

ACTION COMMITTEE FOR TRANSIT

Transit Times

The Newsletter of the Action Committee for Transit of Montgomery County, Maryland
Volume 23, Number 4, October 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.

Oct 13: Brian Murphy, Bombardier Transportation - LRT systems in North America

Nov 10: Alison Mosle, Federal Realty and the White Flint Partnership - The White Flint Master Plan

Dec 8: Speaker TBD

Feature Articles

- Governor O'Malley Announces Purple Line Locally Preferred Alternative (p. 1)
- A Celebration (p. 3)
- ACT's All-Transit Alternative for the I-270 Corridor (p. 4)
- Medical Center Metro - A New Entrance? (p. 6)
- Metrorail Trends Markets: A Synopsis of Recent Ridership Growth (p. 7)
- Metro's Next Bus (p. 8)

Governor O'Malley Announces Purple Line Locally Preferred Alternative

Press Release of August 4, 2009 from the State of Maryland, Office of the Governor

Governor Martin O'Malley announced today [at New Carrollton, MD] that the locally preferred alternative (LPA) for the Purple Line will consist of a light rail line operating along a 16-mile east-west corridor from Bethesda in Montgomery County to New Carrollton in Prince George's County. The project will now be submitted to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) under its "New Starts" process as the State seeks the approval to begin preliminary engineering and competes for federal funding for the \$1.5 billion project.

"The Purple Line will create a lasting legacy by providing more transportation capacity in a way that protects and preserves existing communities," said Governor O'Malley. *"This east-west light rail line will connect with Metro and MARC in a way that will help reduce our dependence on cars by providing a reliable and environmentally friendly transit option to connect people with their places of employment, places of worship, and centers of economic development throughout the region. This is the basis for our Smart, Green, and Growing initiative."*

"Governor O'Malley and I have made public transportation one of our top priorities because we understand that Maryland cannot continue to move forward if our neighbors are buried in gridlock," Lt. Governor Brown said.

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You can join ACT by remitting membership dues. Your membership dues are based on the category of membership that you choose:

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Send your check for the chosen category of membership to:

Action Committee for Transit
P.O. Box 7074
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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.

shuttle residents east and west through the Washington suburbs. It will connect people to opportunities. I applaud all the men and women who have shared our efforts to expand and improve public transportation and I look forward to traveling along this light rail in the near future to visit my friends in Silver Spring, in Bethesda and in New Carrollton."

"Moving forward on a light rail Purple Line is good news for thousands of Marylanders currently wasting time, money and gas in gridlock," said Senator Cardin, a member of the Senate Environment and Public Works Transportation Subcommittee. "The lack of affordable, convenient transportation choices connecting Maryland communities, along with Metro, MARC and Amtrak, has been frustrating for individuals and businesses throughout our region, but that is changing. As we begin to develop climate change legislation in the Senate, my number one priority will be to ensure that we make robust investments in public transit projects such as the Purple Line that will be good for our economy and good for our environment."

"The Purple Line is a critical project for Montgomery and Prince George's counties, and I intend to partner with my Congressional colleagues to ensure that it receives the federal funding it deserves. It is essential that this project be implemented in a manner that preserves the integrity of the Capital Crescent Trail and minimizes the impact on surrounding neighborhoods. I will work with Governor O'Malley and federal transportation officials to accomplish this goal," said Congressman Chris Van Hollen (D-MD).

The Purple Line LPA will be a pedestrian friendly system with a total of 21 stations proposed for the corridor that are projected to handle 64,800 boardings a day by 2030. On the eastern end, it will operate along the Montgomery County Master Plan Georgetown Branch alignment where innovative design techniques will be used to allow the trail and the Purple Line to coexist in a community-friendly-manner.

In Memory

ACT member Dan Parr passed away on September 9.

Dan was also Treasurer for the Coalition to Build the Inner Purple Line in 2003.

Our condolences go out to his family and friends.

“As a long-time champion of the Purple Line, I am excited that we are poised at the state and federal levels to make the Purple Line a reality,” said Rep. Donna F. Edwards. *“While this project will impact some more than others along the route, the Purple Line project will promote transit system connectivity and provide much-needed transportation options for the entire region. It will improve east to west transportation across the region, and will be a source of economic development for both Prince George’s and Montgomery Counties. I thank Governor O’Malley, Senator Cardin, and County Executives Leggett and Johnson for their ongoing commitment to the Purple Line Project.”*

The Purple Line LPA will largely run on the surface with one short tunnel section, one aerial section, and several underpasses and overpasses of busy roadways. It will operate mainly in dedicated or exclusive lanes, allowing for fast, reliable transit operations. The users of the Purple Line will generally access the line by foot, since it directly serves local communities, or by other transit services, particularly Metrorail and local bus services.

