

**Baltimore-Washington Investment Corridor
Transit Futures Symposium
Maryland Department of Transportation
Harry Hughes Conference Room
June 3, 2008
10:00 AM to 2:30 PM**

Meeting Proceedings

The Maryland Transit Administration and the Maryland Department of Transportation co-sponsored an outreach session for primary stakeholders of the Baltimore-Washington Investment Corridor on the subject of the future of transit in the Corridor.

Jennifer Weeks, representing the MTA, opened the session explaining that the purpose of the meeting was to engage the group in dialogue on the future of transit in the Baltimore-Washington Corridor. Several people from the Department would be giving presentations on several ongoing transit and transit related initiatives in the area. Participants in the Symposium should feel free to ask questions of the presenters. The group went around the room and introduced themselves.

Those in attendance included the following:

- Regina Aris, BMC
- Dusan Vuksan, MWCOG
- Carole Sanner, Anne Arundel County
- George Cardwell, Anne Arundel County
- Dennis Wertz, Baltimore County
- Heather McColl, ARTMA
- Jamie Kendrick, City of Baltimore
- Mark Rawlings, DC DOT
- Nat Bottigheimer, WMATA
- Carl Balser, Howard County
- Ted Hartman, US Army
- Cynthia Dawson, BWI Business Partnership
- Ben Cohen, BWI Business Partnership
- Chris Patusky, MDOT
- Don Halligan, MDOT
- Diane Ratcliff, MTA
- Harry Romano, MTA
- Gerry Cichy, MTA
- Michelle Martin, MDOT
- Nicole Katsikides, MDOT
- Billy Hwang, MDOT
- Heather Murphy, MDOT
- Tom Webster, MDOT
- Wayne Schuster, MAA
- Tony Storck, MAA
- Mike Nixon, MDOT
- Lenny Howard, MTA
- Jeff Ensor, PB
- Dudley Whitney, PB
- Harriet Levine, Jacobs
- Mark Cheskey, PB
- Danielle Matland, City of Annapolis
- Michael Madden, MTA
- Shiva Shrestha, SHA
- Ron Skotz
- Sonny Hinton
- Lois Stuart
- Austyn Jones

The agenda began with an introduction on the purpose of the symposium and a history of the Baltimore-Washington Investment Corridor Transit Markets Study. Following were a series of presentations by Maryland Department of Transportation modal staff and representatives on a number of transit projects and initiatives in the Corridor. After a lunch break, Jeff Ensor of the firm PB Strategic Consulting gave a presentation on the results of the transit market analysis he conducted for the Corridor. The final agenda item was an open discussion. The following summarizes those events by agenda item.

Project History & Purpose - Diane Ratcliff kicked off the session with a discussion of the significance of the Baltimore-Washington Corridor as an economic generator for the State of Maryland and the target of substantial growth. The purpose of the Symposium was to discuss the opportunities available for integrating transit into the Corridor in light of the growth anticipated. She invited input by the participants in several key questions, including what the priorities should be for the Corridor, what short term and longer term activities should be in the pipeline, and what opportunities exist for partnership to support transit investments in the Corridor.

Don Halligan continued the introductory remarks by summarizing the history of the study that led to the Symposium. The study of transit markets in the Corridor stemmed from a series of studies on extending the WMATA Green Line from its current terminus at Greenbelt. Those studies showed that although such an extension is physically feasible, supportive land use policy and project “champions” for the extension were not in place. Input from stakeholders indicated continuing political interest and land use investment targeting the State’s MARC system. Several stakeholders continued to support the Green Line as an investment as well as other investments including Maglev and improvements to the Baltimore light rail system extensions in the Corridor. Based on the lack of clear consensus, the State pursued the Baltimore-Washington Investment Corridor Transit Market Study, designed to take a step back and examine the transit markets that exist in the Corridor as a means of informing decisions on which investment or investments make sense for the Corridor.

MARC Growth & Investment Plan - Harry Romano reviewed the MARC Growth & Investment Plan. In addition to an increase in Amtrak ridership in the northeast corridor, the MARC system now exceeds the peak system capacity of 27,000 daily trips with 32,000 daily trips. Harry Romano noted critical track and station issues, as well essential maintenance needs for the MARC system. Initiatives funded to improve the MARC system include a station parking feasibility study, most of the immediate needs identified in the MARC Growth & Investment Plan and many of the 2010 investments. Additionally, MTA is working on purchasing locomotives and coaches (some previously owned), and working diligently towards a new maintenance facility in Harford County. Longer term improvements are intended to provide more capacity, frequencies of service, and better connectivity to existing and planned transit service in the Baltimore region. Achieving these longer term objectives will require considerable capital investment.

BRAC/Commuter Bus Study - Gerald Cichy gave a review of the BRAC studies to determine commuter bus and other transit needs focused largely on access to Fort Meade using the proposed Central Maryland Transit Facility, Aberdeen Proving Grounds (APG) and Bethesda Naval Medical Center (NNMC). MTA's BRAC study evaluated extensions of existing transit bus services, Corridor Transportation Corporation (CTC) Route F and Howard Transit's Gold Route. The commuter bus study, which there is currently no market to support, looked at the following three routes:

- the Intercounty Connector Route;
- the Greenbelt to National Security Administration (NSA)/Central Maryland Transit Facility Route; and
- the Annapolis to NSA/Central Maryland Transit Facility Route

It was noted that NSA currently runs shuttle bus routes for members (843 members who pay dues), with a guaranteed ride home program. Ted Hartman is the Fort Meade BRAC contact. He hosts two transportation work groups: one quarterly external inter-agency coordination group and one internal group looking at immediate base needs, including ridesharing. Ted also noted that Fort Belvoir already allows shuttle buses through the secure gates (ID required), and believes that we can do this at Fort Meade as well. Fort Meade is currently completing their own internal study, to be completed in late June, which he will share with the various groups.

