



## **ACTION COMMITTEE FOR TRANSIT**

# **Transit Times**

The Newsletter of the Action Committee for Transit of Montgomery County, Maryland  
Volume 29, Number 1, January 2015

ACT's monthly meetings are held at the Silver Spring Civic Building, One Veterans Place 20910, in the Ellsworth Room at 7:30 PM, the second Tuesday of each month.

The Silver Spring Civic Building is located at the corner of Fenton St & Ellsworth Dr. It is an eight minute walk north from the Silver Spring Metro Station. The nearest bus routes are: Ride-On routes #9, #12, #15, #16, #17, #19 and #20; and, Metrobus routes Z6 and Z8.

Parking is available at the Town Square Garage just across Ellsworth Dr from the Civic Building; it is free after 6:00pm.

For meeting updates check our website listed on pg 2.

Jan 13: Annual Meeting & Election of ACT Officers - see p. 8 for nominations - Come and Vote; Speaker: David Alpert, Greater Greater Washington blog

Feb 10: Speaker TBD

March 10: Speaker TBD

*In Case of Inclement Weather - if the Silver Spring Civic Building is closed, the meeting is canceled. A notice will be posted on the ACT website if this is the case. Please check the website before going to the meeting, if the weather is questionable.*

### **Feature Articles**

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### **FIRST, THE GOOD NEWS**

#### **Purple Line OK'd for Start of Engineering Phase**

Quon Kwan

On August 28, 2014 the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) notified the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) that the Purple Line project may advance to the engineering phase of the New Starts grant program. Entry into the New Starts engineering phase is the final milestone required before FTA signs the Full Funding Grant Agreement for the Purple Line. With this achievement, MTA can start to incur costs that are eligible for federal reimbursement. Construction of the Purple Line is slated to begin in 2015.

### **NOW, THE BAD NEWS . . . .**

## It's Time to Renew Your ACT Membership

You can renew 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)]  
 \$100 [engineer (code E on mail label)]

[the two digits after your category of membership code indicates year paid]

**Join/Renew online at our website**, or 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](http://www.actfortransit.org)

[www.twitter.com/actfortransit](http://www.twitter.com/actfortransit)

[www.facebook.com/actfortransit](http://www.facebook.com/actfortransit)

You may also give your membership dues to Treasurer John Fay 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.

ACT has been attempting to obtain public information from the Town of Chevy Chase relating to the Purple Line. Baker Hostetler has agreed to provide legal counsel on a *pro bono* basis regarding ACT's attempts to obtain public information from the Town of Chevy Chase.

## ... Action Needed to Save the Purple Line

Some of you may have received an email Action Alert request from ACT, and possibly other groups, in December. We thank all of you who have responded. If you haven't followed up on the request, it is NOT too late. If you did not get the Action Alert, we encourage you to take action now! Here is the request:

*Dear Purple Line supporter:*

*The Purple Line is again in grave danger -- at the very moment when it is about to begin construction.*

*Governor-elect Larry Hogan says he might halt work on this urgently needed transit line and use the money to build roads instead.*

*Write now to the Governor-Elect at [info@hogantransition.com](mailto:info@hogantransition.com) and urge him to build the Purple Line without delay.*

*Tell him that --*

*Maryland will lose thousands of jobs in construction and future growth if we don't build the Purple Line now. The new Silver Line has four stations in Tysons Corner because Virginia understood the economic importance of rail transit; Maryland must not fall behind. Businesses and commuters are counting on the state to keep the commitments it has made and go forward with the Purple Line.*

*Please write immediately to [info@hogantransition.com](mailto:info@hogantransition.com). And forward this email to your friends and neighbors so they can join in this crucial effort.*

*If you can do one more thing for the Purple Line, ACT needs your financial help to continue our campaign. Please make a special contribution now. You can donate online at our [website](http://www.actfortransit.org), or send a check to PO Box 7074, Silver Spring MD 20907.*

## Silver Line Phase 2 Gets New Project Manager and TIFIA Loan

Quon Kwan

On August 8, 2014, the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority announced the appointment of Charles Stark as the project manager for construction of Phase 2 of the Silver Line. Stark replaced Pat Nowakowski, who resigned in April 2014 after five years as the project manager for construction of Phase I of the Silver Line. Nowakowski left to become President of the New York Long Island Railroad. Nowakowski was more experienced in management of transit operations than of construction.