The planning for this project has included extensive public participation and the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) has worked with local community members to develop alternatives that provide the greatest benefits, while minimizing adverse impacts. The Purple Line alternative selected has the support of both Jack B. Johnson, County Executive for Prince George’s County and Isaiah Leggett, County Executive for Montgomery County. Support for the alternative also comes from both county councils, the mayors of many towns, and numerous legislators along the 16-mile corridor.

“Too much time is spent in the car each day going to and from work. This is lost time that could be spent with family and friends. The Purple Line will give commuters another mass transit option and shorten commute times, thus allowing people to spend less time away from their loved ones,” said Prince George’s County Executive Jack Johnson. *“Additionally, it will give us more opportunities to create mixed-used, transit-oriented development projects where our*

residents can live, work and have easy access to public transportation.”

The MTA will continue to work to address and mitigate concerns and issues raised by communities and citizens throughout the study process. Public outreach and agency coordination will continue to be an integral part of the development of the final environmental impact statement, providing opportunities for local residents and stakeholders to contribute to the planning and design of the project. With appropriate approvals and funding, construction could start in 2013 and service on the Purple Line could begin in 2016.

Governor O’Malley also announced today the preferred alternative for the Baltimore Red Line. The Red Line is a 14-mile, east-west light rail line that will extend from the Woodlawn area in Baltimore County to the Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Campus in east Baltimore City. It will provide convenient connections to the Metro Subway, the existing Light Rail system, MARC commuter trains and local bus routes to create a comprehensive regional transit network. Together, the Purple Line and the Red Line represent the next generation of transit in Maryland.

A Celebration

by John Carroll

23 years ago ACT was formed around the idea of preserving the eastern 4 miles of the abandon B&O Georgetown Branch for a transit corridor. In the early years one of ACT’s promotion projects involved pushing a railroad handcar with 4 rotary mowers welded on the front along the old tracks and picking up litter along the way. After a few years the tracks were removed to facilitate the interim trail but the scope of the rail & trail plan grew into the 16 mile, 21 station Purple Line which has been endorsed by Governor O’Malley. ACT paused, briefly, by dedicating the August meeting to a celebration of progress. Thank you to everyone who joined us, those that sent their congratulations and those that helped make this a reality.

ACT's All-Transit Alternative for the I-270 Corridor

Cindy Snow

Transit or Roads? "It's Your Choice." That's what the flyer says and that's what ACT is trying to provide to residents and commuters along the I-270 corridor – a choice. Currently the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) is studying and promoting a \$4 billion plan to widen and add toll lanes to I-270 between Shady Grove and Frederick. But ACT believes there is a better answer. A transit vision for the I-270 corridor would provide more and better transportation, do more for economic development, and be better for the environment.

In mid-September ACT started a leafleting campaign on MARC trains, at the Shady Grove and Rockville Metro's and the Lakeforest and Germantown Transit Centers. The flyers outline ACT's proposal and encourage folks to contact their county council or commissioners for Montgomery, Frederick and Washington Counties and ask them to include a study of the transit alternatives as part of the I-270 project. Volunteers were up in the wee hours of the morning distributing almost 10,000 flyers. Thank you volunteers and to everyone who responded to the ACTION Alert for I-270. You make things happen!

