



Area Advisory Committee One Meeting #6 Summary
Wednesday, January 28, 2015, 7pm
Lakelands Clubhouse, Green Room
960 Main Street
Gaithersburg, MD 20878

Members

Joseph Allen	David Rosenbaum
Marilyn Balcombe	Steve Scharf
Stuart Barr	Lynne Tucker
Brian Downie	Michael Watkins
Cherian Eapen	Ronald Welke
Erik Morrison	Kam Yee

Apologies

Girum Awoke	Anita Schweinfurth
Peter Henry	Francine Waters
Michael Janus	James Woods

Staff

Facilitator – Holly Storck	Operations Task Lead – Chris Bell
Station Architect – Todd Connelly	Public Involvement Task Lead – Crystal Saunders
Traffic Engineer – Elizabeth Andrew	Logistics Staff – Jordan Vann, Tori Leonard

General Public

Richard Arkin	Jeff Witcher
John France	

Handouts:

Meeting packets included: Meeting Agenda, Meeting #5 Summary, Operations Planning presentation, and a copy of the MTA's Facility Naming Policy.

Introductions and Overview:

Facilitator **Holly Storck** welcomed attendees and gave an overview of the meeting agenda: an update on funding, station design follow up, changes to the Muddy Branch Road alignment, operations planning, and station naming. The attendees introduced themselves, and because there were several members of the general public at the meeting, Holly reminded attendees that AAC meetings are open to the public, but participation in the discussions is limited to AAC members. She also reminded the group that if Montgomery County schools are closed or if afternoon and evening activities are cancelled, the AAC meeting is cancelled. Holly announced that Jordan Vann, logistics coordinator for the AAC meetings, would be leaving to take a job with Los Angeles Metro. She praised Jordan for being invaluable to the AAC process and thanked her for her service.

Holly gave a brief update on funding for the CCT saying there was no change from the update given at the November meeting. Governor Hogan's budget includes funding for the CCT, Purple Line, and Red Line projects, but all are subject to further review and evaluation. However, the

projects are proceeding as usual until they are told otherwise. The CCT project team continues to evaluate different ways to procure the CCT project, whether that will be design/bid/build, P3, design/build/operate, etc.

Station Design Follow-Up:

Holly asked if there were any questions or follow up thoughts for station architect **Todd Connelly** and the station architecture concepts he presented in November. A member asked whether there was any consideration to blend the two options. Todd said yes, but that the blending would not create a new concept out of the two that were presented. Rather it would consider taking elements or ideas that were viewed positively from one and integrating them into the chosen concept. At the March ACC meeting, Todd will present the chosen station architecture concept at the center platform station and the aerial station as well as share how the concept is applied at DANAC (side platform) and the Metropolitan Grove pedestrian bridge.

A member said that he thought that some transit stations successfully softened concrete and steel designs with wood, glass, and stone. He asked if he could send examples to the station design team for consideration. Todd said yes, and Holly encouraged members to email examples to her and she would send them to Todd. With the images, please identify the location of the image, including the station name and line, and what elements are particularly liked.

A member asked if the Kentlands station would incorporate the design code for the neighborhood. Todd remarked that the team was supposed to be put in touch with the resident architect for Kentlands as well as King Farm. The member replied that he could get Todd copies of the codes. On February 2, Todd received the Kentlands Design Code.

There was then a discussion about how the Kentlands Station would interact with the surrounding area and the development plans for the commercial area around it. Todd said the aerial station presents design complexities, but the project team is looking at ways to address the underside of the transitway, which can be considered the first floor of the Kentlands shopping area. Ideas include a concourse with perhaps small retail concessions and/or landscaping that would serve as a transition from the Great Seneca Highway level to the platform and parking lot level.

Concern was raised about a plaza shown in the Kentlands master plan and a similar plaza shown in the station architecture and urban design presentations. Members assume that the area will only get one plaza, and if the station plaza is built first then the one in the Kentlands master plan, which has more of a community focus, won't get built. **Rob Robinson**, City of Gaithersburg, said that there is no definitive decision on the Kentlands development plan and that master plans are used as guides. The developer is meeting with the station architecture team and is looking at ways to best integrate the station into its long term plans for the area. Creating integrated open spaces for public use is a goal for all involved.