Stark is highly experienced in management of rail construction mega-projects. As Vice-President and Project Manager for Aecom, he helped start up the heavy rail (Westside Subway Extension) in Los Angeles. Previously, he worked for two transit agencies: he was Executive Officer for Engineering and Construction at the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority and Assistant General Manager of San Francisco's Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BART). He also has held a number of other positions, including leadership of a team involved in rebuilding New York's World Trade Center complex and its rail transit facilities following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. He began his career as field engineer in General Electric's rail car division.

Phase 2 of the Silver Line will begin at the Wiehle Avenue Reston East Station, where Phase 1 ended. Phase 2 includes construction of 11.4 miles of track to Route 772 in eastern Loudoun County, VA, six new stations -- Reston Town Center, Herndon, Innovation Center, Washington Dulles International Airport, Route 606 and Route 772, and a new Service and Inspection Yard at Dulles International. After Phase 2, the Silver Line is expected to serve approximately 85,700 daily riders by 2030.

On August 20, 2014 U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx announced the award of a \$1.28 billion Transportation Infrastructure Financial Innovation Act (TIFIA) loan to the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority

(MWA) for construction of Phase 2 of the Metrorail Silver Line extension. The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) will take over operation of the rail line when construction is completed.

The TIFIA loan for Phase 2 of the Silver Line extension to Loudoun County represents the largest TIFIA assistance for a single project so far. The TIFIA credit program is designed to fill market gaps and leverage substantial non-federal investments. Each dollar of federal funding can provide up to \$10 in TIFIA credit assistance and support up to \$30 in transportation infrastructure investment. Since its launch, the TIFIA program has helped 46 projects turn almost \$18.5 billion in U.S. DOT assistance into more than \$69.5 billion in infrastructure investment across America.

### Montgomery County Planning Speaker Series Examines Past and Future Planning of Montgomery County

The series called "[A Once and Future County: Lessons on How Planning Politics Shaped Montgomery County](#)" hosted and presented by Royce Hanson, former chairman of the County's Planning Board includes panel discussions among regional planning experts and question-and-answer sessions with attendees. Topics will reflect the subject of Hanson's soon-to-be published book: *Suburb: Planning Politics and the Public Interest in Montgomery County 1910-2010*.

The Series is held from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m. at the County's Planning Department headquarters, 8787 Georgia Ave, Silver Spring, MD. These events are free to the public and will be streamed online live. Videos of past and upcoming session can be viewed at <http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/>.

The next session will be held on Wednesday, January 14, 2015: "Trials and Errors of Corridor Cities Planning," which focuses on the planning politics and development in the Rockville-Gaithersburg area, the challenges of a new town in Germantown, and the planning and development of Clarksburg.

The last two sessions are February 11: "Creating and Sustaining the County's Agricultural Reserve" and March 11: "Hunting the Snark: Growth Policy and the Public Interest".

## Metroway – the First Dedicated Bus-Only Lanes in the Region

Quon Kwan

On August 24, 2014, Metroway was launched as a new premium Metrobus service. Metroway is the first transit bus service in the Washington, DC region to operate on dedicated bus-only lanes. These special lanes are on the most congested part of U.S. 1 between Potomac Ave. to E. Glebe Rd. Metroway replaced Metrobus Route 9S and serves riders between the Braddock Road and Crystal City Metrorail stations in the Crystal City/Potomac Yard (CCPY) Corridor.

Concomitant with the inauguration of Metroway also was the introduction of new late night service and new weekend service in that corridor. The new Saturday and Sunday service account for almost 500 trips. As a result, ridership has increased by 30 percent without other nearby bus routes seeing a decline in ridership. The ridership increase points to a new transit market in the previously under-served Potomac Yard area.

Metroway resulted as a partnership among the City of Alexandria, Arlington County, and Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), The City of Alexandria and Arlington County jointly constructed the dedicated bus-only lanes to support residential and job growth in the area. The two jurisdictions also optimized traffic signals in order to minimize the wait time for traffic at intersections and to ensure buses on the dedicated bus-only lanes maintain their schedule.