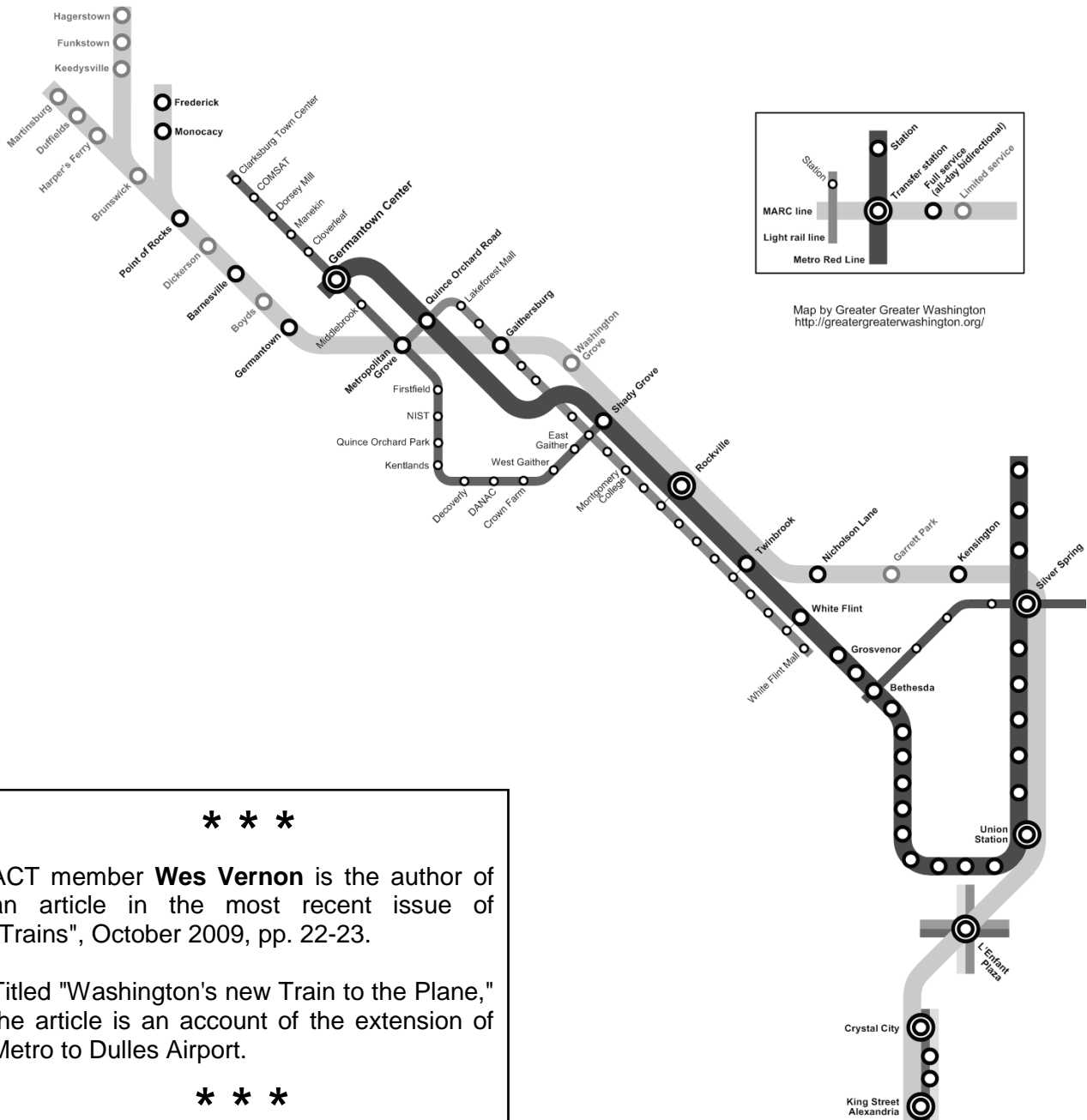
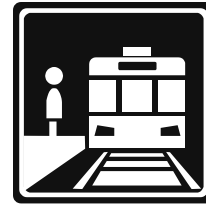
In addition, ACT has sent letters to the SHA, the Montgomery County Planning Board and the County Council asking them to consider the transit alternatives to road widening and include a study of these alternatives as part of the I-270 project.

We are making headway. On September 8, 2009 eighteen Montgomery County delegates signed a letter to Governor O'Malley, asking for a study of ACT's all-transit alternative for I-270. Thank you to Delegate Sheila Hixson (Dist. 20) for circulating the letter for the signatures. An identical letter from 4 senators (Frosh, Lenett, Madaleno, Raskin) was also sent. There have been articles about ACT's plan in the Frederick Post and the Baltimore Sun, as well as reports on WMAL, WTOP and Hagerstown TV 25.

Following is the plan, which ACT believes will provide much more transportation value for the same dollars than widening I-270. Widening a highway like I-270 creates more traffic that gets dumped onto other roads. A rail transit network gives people a way to avoid the traffic jams.

- Red Line to Germantown. A Metrorail extension along the I-370 and I-270 right of way from Shady Grove to an underground station within the Germantown town center, the first major expansion of the County's transit backbone, would be affordable based on the budget in the DEIS.
- MARC expansion. The Maryland Transit Administration developed the plan to expand MARC to an all day, both directions service several years ago, and we along with many residents and commuters are eager to see it implemented. The current MTA plan includes expanded all-day two-way service to Frederick with trains no more than 15 minutes apart in rush hour, at a cost of \$531 million. Our plan also includes a new MARC line to Hagerstown, using the partially abandoned right of way of the Washington County Branch of the B&O Railroad. Rail service will contribute to the revitalization of Hagerstown as an urban center.
- Route 355 as a multimodal urban boulevard. Master plans from downtown Bethesda to Gaithersburg foresee Route 355 as the main axis of the County's primary urban development corridor. Surface transit with dedicated roadway right-of-way light rail along this axis is clearly needed to supplement Metro as far as Gaithersburg. Our plan includes not only light rail, but also rebuilding the roadway as an attractive European-style boulevard, along the lines recommended by the White Flint Partnership, Rockville's plans for its downtown, and Gaithersburg's plan for Frederick Avenue. Such transit is also recommended in the Germantown master plan to serve the much-traveled route between eastern Germantown and the lower Corridor Cities.