A member expressed concern that development in the corridor (such as Crown Farm and USG) is continuing while the CCT is 10 to 15 years away and is "playing catch up". He suggested that rather than build a full BRT system now (with stations, transitway, and other infrastructure) that buses should just run along the alignment using existing roads. As development occurs, the BRT

infrastructure could be added if felt to be necessary. Holly pointed out that Montgomery County has tied a number of its development requirements to different milestones of the CCT. This means that development cannot proceed unless certain milestones for the CCT are met. A member mentioned that there are several Ride On bus routes that already serve this purpose and the point of the CCT is to create a more premium service with the necessary infrastructure in place. Holly pointed out that there is a debate within the BRT community about how much BRT infrastructure is necessary to create a viable BRT service and whether a service needs to start at “full” BRT or can start with fewer amenities and less infrastructure and evolve into a “gold standard” system.

Muddy Branch Status:

Although the Muddy Branch Road segment of the project is not in AAC One, the project team felt it was important to share the changes that have occurred in the alignment with AAC members. The original CCT alignment had the alignment running on the east (Belward Farm) side of Muddy Branch Road. The 15% design moved the alignment to the median of Muddy Branch Road. The alignment was changed after discussions with the Mission Hills neighborhood and their concerns about impacts to traffic, in particular free right turns out of their neighborhood, and the impact on a home. However, the Montgomery County’s Master Plan shows Muddy Branch Road eventually becoming a six-lane road with the existing median being used to accommodate the expansion. That would not be possible if the CCT is moved to the median.

The agreement reached between MTA and Montgomery County is that MTA, during construction of the CCT, will modify the footprint of Muddy Branch Road so that it can accommodate six lanes, when needed in a future year. The west side (Washingtonian Woods side) of the roadway footprint will remain where it is, and the existing two southbound roadway lanes would remain where they are. Then there would be a grassy strip graded to accommodate an additional southbound roadway lane, the two CCT lanes, a grassy strip graded to accommodate an additional northbound roadway lane, and then the replacement of the existing two northbound lanes.

Only the CCT lanes and four roadway travel lanes would be built as part of the CCT project, as well as turn lanes at the intersections. The fifth and sixth lanes would be built by Montgomery County when they felt that the capacity was needed. Discussions with Montgomery County are ongoing to identify the details of the cross section of Muddy Branch Road, the intersection configurations at Muddy Branch Road and Great Seneca Highway, and at Muddy Branch Road and Belward Campus Drive.

The alignment along Great Seneca Highway (with the transitway on the Kentlands/Lakelands side of the road) is unchanged.

Members asked for sketches of the current roadway and future roadway configurations so that they could better understand what is being proposed. The design team is in negotiations with Montgomery County regarding turn lanes and bicycle lanes and is not able to send out a sketch at this time. Once graphics are prepared, they will be shared with AAC members.

Members asked whether the new footprint would be eight lanes wide and whether the home that was to have been impacted by the eastside transitway would be impacted by this new alignment. Holly said yes. **Crystal Saunders** pointed out that the Mission Hills community and the homeowner of the impacted property are aware of the plans. In addition, a Mission Hills resident is a member of AAC Two and the Washingtonian Woods community hosted Ike Leggett, the Montgomery County Executive, at a recent meeting and walk through of the project. (Correction: The meeting with the County Executive was postponed until March.)

Rob said that Montgomery County has included a grade-separated interchange (which the City of Gaithersburg does not support) at Great Seneca and Muddy Branch in its transportation priority letter to the State. He wondered how the CCT would operate with such an interchange. Crystal pointed out that there were no roadway engineers present at this AAC meeting, but that she and Holly would take the questions and comments of the committee back to the engineering team for answers. After the meeting, the project team realized that the proposed grade-separated interchange is at Great Seneca Highway/Sam Eig Highway/Muddy Branch Road and has been on the County's priority list since the 1990s with no traction for construction.

CCT Operations Planning:

Chris Bell, operations task lead, used the AAC Operations Presentation to share information with the AAC members about the operations planning process, operations related CCT premium elements, and safety and security elements.