WMATA furnished new buses with the unique Metroway branding that differentiates it from other transit service. The new buses have larger windows and the exterior of the buses are branded by unique blue and white colors, appearing with a series of ascending arrows. The



buses are also accessible and can accommodate bicycles.

Fares on Metroway buses are the same as the standard Metrobus fares, including transfers and discounts. When the full service premieres in 2015, Metroway will feature off-board payment that will speed the trip even more. Riders will pay their fares prior to boarding the bus using fare machines found at each Metroway station. With off-board fare payment, riders may board any door on Metroway buses. Fares can be paid for using a SmarTrip® card, credit card, or coins. Fare machines will not accept bills. Besides the off-board fare collection, opening in 2015 are (1) extension of dedicated bus-only lanes from S. Glebe Road in Arlington to Pentagon City Metrorail Station, (2) new Metroway stations at 33rd & Crystal Dr. in Arlington, and Fayette St. in Alexandria, and (3) real-time bus arrival displays at Metroway stations.

Generally, Metroway buses run every 12 minutes along the full route. During rush hours, two Metroway routes overlap providing a bus every six minutes between Crystal City Metro and S. Glebe Road. On the weekends, buses on Metroway run every 20 minutes. The operating hours of buses on Metroway are Monday - Thursday: 5:30 AM – 10:00 PM, Friday: 5:30 AM – 12:00 AM, Saturday: 6:30 AM - 12:00 AM, and Sunday: 7:30 a.m. - 10:00 p.m.

Over \$20 million was invested in the Alexandria portion of the Metroway. The Federal Transit Administration contributed over \$14 million in grant funds, including an \$8.5 million Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant. The TIGER grant for Metroway was part of a regional grant awarded to the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments' National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board to enhance transit bus service along priority corridors.

Metroway is a harbinger of what authentic bus rapid transit will look like if and when it gets implemented in Montgomery County. Bus rapid transit without dedicated lanes simply does not do any better than conventional bus transit, which gets stuck in the same rush-hour traffic as single-occupant automobiles.

## Call for Innovative Leadership at MCDOT

Ben Ross

ACT joined with an unusually broad spectrum of organizations -- the County Chamber of Commerce, the Association of Realtors, the Sierra Club, and the Washington Area Bicycle Association -- in a call for innovative leadership at the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT).

A joint letter to County Executive Leggett, sent December 23, said that *"MCDOT needs a visionary leader with the skill set to implement innovation. New York, Chicago, and the District of Columbia have shown how strong leadership can bring transformation."*

The letter explained that *"Flexible, context-sensitive design should replace by-the-book engineering especially in urbanizing parts of the County where space constraints affect easements, access and design. Problems should be solved whenever possible with creativity focused on results rather than time-consuming studies."*

Full text of the [letter](#) is on the ACT website, [www.actfortransit.org](http://www.actfortransit.org).

### IN MEMORIAM

We are saddened to note that long time ACT member **George Painter** passed away in November. George was the first public advocate for the Purple Line in the Town of Chevy Chase. He lived across the street from the right-of-way on Elm Street and was interviewed as a supporter in the *Washington Post* at that time. He continued to actively support the project until his health declined in the last five years.

## Book Review: *RAILTOWN: The Fight for the Los Angeles Metro Rail and the Future of the City*

Quon Kwan

This 292-page book was published in early 2014 by the University of California Press. The author is Ethan Elkind, a lawyer with a focus on history, who researches environmental law and policy. He is Associate Director of the Climate Change and Business Program at the Schools of Law of the University of California at Berkeley and at Los Angeles (LA). The book is about the re-emergence of rail transit against overwhelming odds in car-dominated LA. We say "re-emergence" because the greater LA area had the world's largest mass rail transit system (over 1000 miles of track) before it was dismantled 1926-1946 by the conspiracy of General Motors, Mack Truck, Firestone Tire, Standard Oil and Phillips Petroleum (see "Taken for a Ride" a film at <http://www.pbs.org/pov/takenforaride>).

