



ACTION COMMITTEE FOR TRANSIT

Transit Times

The Newsletter of the Action Committee for Transit of Montgomery County, Maryland
Volume 23, Number 1, January 2009

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.

Jan 13: Election of ACT Officers – see p. 8 for nominations. Come and vote; Wilber Smith Consultants - "Urban Transit Integration"

Feb 10: Rick Kiegel, Maryland Transit Administration Project Manager – "The Corridor Cities Transitway"

March 10: Speaker TBD

- ACT Comments on Transit-Oriented Development Zones (p. 4)
- Act Challenges County: Give Fast Buses Action, Not Lip Service (p. 5)
- MARC Service Cuts Announced (p. 5)
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- Transit Maps of the World (p. 7)

Last chance to comment on Purple Line

If you have not yet submitted your comment in favor of building the Purple Line as light rail, write immediately to:

purpleline@mtmaryland.com

Include your name and home address. Deadline is January 14.

Feature Articles

- ACT Joins Transportation for America (p. 1)
- Wealthy Chevy Chase Town Spends More to Keep Out Light Rail (p. 2)
- A Tale of Two Transit-Oriented Master Plans (p. 3)

ACT Joins Transportation for America

Quon Kwan

On September 22, 2008, Action Committee for Transit signed a partnership agreement with Transportation for America. Transportation for America is a growing and diverse coalition focused on creating a national transportation program that will take America into the 21st century by building a modernized infrastructure and healthy

It's Time to Renew Your ACT Membership

You can renew your membership or 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.

 Staff Member: Cindy Snow
actfortransit@mail.org

communities where people can live, work, and play. The coalition includes environmental, housing, public health, business, and urban planning organizations.

Partners to Transportation for America agree on a platform of reducing dependence on oil, making ample and affordable options available for housing and commuting, creating accessible, fair, and environmentally

sustainable communities, and spending government funds in a way that addresses the needs of all citizens.

The role of the partners is to provide media commentary, public remarks, or generate media coverage to support the platform, recruit additional partners, support local, state, and national calls to action, support the platform as the goal for transportation on local, state, and national scales, share contact information, disseminate the platform message, and dedicate resources to planning and execution of central Transportation for America strategies and tactics.

Wealthy Chevy Chase Town Spends More to Keep Out Light Rail

ACT Press Release of November 7, 2008

The Town of Chevy Chase approved additional lavish spending to fight the Purple Line, a proposed light rail line from New Carrollton to Bethesda, last night. The Purple Line would run along the affluent town's borders, on a county-owned right of way where a freight railroad ran 1905 - 1985.

The Town Council, at a monthly meeting, appropriated \$96,000 to hire the high-priced law firm of Sidley Austin, where partners charge \$400 to \$500 per hour. Sidley Austin has offered to donate some time "pro bono" to fight the transit line. "Pro bono" refers to time that lawyers give away free as charity. The Town will pay the \$96,000 after the free time is used up.

The town currently has an unbudgeted surplus of \$2 million dollars and is debating whether to send each household in the town a check between \$500 and \$2000. It is also paying \$434,000 to Sam Schwartz Engineering to oppose the light rail project.

"U.S. towns are scrambling to meet rising mass transit demands as the price of gas increases. The Town of Chevy Chase will be left in the dust," commented State Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk of District 21.

A Tale of Two Transit-Oriented Master Plans

Pamela Lindstrom

On the agenda of the Montgomery County Planning Board are two master plans for communities in the outer I-270 Corridor. Their circumstances differ, but both are using the prospect of the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) as the basis for major increases in development capacity. The two plans would test the ability of the CCT to serve as a framework for large scale development. They will also test the limits of how well the County Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance can delay development. The two plans also illustrate the wisdom of the CCT plan proposed by ACT - two separate spurs from Shady Grove, one going to Kentlands and the other offering fast, direct service to Germantown and Clarksburg.