The first step in the operations planning process is determining ridership demand. This is a key input needed to determine service frequency, or how many vehicles are needed per hour to meet passenger demand. This will also dictate the total fleet size needed. Ridership is calculated by using a customized version of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Government's (MWCOC) regional transportation model. The regional model is maintained by MWCOC to track how well the region meets its air quality goals. Air quality conformity analysis is done for the entire region and measures the impact of changes to the transportation network on air quality. The model has been certified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the results of the model runs are calibrated against real world data. The assumptions and underlying data behind the model are the existing and funded transportation network, and land use, population, and employment forecasts based on land use and master plans. All of the jurisdictions within the region review the assumptions and agree to them.

The regional model is further customized for specific projects such as the CCT. This customization is completed in order to more accurately reflect the smaller area where the CCT will be operating and incorporates transit-specific elements such as walk distances, access to transit, and non-work trips. The CCT model is a variation of the ridership model being used for the Purple Line project and has been certified by the Federal Transit Administration. It is also validated against real-world data. A key element of the model is mode choice based on travel time and cost. The premium elements of BRT make it a more attractive mode choice, which gets incorporated into the mode choice model. It also reflects the differences in attractiveness between LRT and BRT based on surveys and reviews of existing systems in other parts of the country.

The ridership model generates data on station by station boardings and alightings, which in turn is used to calculate passenger loads on each station-to-station link. This data is then utilized to calculate the number of vehicles needed to meet the maximum passenger load during the peak hour. The required service frequency is calculated by dividing the maximum passenger load during the peak hour by the capacity of a single bus. The result of this division will yield the number of buses required per hour to provide the capacity to serve and meet the maximum load. The service frequency is calculated by dividing 60 minutes by the number of buses required per hour. On the CCT in the opening year, 10 buses per hour will be required to serve the maximum load. This means a bus will have to come every six minutes in order provide sufficient capacity.

The CCT vehicle is a 60-foot CCT-branded diesel/electric hybrid articulated bus that has a maximum capacity of 90 passengers - 60 seated and 30 standing. The number standing is an industry standard. The AM peak hour maximum load is in the northbound direction between East Gaither and West Gaither, with a forecasted 893 passengers on-board a CCT bus during the AM peak hour. As noted above, 893 divided by 90 (the passenger capacity of a bus), results in the need for 10 buses per hour. This translates into a bus every 6 minutes. This is for the opening year in 2020, but the project also has data for 2035, which is the horizon year. The horizon year is used to design the infrastructure that will be needed once the project is being fully utilized.

Ridership is more concentrated in the morning as most people are headed to work. In the evening, ridership is more spread out because people are leaving at different times and doing other things after work. The heaviest trip flow direction is northbound, which reflects that people who would be using the CCT are getting off Metro at Shady Grove and going to jobs in the CCT project area.

A member asked about the margin for error in the ridership numbers. Chris said that the model is validated to real-world data and is fairly accurate. The model is projecting 35,000 passengers per day in 2035, which is a good ridership number.

The CCT will be offering two routes: 1) CCT Direct (Metropolitan Grove to/from Shady Grove exclusively in the transitway) and 2) CCT via USG (a route that leaves the transitway, travels in mixed traffic, and serves the Universities at Shady Grove and the Traville area in a loop). Both routes will run all day and both routes will make all stops along its route. The CCT Direct route is the backbone service and during the peak period will have headways of every six minutes in the opening year. The CCT via USG route is an overlay and would run every 15 minutes as a policy decision (meaning service is not required every 15 minutes to meet passenger demand but rather will run every 15 minutes in order to provide a convenient service). The CCT via USG vehicles are not included as part of the 10 vehicles per hour needed to meet peak hour demand. Ridership demand would be met with the CCT Direct service and the CCT via USG service added would be an overlay of additional service.

Fleet size is determined by dividing the round-trip run time by the service frequency. (An example for the CCT via USG was provided in the presentation; round trip run time on CCT via USG is 105 minutes and service frequency is 15 minutes, meaning 7 buses would be required to meet service).

At opening, the CCT will have 27 vehicles in its fleet. The number would increase to 39 in 2035. In 2035, the frequency of service based on estimated demand is 3.5 minutes, but Chris said that this headway may not be feasible due to vehicle bunching.

