action Committee for Transit today denounced a plan to cut Ride-On bus service when the Montgomery County bus system has just been awarded millions of dollars in new state aid. The cuts were proposed in a Dec. 21 budget-cutting plan from the County Executive to the County Council.

"With Montgomery County's traffic so bad, the last thing we should be doing is putting more cars on the road by forcing people to drive who don't want to," commented ACT Vice President Ben Ross.

Just a month ago, Montgomery County members of the General Assembly won a pledge from Gov. Martin O'Malley to provide additional aid for Ride-On from Maryland's Transportation Trust Fund. Local legislators who voted for tax increases wanted to be sure that some of the new revenues would go to relieve the travails of county commuters.

If the county cuts Ride-On service at the same time that Ride-On is getting more money from the state's Trust Fund, the net effect will be to use Transportation Trust Fund (TTF) revenues to cover the county's general operating deficit. ACT pointed out that when the previous state administration used TTF money to cover an operating deficit, Montgomery County residents were highly critical.

ACT warned that diverting money dedicated for Ride-On could make it harder for legislative delegates to win future funding of any kind.

Note: Ride-On has announced its final decision on the proposed service reductions. It appears most of the proposed service reductions will NOT occur except on the following routes:

- 30 and 36 will have no Saturday service.
- 37 will be reduced to 30 mins.
- 42 will be subsumed by route 34.
- 90 Saturday service span will be reduced by 2 hrs.
- 98 will have no Sunday service.
- 124 will be eliminated.
- 127 will only run on days when Montgomery College is in session.

TTI Congestion Report Shows the Benefit of Transit

APTA Press Release

"Congestion is a scourge on the United States wasting peoples' time and money; decreasing productivity; creating frustrating and uncertain business and personal travel plans; and lowering our quality of life," said American Public Transportation Association (APTA) President William W. Millar.

The new congestion report, *The 2007 Urban Mobility Report*, released today by the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI), is clear – public transportation stands out as a proven strategy that helps alleviate traffic congestion and saves energy. According to the report, in the 437 urban areas studied in 2005, public transportation saved 541 million hours in travel time and fuel usage would have been 340 million gallons greater. Without public transportation, congestion costs would have been \$10.2 billion more in that year.

The TTI report finds that in the largest urban areas, where transit is most available and used, the savings are the greatest, demonstrating the value of public transportation investment. *"We need more and*

better public transportation,” said Millar. “Unfortunately, public transportation is not readily available in all regions of the country. Only 53 percent of Americans say that they have access to any public transportation.”

Pointing out that even someone who never rides a bus or a train benefits from public transportation, Millar said, “A *comprehensive public transportation system is something that everyone should support in their community as it helps to reduce congestion and saves energy.*” “*Finally, we need to make a national commitment to improve all modes of transportation. America needs and deserves a world class transportation system.*”