- **Germantown** The Planning Board is working on a draft plan for the central corridor along I-270 and CCT, billed as a plan for economic rejuvenation of this area, which alone among I-270 Corridor locations has become a bedroom community for the rest. It has lots of affordable housing and few significant employment centers. The plan proposes to allow about 16.5 million square feet of employment space and thousands of new housing units around and between five presumed CCT stations, along a corridor over two miles long. The plan stresses the need for a visible Town Center near the intersection of Route 118 and I-270. This is the site of a current transit center which offers express bus service to Shady Grove Metro, the best current transit access of any place in Germantown.

The first draft plan gave lip service to its dependence on a high transit mode share. But the Staging Plan, which tells how development will be coordinated with new public facilities, included new roads but no transit. After ACT and others complained, the Board recently amended

the staging plan to require not only funds for constructing the CCT to Germantown, but also a 25% non-driver mode share for peak hour trips, up from the current 15%.

That would be good news except for.....

- **Gaithersburg West** While the Germantown plan is overly large for the north end of the I-270 Corridor, at least it conforms to the County's General Plan. That cannot be said for Gaithersburg West, far from the main axis of the I-270 Corridor, on the border with the green Wedge at Potomac. The staff proposes about 19 million square feet, more employment and housing than in downtown Bethesda. This is billed as the urbanizing of the County-sponsored Life Sciences Center, ala science cities in Japan and Singapore. Actually its core is a real estate venture by Johns Hopkins University (JHU), which wants to maximize return on about 150 acres it owns in the area.

The Gaithersburg West plan also relies on the CCT. JHU and County planners propose to add additional meanders to the route. The high development in this plan may boost CCT ridership in western Gaithersburg, but I am afraid it would increase the cost and lengthen the trip such that the CCT would never get to Germantown.

These plans illustrate the schizophrenic nature of the CCT. In Gaithersburg West, planners envision a slow transitway which offers local service to all the major developments in the area. But in Germantown planners want to treat the CCT as an efficient connection to Metro and beyond. ACT and others interested in good planning must continue to advocate for separating these functions: providing an efficient direct route from Shady Grove to Germantown and Clarksburg, and separately a local service in western Gaithersburg. Currently, the most cost-effective service for Germantown seems to be Maryland's plans for expanding MARC service.

- LATE BREAKING NEWS -

Ride-On has just proposed additional service cuts, to take effect this summer. Routes that will be affected include 4, 6, 18, 43, 63, 75, 82, 83, and 98.

ACT will be opposing these cuts - watch your email for more information.

ACT Comments on Transit-Oriented Development Zones

ACT President Ben Ross

The Montgomery County Planning Board recently proposed adding a new transit-oriented development zone to the zoning code. Initially, land would be put in this zone around the Twinbrook and White Flint Metro stations and along the proposed Corridor Cities Transitway in Germantown and the Shady Grove Life Sciences Center area. ACT commented on this proposal as follows:

The Action Committee for Transit is a strong advocate of transit-oriented development. One of the greatest obstacles to the county's efforts in this direction has been our automobile-oriented zoning code. Therefore, we endorse the concept of a new zone for transit-oriented mixed-use development. We are concerned, however, that the proposed zoning text amendment will not accomplish that goal. We have several concerns.

Lack of nexus to transit - *The greatest defect of the proposed zone is that the needed tie to transit is lacking. If the amendment is adopted as written, development will be allowed anywhere near a planned transit station, regardless of whether the transit station is likely to be built. Our county has a history of putting transit lines on planning maps and not building them. The North Bethesda Transitway is the most extreme example of this, but it is not the only one. We believe that optional method development should only be allowed to proceed within walking distance (1/2 to 3/4 mile) of a rail transit station that (1) is in operation or fully funded for construction, and (2) offers or will offer service with 15 minute headways at least 16 hours per day, seven days per week.*

We cannot support allowing development in this zone along so-called Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) lines because there is no clear distinction between BRT and a simple express bus. Allowing so-called transit-oriented

development near Bus Rapid Transit stations, especially BRT that is merely planned or shares traffic lanes with automobiles, would mean that a paper study of Bus Rapid Transit becomes a trigger for unchecked sprawl development.