- The Corridor Cities Transitway is included as light rail. It is also extended to Clarksburg Town Center, fulfilling the promise of a transit-oriented town made to the residents of that community. Making the CCT part of a comprehensive plan, with connections at Germantown and Metropolitan Grove, will greatly enhance its usability and ridership, and increase the chances of having it funded as light rail.



* * *

ACT member **Wes Vernon** is the author of an article in the most recent issue of "Trains", October 2009, pp. 22-23.

Titled "Washington's new Train to the Plane," the article is an account of the extension of Metro to Dulles Airport.

* * *

Medical Center Metro - A New Entrance?

Cindy Snow

At the March 10, 2009 membership meeting, ACT members were given a presentation by Sara Benson and Robin McElhenny-Smith of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) on the Medical Center Station Access Improvement Study. With the implementation of the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process, activity at the Medical Center Metro is going to increase and improvements are going to need to be made to accommodate pedestrian access from the Metro/Bus area on west side of Rt. 355 to the new Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (currently National Naval Medical Center (NNMC)) on the east side of Rt. 355. The WMATA study was undertaken to address this need.

Five alternatives were chosen in this study: a No Build alternative that just provides minor access improvements, Deep Elevators on the east side of Rt. 355 that is basically a new entrance to the Medical Center station on the east side of Rt. 355, a Shallow Tunnel under Rt. 355 for pedestrians, a combination of Deep Elevators & Shallow Tunnel, and a Pedestrian Bridge over Rt. 355. ACT supports the Deep Elevators (new Metro entrance) as the best alternative.

In July 2009 the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOCG) adopted a *RESOLUTION APPROVING THE SUBMISSION OF A NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION PRIORITY BUS APPLICATION FOR FUNDING UNDER THE TRANSPORTATION INVESTMENTS GENERATING ECONOMIC RECOVERY (TIGER) COMPETITIVE GRANT PROGRAM OF THE AMERICAN RECOVERY AND REINVESTMENT ACT (ARRA)*. There were six project areas listed as part of the Resolution, including "Metrorail Station Enhancements and Transit Centers, which listed "Creation of a pedestrian tunnel under MD-355 at Medical Center Metrorail station" as a component. However, this left out the possibility for a new entrance for the station. ACT President Ben Ross sent a letter to County Council President

Phil Andrews about our concern with this limitation on the options. Thanks goes to Marc Elrich, Montgomery County Council representative on MWCOCG's Transportation Planning Board (TPB), who made an amendment to the Resolution so that it does not specify which option will be selected (pedestrian tunnel or new Metro entrance). Thanks also goes to Councilmembers Duchy Trachtenberg and Nancy Floreen for their assistance.

But the issue of the Medical Center station access improvement doesn't end there. When County Executive Isiah Leggett submitted the TIGER grant application, titled "The Bethesda BRAC Multi-Modal Traffic Mitigation and Pedestrian Access Project," on September 15, 2009 for Medical Center, a new, unknown and confidential option was submitted for funding. The request for constructing "a level ADA-compliant underpass below Rockville Pike that connects the Metro Station and the NNMC campus" also notes that with "the consent of the Navy and NIH, the footprint of the pedestrian underpass can be used in the future as a grade-separated vehicular roadway with a sidewalk and a bikeway to provide a direct connection between NNMC and NIH for emergency vehicles carrying doctors and patients, as well as pedestrians and cyclists. Short access roads would enable convenient vehicular ingress and egress for NNMC and NIH personnel while eliminating a gridlock-producing traffic signal."

This is a far cry from the simple pedestrian tunnel proposed by WMATA and the grant application does not include the new Metro entrance option. In addition, as the new plan is labeled "CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS INFORMATION," there is no information about the plan provided to the public. There is some concern that this move by the County Executive is a back door way to accommodate auto travel under the guise of pedestrian access. On September 21, 2009, on behalf of ACT, Ben Ross wrote a letter to the US Office of the Secretary of Transportation under the Freedom of Information Act, requesting a copy of the TIGER Grant Application submitted by the County, including the redacted pages. That is where we stand at the moment and the rest is to be continued.....