Chapter 1 starts with a campaign promise of soon-to-be-Mayor Tom Bradley in 1973 to start building a rapid transit system within 18 months of taking office. He called LA, smarting from smog, traffic, and high gas prices, *"last of the great cities of the world to secure an underground rapid transit system."* To cash in on Federal grants for transit projects, Bradley campaigned for a sales tax to raise money for the local share to match a grant. The effort proved futile. Although Bradley gained an ally, Baxter Ward, a news anchorman elected to the LA County Board of Supervisors, Bradley and Ward wrangled over locating the starter line. By 1976, LA missed the heyday of easy Federal grants, losing its share to the less populous Miami, Atlanta, Buffalo, and Baltimore. Roger Snoble, former Chief Executive Officer of LA County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (hereinafter called the transit agency), chuckled, *"We used to laugh all the time at LA when I was in Dallas, that LA couldn't get its act together so we'd come in and grab the money."*

Chapter 2 describes LA County Supervisor Kenneth Hahn's achievement in 1980 -- what Bradley and Ward could not do in 1974

and 1976. Hahn succeeded in passing a sales tax for transit. This event includes one of the biggest ironies in history – pro-transit, gutless politicians who at the last minute are tempted to oppose the tax for fear of losing face should the tax fail.

Chapter 3 continues with Hahn's championing of a starter route for a light rail line between LA and Long Beach (the second largest city in LA County). Hahn was inspired after his visit to see the San Diego – Tijuana light rail, built with only local funds. The LA – Long Beach light rail, to be built only with local funds, would run along a former Pacific Electric rail right-of-way. The bureaucratic squabbling over routing of this light rail line at both ends – i.e., through both downtown LA and downtown Long Beach delayed the project for years. Targeted to open for the 1984 Olympics, groundbreaking did not occur until 1985, and the line did not open until 1990. This light rail line now has the highest light rail ridership in the U.S.

Building this light rail line also reveals how cities can extort concessions from the transit agency over infrastructure costs that should be borne by the cities themselves – not the transit agencies, inflating the costs of the light rail project. It also shows how politicians favor their own constituents over the good of the region. In particular, the subway along Wilshire Blvd. should have been higher priority than the LA–Long Beach light rail line because the Wilshire corridor is much denser. It has the fifth highest population density in the U.S. (akin to Manhattan at 15,000 people/square mile). However, the light rail line – not the Wilshire subway – runs through Hahn's district. Nevertheless, Hahn shows how a forceful politician, assembling a powerful coalition, can bring rail to his district.

Chapter 4 contrasts Hahn with Henry Waxman, a Congressman who stops LA's "Subway to the Sea," which would serve the Wilshire corridor. Waxman's Jewish constituents were concerned about gentrification of Fairfax Ave from the subway. Moreover, well-heeled Beverly Hills and Hancock residents in Waxman's district opposed the subway. Waxman used the facade of safety (a methane gas explosion occurred near the subway route) to pass a law in

1985 banning Federal funds for the subway in his district. The ban ignored the expert testimony of Byron Ishkanian, a state geological engineer. Not until 2007 did Waxman host a bill, which Congress passed, to lift the ban.

What happened when the subway along the Wilshire corridor was stopped is the topic of Chapter 5. With a stub of the subway at Western and Wilshire, politicians and planners took advantage of Waxman's ban by diverting the subway via Hollywood (opened in 1999) to North Hollywood (opened in 2000). These areas are no less worthy of a subway. In the diverted route, the subway serves Koreatown, LA City College, Kaiser Permanente Medical Complex, Hollywood Presbyterian Medical Center, Children's Hospital of LA, Hollywood "Walk of Stars", the theatre district [from Pantage's to Grauman's Chinese Theater], and Universal Studios and its "City Walk." The subway diversion to North Hollywood also plays a part in appeasing the San Fernando Valley, which for many reasons wanted to secede from LA. Building the Metro Orange Line bus rapid transit busway, where light rail is now justified, is also part of that appeasement.

The story of the Gold light rail line from Pasadena to Azusa is another example of how local politicians favor their constituents over the good of the region. The story of the Expo light rail line from LA to Santa Monica via Culver City is a story of the transit advocates, "Friends4Expo," spearheaded by Darrell Clarke (like our late Harry Sanders) as well as a story of sparring with wealthy "Not In My Back Yarders (NIMBYs)" (like our Chevy Chase). It tells how going to a community meeting on the light rail project can be more life-threatening, sardonically, than going to a crime-infested neighborhood. The story of the Green light rail line between Norwalk and Redondo Beach has two parts: (1) a fight of South Central LA residents against the Century Freeway [the last freeway to be built in LA.] and (2) how good intentions ended up bad (or how the Green line bypassed LAX International Airport.)