Standard method development in the zone - *The proposed standard method development rules would allow suburban-type buildings that are inappropriate in a transit-oriented zone. The footprint of standard-method developments in this zone should be limited to one-third of the floor area. This would allow subsequent infill of the rest of the plot without the need to destroy the standard-method building.*

Minimum lot size - *There should not be a minimum lot size for mixed-use development. This is a very pernicious requirement that forces small local merchants to sell their property. This change goes hand-in-hand with allowing other amenities to be substituted for public-use-space requirements — a change that is needed in any case to abate the plague of street-deadening plazas that has done so much damage to the streetscapes of downtown Bethesda and Silver Spring.*

Parking - *The amendment applies the same parking requirements as in other zones. The parking rules in the current zoning code are utterly outdated, and they are especially pernicious when applied to transit-oriented development. The provision in the zoning text amendment is justified only on the assumption that the parking chapter of the zoning code will be thoroughly rewritten before development proceeds in the zone. But there has been little visible progress in rewriting the parking rules. We therefore recommend that the new zone have a sunset date beyond which the current parking rules will not apply in the zone.*

We urge you to make the necessary changes in this zoning text amendment. Without them, we fear that the zone will not accomplish its purpose.

Act Challenges County: Give Fast Buses Action, Not Lip Service

ACT President Ben Ross

With growing discussion of so-called "bus rapid transit" instead of rail on the Purple Line and Corridor Cities Transitway, ACT issued a challenge for immediate action to speed up bus travel.

The heart of the bus rapid transit concept is giving buses preferred ways to move on the roads so they travel faster than automobiles. But Montgomery County's current policy is to treat all vehicles the same in the operation of the roads. As a result, the County ends up moving single-occupant automobiles instead of moving people.

In a Dec. 7 letter to County Executive Leggett, ACT identified ten places where bus movement could be speeded up by changing light

cycles or restriping intersections. No cost is involved – if anything, the county would save money on bus drivers' salaries when buses sit at fewer red lights.

The common element of these changes is that buses get a higher priority than single occupant automobiles. The ACT letter pointed out that this represents an acid test of the county's willingness to alter its current no-bus-priority policy. Without such a policy change, the letter pointed out, any bus rapid transit plan is bound to fail.

Full text of the letter and the list of proposed changes is on ACT's website at www.actfortransit.org.

MARC Service Cuts Announced

Cindy Snow

In October, the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) announced proposed cuts to MARC commuter rail service. The cuts to the Brunswick Line, which runs through Montgomery County, are to the mid-day train and the late train to West Virginia, holiday service, and the popular ten-trip ticket.

Why is MARC service being cut? According to MTA, "*The sources of revenue that support the operation of MTA's MARC Train and Commuter Bus services have declined dramatically since the start of the fiscal year on July 1.*" In other words, revenue from gas taxes and vehicle title registrations has declined - which is a consequence of more commuters using transit. In addition, MTA employees have said that it was Governor O'Malley who decided on service cuts, rather than a fare increase, to make up the budget shortfall.

In response to this announcement, ACT president Ben Ross sent a letter to Governor

O'Malley opposing the cuts and pointing out the absurdity of this situation. "*It should be good news for everyone that people are driving less and using mass transit more. So it makes no sense that the Maryland Dept. of Transportation just announced that because people are driving less and buying less gasoline, there will be major cuts in service on the MARC trains and commuter buses that people are finally learning to use.*"

Led by Miriam Schoenbaum, ACT, in conjunction with Save Maryland Area Rail Transit (SMART), organized a leafleting of the MARC stations during the week of Nov. 10 to inform riders of the proposed cuts, the upcoming hearings on the cuts, and where to send comments. On Nov. 17 Ben Ross testified on ACT's position against the cuts at the Rockville hearing. The 16 hearings MTA held around the state were well-attended, with most people preferring a fare increase to service cuts. MARC was expected to announce a decision after the public comment period ended on December 26.