The ridership model assumes no changes to existing Ride On, WMATA or local shuttle bus networks, including the Crown Farm and King Farm shuttles services. These shuttles are required by the County until the CCT is constructed. Chris explained that the operations planning team conducted their work with the assumption that those services would not change. The CCT project team has ongoing coordination with WMATA and Montgomery County Ride On.

A member pointed out that with its 12 minute off-peak frequencies, the CCT will be particularly attractive to riders traveling at off-peak times. Ride On's frequencies in the peak are similar to the proposed CCT's peak frequencies, but in the off peak, Ride On's service is fairly infrequent.

Chris reminded the group that the CCT will have a slightly longer schedule than Metro with earlier opening times and later closing times so that the CCT meets the first Metrorail trip of the morning and the last Metrorail trip in the evening.

The fare for the CCT has not been set, but it will be a flat fare rather than a distance-based fare. A distance-based fare would require barriers at the station to record passengers' entrances and departures. The ridership model used Ride On's fare of \$1.75. Members wondered how the CCT fare would be set. Would it be set to achieve maximum ridership or to meet specific revenue goals? Chris explained that the fare would not be based on revenue goals but on ease of use and consistency with other modes, since cost is also a factor in mode choice. A member wondered if farebox recovery would be a factor in determining the fare. Chris said there is not a policy yet, but as the project moves toward implementation, available funding could have an impact. Rob pointed out that large transit systems are not moneymakers and often need large subsidies; farebox capture does not usually exceed 10% and does not fully support the transit system. Chris estimated that WMATA recovers 30% of its bus costs from the farebox.

A member wondered what the ridership model would be like if Phase II of the CCT were included. Chris wouldn't speculate on what the results would show and explained that the model would need to be revised to include the larger service area and then be rerun. He suggested that partially implementing a line is not unheard of and used the Silver Line in Virginia as an example. If a decision is made to move forward with Phase II of the CCT, there would need to be further evaluation. The findings could change the operations plan, which could result in changes to operating and maintenance costs. Chris also said that once service starts it would be monitored for excess crowding or vehicles running less full than anticipated and vehicle frequencies could be recalibrated if necessary. A member asked if the project would consider using bigger vehicles, even though they might take longer to load, if demand warranted it. Chris explained that the stations are designed to accommodate two vehicles at a time and a "vehicle train" could be run if needed.

CCT premium elements that enhance the passenger experience and are related to operations include a dedicated transitway, which provides faster travel times and more reliable service; high frequency service; simple and direct route patterns; branded service; premium vehicles with

doors on both sides of the vehicle to allow for use at side and center platforms; minimum time at stations; off-board fare collection; and multiple doors on the vehicle. The vehicles would be equipped with an AVL system that would allow for real-time tracking. The information would be available on variable message signs in the stations as well as on mobile devices.

The Design Team has not yet decided how bicycles will be accommodated on the CCT. However, putting a rack on the front of the vehicles will likely not be considered since that affects dwell time of the buses at stations.

Safety and security elements include voice annunciators, which are primarily used to announce stops, but can be taken over by the operations center to make announcements if there is an emergency; CCTV that will be monitored in real-time; a silent alarm that can be activated by the driver and sent to the operations center and emergency personnel; voice monitoring of activity on the bus by the operations center; announcement signs that can be taken over by the operations center to make announcements if there is an emergency; and a driver public address system. Stations will feature emergency phones and CCTV monitored in real-time.

Facility Naming Policy:

Holly referred members to the MTA's Facility Naming Policy, which was included in the meeting packets. Key elements of the naming policy are that names ideally should be geographic, single words and no more than 25 characters, unique, and not a commercial entity or the name of a person unless the name is part of a well-know destination. Naming rights cannot be sold, although temporary naming for a special event is allowed. The members did not discuss possible station names although many noted that the existing station names in AAC One were probably appropriate.

General Discussion/Closing:

The next two meetings are scheduled for Thursday, March 26 and Wednesday May 20. The public hearing associated with the Environmental Assessment (EA) has not been scheduled yet. However, the goal is to share EA information with the AACs before the public hearings.

A member requested that at the next meeting an update on Montgomery County's proposed legislation for authority to create an independent transit authority (ITA) be provided. The ITA could include CCT, Purple Line, portions of WMATA services, and the proposed BRT network. The first step is to secure enabling legislation from the State legislature. Then the County could choose to create an ITA.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

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