There are other dramatic clashes fought to get LA rail transit built: One is the clash with the raucous pro-bus, anti-rail groups (i.e., Bus Riders Union and Labor/Community Strategy

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Center which hired, of all attorneys, the Natural Resources Defense Council). See the book to find out Roger Snoble's eloquent rejoinder to these groups. Another clash was mistrust of the transit agency leading to *ad hoc* construction agencies solely for building the Gold and Expo light rail lines. A third clash was over bad publicity from a fire and sinkholes during subway construction resulting in a 1998 ban on local funds for transit tunneling. A fourth clash was over buying Japanese-made railcars: there were no complaints until the 1990's economic downturn caused the transit agency to confront xenophobia. A bigger battle was achieving financial stability at the transit agency, the work of corporate turnaround genius Julian Burke. The biggest battle was passing Measure R, (see "LA Mayor Villaragoisa Sets Example for Champion of Public Transit" in *Transit Times*, v. 25, n. 1, January 2011).

Today, the LA Metro Rail system consists of 18.6 miles of heavy rail subway and 69 miles of light rail serving 350,000 riders. This does not include 512 miles of Metrolink, the commuter rail provider, connecting 22,000 riders in five counties. Under construction are nine miles of heavy rail (extending the "Subway to the Sea" under Wilshire Blvd. from the Western Ave. stub to Westwood Village. Also under construction are 28.5 miles of light rail. These are projects supported by Measure R. Mayor Bradley's 1973 vision is taking shape in spite of the many battles. In fact, the reader can find in the book almost every battle that was ever fought over a rail transit project in the U.S.; it took place in LA.

## Thanksgiving Parade Wrap-up

Kathy Jentz

ACT once again participated in the Montgomery County Thanksgiving Parade, a holiday celebration in downtown Silver Spring. (We previously marched in 2005 and 2013.) More than 30 ACT members and friends (and one friendly dog) gathered on Ellsworth Avenue. All wore purple clothing and scarves. Some formed the Purple Line in a chain of stations spelled out on cards mounted on a long scarf. Others became the Purple Line inside a light-rail-shaped costume. The rest of the participants roamed freely giving out purple foil-wrapped Hershey's Kisses and ACT stickers to the viewing crowds along the one-mile route. The "Purple Line Now" chant was led by the booming voice of Ralph Bennett and several children wore purple capes with a super "P" on their chests.

The parade was shown live on NewsChannel 8 and was rebroadcast on Thanksgiving Day. The ACT group was able to get extra air-time by arriving at the reviewing stand just before a commercial break and by sharing some Hershey's Kisses with the television hosts.

The crowd reception to the ACT unit was overwhelmingly positive with many waves and shouts of "we love the Purple Line!" The ACT board expects to join in other community parades next year, perhaps, including the Rockville Memorial Day event. ACT member suggestions and participation in future events are welcome and encouraged.

### 2014 Parade Crew

Photo by Kathy Jentz



# Transit Times

Action Committee for Transit, Inc.  
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## 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](mailto:qykwan@gmail.com) or call him at: (h) 301-460-7454.

## Fenton Street Market "Art with Transit" - Oct. 18



Photo by Ronit Dancis

## Nominations for 2015 ACT Officers

ACT Nominating Committee Report

The ACT Nominations Committee proposes the following candidates as ACT Officers for 2015. **Come to the January 13 meeting ready to vote. Other nominations may be made at the meeting:**

President: Nick Brand  
V. Pres (campaigns): Ronit Dancis  
V. Pres (legislative): Jim Clarke  
V. Pres (land use): Dan Reed  
Secretary: Tracey Johnstone  
Treasurer: Dave Anderson  
Board Member: Tina Slater

Non-Voting ex officio board members:

Ralph Bennett: Purple Line Now!  
Sareana Kimia: Student Rep  
Wendy Leibowitz: Safe Walk to School  
Ben Ross: Program Chair  
Miriam Schoenbaum: Upcounty & MARC

Webmaster: Jeri Roth  
Meeting Agenda: Neil Greene  
Staff: Cindy Snow & Kathy Jentz  
[admin@actfortransit.org](mailto:admin@actfortransit.org)