Thank You, Thank You ACT Volunteers. You are the best!!

ACT is lucky to have so many willing and hard working volunteers. We appreciate all your help with the Purple Line hearings and the Metro and MARC leafletings, even with the uncooperative weather.

Public Transportation's Contribution to Greenhouse Gas Reduction

Quon Kwan

This study was done by Scientific Applications International Corporation (SAIC) and funded by the Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP). The study addresses four questions:

1. How much net CO2 is transit saving in the U.S.?

Answer: Transit is a net CO2 reducer; saving 6.9 million metric tonnes in 2005 (all tonnes are metric tonnes -- one metric tonne is equivalent to 2,205 pounds).

If current transit riders drove cars, they would emit 16.2 million tonnes of CO2. Actual operation of public transit vehicles, however, resulted in only 12.3 million tonnes of these emissions. In addition, 340 million gallons of gasoline were saved through transit's decreased congestion, which reduced CO2 emissions by another 3.0 million tonnes. An additional 400,000 tonnes of greenhouse gases (GHG) were also avoided, including sulfur hexafluoride (SF6), hydrofluorocarbons (HFC), perfluorocarbons, and chlorofluoro-carbons (CFC). This study estimated the following benefits of transit in 2005 in reducing congestion and this nation's CO2 emissions in millions of tonnes:

CO2 from cars if no transit	16.2
<u>CO2 from transit</u>	<u>-12.3</u>
Net CO2 saved from transit	3.9

Additional CO2 saved from transit reduced congestion	+3.0
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Total CO2 savings from transit	6.9
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The above 6.9 million tonnes of CO2 savings exceeds the transportation CO2 emissions from the sparsely populated states like North Dakota (6.3 million tonnes) and a more densely populated state like Delaware (5.0 million tonnes),

2. How much more CO2 can be reduced by increasing transit ridership?

Answer: A solo commuter switching from a car to transit in a single day can reduce CO2 emissions by 20 pounds or 4,800 pounds in a year.

An average car emits about 1.0 pound of CO2 per mile. A car with a single person driven 20 miles round trip to work will emit 20 pounds of CO2. Thus, the savings by using existing transit instead would be about 20 pounds of CO2 per daily trip. Over the course of a year, a person could potentially reduce CO2 emissions by more than 4,800 pounds (at 240 days of transit travel per year). This represents slightly more than two tonnes of CO2 or about 10% of a two-car family household's carbon footprint of 22 tonnes per year. In contrast, weatherizing a home and adjusting the thermostat would save about 2,800 pounds of CO2. Other comparisons include replacing 5 incandescent bulbs with lower wattage compact fluorescent lamps (445 pounds of CO2 per year), or replacing an older freezer (335 pounds of CO2 per year.)

3. What can households do to save additional CO2?

Answer: Transit is effective in reducing household CO2 emissions and cost.

One of the most significant actions that households can take to reduce their carbon footprint is to use transit where available. The annual use of a car driven an average of 12,000 miles per year at an average 22.9 miles per gallon (MPG) emits 4.6 tonnes of CO2 per year. Households that have a sport utility vehicle (SUV) or light duty truck and drive an average of 14,500 miles per year at an average MPG of 16.2 emit 7.9 tonnes per year. The carbon footprint of a typical U.S. household is about 22 tonnes per year. Reducing the daily single-occupant car use with public transit can reduce a household's carbon footprint between 25-30%.

4. How does transit affect land use to result in positive benefits?

Answer: Transit provides many benefits beyond energy and CO2 savings.