From the 88th Annual Transportation Research Board (TRB) Meeting, January 11-15, 2009 in Washington, DC, there is one paper that will fascinate ACT readers: *Metrorail Trends Markets: A Synopsis of Recent Ridership Growth*. The following is a summary of that paper.

Metrorail Trends Markets: A Synopsis of Recent Ridership Growth

Abstracted from TRB Paper 09-2645 by Quon Kwan

Wendy Jia, Senior Planner, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) authored this paper about the characteristics associated with recent ridership growth. WMATA operates the second busiest heavy rail transit system in the U.S. serving 3.5 million people in 1500 square-miles.

Generally, ridership growth in the past followed Metrorail expansion. However, even after the last Metrorail line (Green Line) opened in 2001, growth in daily ridership averaged 3% a year in 2002-2007. What is amazing is that although the total number of trips [all modes] into the core of Washington, DC dropped by 24,100, trips on Metrorail into the core rose by 7000 in 2002-2007.

In particular, DC showed solid growth in Metrorail use with a jump of 17% in contrast to jumps of 8% in Maryland and 4% in Virginia in 2002-2007. Metrorail use by DC residents grew in spite of the population growing slower in DC and faster in the suburbs of Maryland and Virginia in 2002-2007.

Metrorail's three busiest stations – Gallery Place, Metro Center, and Union Station – manifested a 33% rise in boardings by DC residents. Areas around these stations are becoming new urban living and activity centers, with more residential building development, bustling retailers and restaurants, and a popular sports and entertainment arena.

Corridors along the Metrorail Green and Yellow Lines have grown the highest of the entire system, led by Columbia Heights, Gallery Place, and U Street. Within ½ mile from the Columbia Heights and U Street stations is the highest population density of the entire system (>21 households/acre in 2005).

The unusually rapid growth in non-work trips occurs in the evening. Trips during this time period were to retail, entertainment, and recreational activity centers – including a new ballpark. Non-work growth is important with respect to operational efficiency in that it utilizes excess capacity in the counterflow direction. The top 10 evening destinations by Metrorail station (in descending order) follow: Dupont Circle, Gallery Place, Metro Center, Foggy Bottom, Pentagon City, Union Station, Silver Spring, Tenleytown, Farragut North, and Bethesda. These stations captured about 40% of all evening non-work trips.

Another remarkable ridership growth was found occurring on weekends. Ridership grew 7% on Saturdays and 15% on Sundays, as compared to 3% on weekdays. The top three weekend destinations by Metrorail station (in descending order) follow: Navy Yard, Gallery Place, and Columbia Heights. Navy Yard has the Nationals Ballpark. Gallery Place has the Verizon Center (i.e., Wizards basketball games and entertainment events) and the Shakespeare Theatre. Columbia Heights has the first Target store in DC.

Growth in non-automobile access to Metrorail is impressive. Access to Metrorail by bicycle grew the highest, 60%, among all non-auto access modes in 2002-2007. Access by Metrobus grew the second highest, 26%, among non-auto access modes. Pentagon Station, with the largest transfer station in the system, experiences 83% access by bus. Access by walking rose 18%, surpassing park-and-ride as the top access mode. Ten Metrorail stations in DC and one in Arlington have the highest number of walking in the system with > 80% of riders walking. Access by park-and-ride to Metrorail dropped 1%.

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8

Transit Times, vol. 23, no. 4, October 2009

Metro's Next Bus

John Carroll

Often wonder if it is faster to walk or wait for the Next Bus? A phone with a browser can help you decide, but practice at home first. I went to http://www.wmata.com/rider_tools/nextbus/arrivals.cfm to try Metro's Next Bus system.

Next Bus is better than a printed schedule because it is real-time. It knows where your stop is based on the bus stop number or the crossroads you give it. It knows where the buses actually are via GPS. It is accurate within a minute.

After getting familiar with the application, I put the url with some of my favorite stops on my PDA browser. On Georgia Ave, where several routes serve, Next Bus tells me all of the choices going my way. I recommend Next Bus.

[Note: Next Bus information can also be gotten on a web-enabled cell phone at <http://www.wmata.com/mobile/> or by calling (202) 637-7000, which can be found on each Next Bus sign.]

Editorial Remarks

Your Transit Times editor is Quon Kwan. Cutoff date for receiving materials for the next publication is **December 8**. Send your materials to Quon at: qykwan@gmail.com or call him at: (h) 301-460-7454.

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