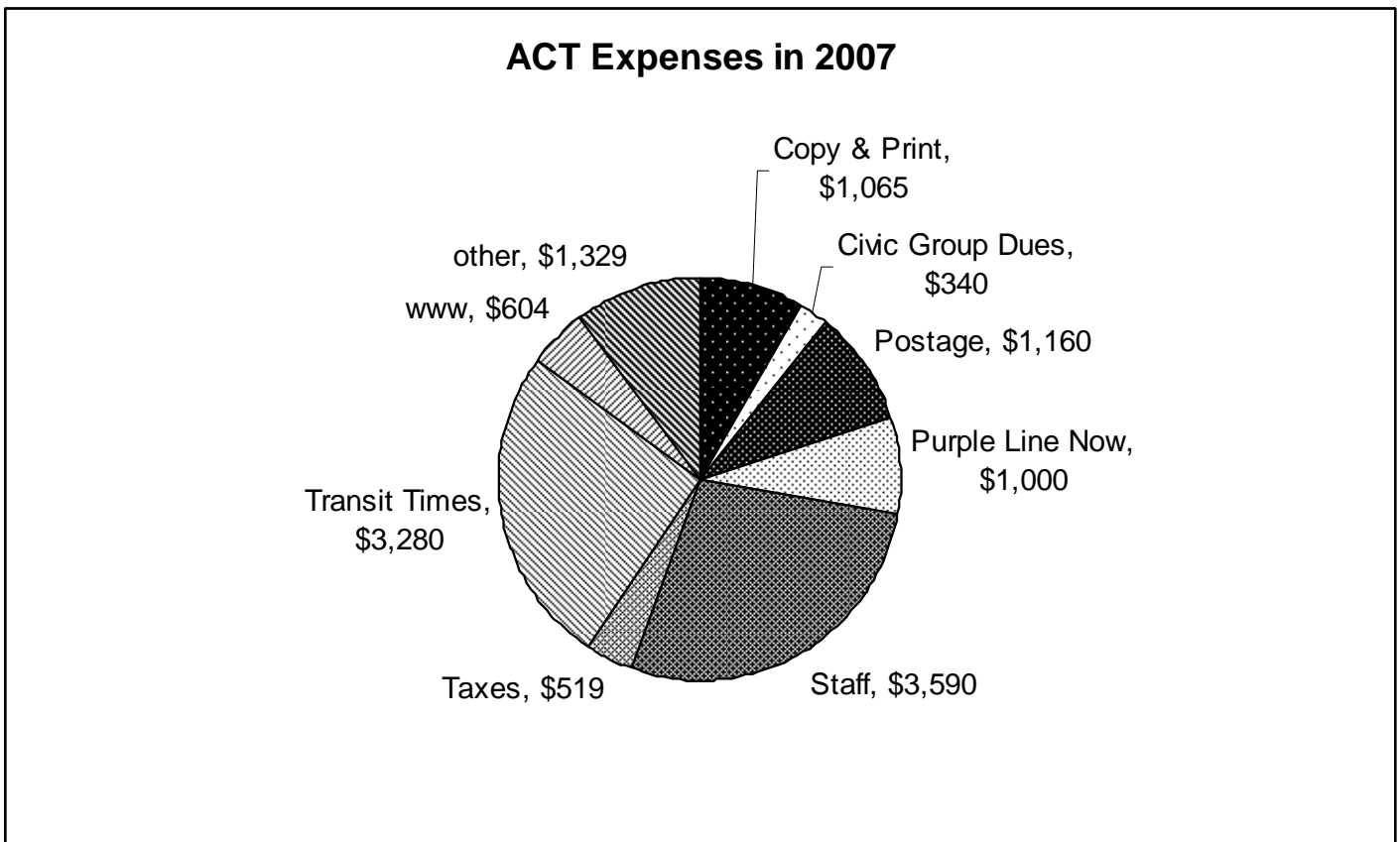
Congratulations

Congratulations to James Allen, co-chair of George's Advocates for Community-based Transportation, who received the Metropolitan Washington AFL-CIO's Political Action Award at their dinner on March 22.

Treasurer's Report for 2007

John Carroll

ACT started 2007 with \$9724 carried forward from the previous year. Our 2007 income came from dues: \$10,450, donations: \$1,840 and interest: \$6; for a total income of \$12,296. Expenses were \$12,887. We ended 2007 with \$9,133 in our account at Branch Bank & Trust. The chart below shows the distribution of expenses.



Volunteers in ACTion

Cindy Snow

It is an honor to be involved in an organization that has so many wonderful volunteers and supporters. Your willingness to help is impressive.

Thank you to all those who responded to our Action alert and wrote to the County Council to fund construction of the Bethesda Metro south entrance. We still have the final budget hurdle in May, but without your efforts, it might not even be on the list.

To our great envelope stuffing crew that is regularly put to work, I appreciate all your help.

I would also like to acknowledge the behind the scenes efforts of ACT Treasurer, John Carroll, who not only keeps the finances in order, he maintains the ACT database, keeping it updated, handles the dues renewals and sends out the monthly meeting reminders and Action Alerts. Kudos to John! He keeps things running smoothly.

Editorial Remarks

Your Transit Times editor is Quon Kwan. Cutoff date for receiving materials for the next publication is June 10. Send your materials to Quon at: siufung@erols.com or call him at: (h) 301-460-7454.

ACT Officers/Staff for 2008:

President: Ben Ross
 V. Pres.: Jim Clarke
 V. Pres.: Hans Riemer
 V. Pres.: Miriam Schoenbaum
 Secretary: Tracey Johnstone
 Treasurer: John Carroll
 Board Member: John Fay
 Board Member: Jason Waskey
 Program Chair: Neil Greene
 Staff Member: Cindy Snow
actfortransit@mail.org
 (note new email address)

FORWARDING SERVICE REQUESTED

Transit Times
 Action Committee for Transit, Inc.
 P.O. Box 7074
 Silver Spring, MD 20907

PRSR STD
 U.S. POSTAGE
 PAID
 SILVER SPRING, MD
 PERMIT # 1931