Transit benefits us by supporting higher density land uses allowing for fewer vehicle miles of travel. While it is difficult to precisely measure this impact, a number of studies have tried to estimate the relationship between transit passenger miles and vehicle miles traveled (VMT) reduction as a proxy. The results are that VMT are reduced between 1.4 and 9 miles for every transit passenger mile traveled. The outcome would be more efficient use of roadways, reduced road maintenance, shorter highway commute times and reduced need for street as well as off-street parking.

SmarTrip Card Getting Even Smarter

John Carroll

On January 4th, Metro, RideOn and other regional operators will discontinue paper transfers in favor of full use of the SmarTrip Card.

The card has already made paying bus fares easier. Touching the card to the farebox makes the trip quicker for each and every rider. And riders have gotten a 10 cent discount for using the card.

Advantages in this next change include:

Boarding with SmarTrip will provide a 3 hour period to complete a trip. Paper transfers had a two hour life.

Litter is reduced. Hopefully fraud and anger aimed at bus drivers will be reduced.

Allow for faster boarding of buses, with fewer riders fumbling for change.

Transfers between bus and rail will get a 50 cent discount in both directions balancing the rail-to-bus and bus-to-rail savings and eliminating the previous paper rail-to-bus transfer.

Still, knowing that many riders have a problem with the initial 5 dollar outlay to purchase a card, Metro has given away thousands of cards through assistance agencies. And of course anyone can still pay cash.

Transit Maps of the World

Quon Kwan

In the Map Store in downtown Washington, DC (next to the Farragut West Metro Station), I came across a remarkable book, "Transit Maps of the World," and I bought it. Although it was originally published by Capital Transport Publishing in 2003 in Great Britain as "Metro Maps of the World," it has been expanded, and published by Penguin Books in 2007.

"Transit Maps of the World" is the first, and only comprehensive collection of urban rail transit maps. The only collection of urban rail transit maps from systems around the world that I have seen is on the second floor of Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Headquarters at the Jackson Graham Building, but the WMATA collection does not even come close to this book.

The author, Mark Ovenden, at 7 years old, with only a Tube map, left his grandparents and made it home alone, 10 miles across London. At the age of 12, he spent hours doodling fantasy extensions and didn't see how an entire new city could be built without regards to transit. He is motivated by a good map design to attract more riders as well as by aesthetics.

The book is clearly well endowed with brightly-colored graphics, befits a coffee-table browsing book, makes an excellent gift for the world traveler, and serves as a reference source for the graphics designer and map lovers. The book is divided into an introduction and six chapters.

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Action Committee for Transit, Inc.
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FORWARDING SERVICE REQUESTED

Thanks to ACTivists

John Carroll

ACT keeps an eye on the press. There were many letters in 2008 calling for safer streets and improved transit services across Montgomery County.

Here are some of the writers we noticed: Casey Anderson, George Barsky, Frankie Blackburn, Jean Buerger, Cynthia & Eric Cathcart, Mary Jo Danton, Judith Deitz, Gerald & Debbie Ehrenstein, Jon Elkind, Ruth Ellsworth, John Fay, Ruth Fort & Arthur Rowse, Ann & Greg Gagarin, Neil Greene, Carl Henn, Connie McKenna, Brigitta Mullican, Adam Pagnucco, S. Gregory Price, Howard Seltzer, Webb Smedley.

Thanks to all citizens who spoke out by attending a hearing or sending letters and messages. Government is taking notice of transit, bike & pedestrian issues. Thanks to everyone.

Editorial Remarks

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

ACT Officers Nominated for 2009:

President: Ben Ross
V. Pres.: Jim Clarke
V. Pres.: Hans Riemer
V. Pres.: Tina Slater
Secretary: Tracey Johnstone
Treasurer: John Carroll
Board Member: Cavan Wilk
Board Member: Jason Waskey
Non-voting ex officio board members:
Harry Sanders: Purple Line Now!
Webb Smedely: Purple Line Now!
Miriam Schoenbaum: SMART (MARC riders)
Come to the **Jan. 13** meeting ready to vote.
Nominations from the floor will be accepted.