Transit Oriented Development - Chris Patusky presented an overview of the TOD program at MDOT, including a summary of developments within the Baltimore Washington Corridor. The State is interested in working with other State agencies and local partners to maximize land use around the station, up to 1/2 mile, to help to develop sustainable pedestrian-friendly transit communities. MDOT has a dual strategy, particularly in the Baltimore Washington Corridor on the MARC line to promote commuters driving to the station to increase the transit mode share, as well as to promote dense transit oriented development around the station to increase pedestrian accessible origin and destination oriented transit. He noted the recent TOD law passed by the General Assembly to make TOD a transportation purpose, which enables us to promote State resources in these areas, but does not increase eminent domain authority. Chris also noted a possible consideration of increasing TIF areas beyond the immediate TOD project, possibly a full 1/2 mile from the station, in order to promote funding for the garage and other infrastructure investments. The group also noted a possible State increment in the sales tax or a hotel tax directed to TOD. Generally, the current policy of MTA is to provide free parking at transit stations.

Maglev Study - Mark Chesky presented an overview of the previous Maglev study. He noted that the Maglev Study in Maryland was part of a larger inter-State Maglev vision, of which Maryland would be the initial "test" section, although many other states within this corridor are not pursuing this technology. Mark noted the project solve web site, which is accessible from the MTA web site. The Maglev study has completed an Environmental Impact Study, which is on file with the Federal Rail Administration; however, no action has been taken. The purpose of the Maglev technology would be to replace Amtrak Acela or Airline short haul services, with a very high speed alternative up and down the northeastern corridor from Boston, MA to Richmond, VA. The Maglev technology is very expensive, approximately \$5 Billion projected

for the Maryland project between Union Station in Washington, DC to Penn Station in Baltimore. For a number of reasons, including the high cost and unknown commitment to connecting projects by neighboring states, the project is not actively being pursued in Maryland. John Mica, a Maglev enthusiast, and some other regions, including Atlanta, Georgia, are still promoting the Maglev technology in the United States.

WMATA Green Line Extension Feasibility Study - Harriet Levine presented a summary of the previous feasibility studies to evaluate a possible alignment and costs for extending the WMATA Green Line from Greenbelt to the Baltimore Washington International Marshall Airport with a supplemental study conducted of extending this extension to Columbia. These studies showed that such extensions are physically feasible, but very costly. She noted the need for more thorough analysis of ridership and environmental impacts in order to fully evaluate the benefits and costs of these proposed projects, but suggested that the initial study results show the most promise for a limited extension of the Green Line to Muirkirk, an area currently served by the MARC Camden Line and located on Route 1 at the terminus of the Intercounty Connector.

Transit Markets Analysis - Jeff Ensor provided a briefing on the recent study activities to evaluate transit market analysis in the Baltimore Washington Corridor, in order for the group to identify short and long term transit opportunities within the Corridor. This analysis examined long term projected employment and population growth as provided by data from several sources, including travel demand model outputs from the two MPOs in the region, data provided by the Maryland Aviation Administration regarding land access to the Baltimore Washington International Marshall Airport, and the Census Transportation Planning Package. Current and projected travel origins and destinations were presented and recommendations for investments and studies presented based on the consultants' analysis of the data.

There was a question by a participant on whether gas prices have been reflected in the studies. Jeff noted that they used historic gas trends and the scenario studies for gas were above inflation. However, no additional modifications were made.

Since this study was devoted to "choice" riders (versus transit dependent riders), was there an analysis of frequency of service that would facilitate improving service to more traditional transit riders. The study really wasn't focused on a specific "type" of rider, although the purpose of the study is to examine markets for which new services could be successfully introduced. This was a corridor level study and did not get into operational issues.

It was suggested that we consider the implications of significant transit investments to the I-95 Corridor and whether 10 lanes would still be needed in the future, per the Highway Needs Inventory. Since the additional I-95 lanes would likely be Electronic or Express Toll Lanes (ETLs) or similar with a bus or BRT component, as well as the fact that there are existing highway needs, the group did not believe these lanes would not be needed.

Open Discussion

Following the presentations, the group posed questions to the consultants that conducted the market analysis and engaged in open discussion. The focus of the open discussion was around three major questions:

1. How do we invest wisely in transit for this Corridor?
 - What should our transit priorities be?
 - Consider both short term and longer term investments.
2. What can be done now and in the near future to prepare the Corridor for transit?
 - Local land use and targeted transportation programs and investments.
3. What are the opportunities for partnerships as we move?
 - Is there an appropriate role for the private sector?

The discussion is summarized as follows:

- There is a need for more robust transit service and patterns than what exists today
- The reverse commute potential should be explored, particularly for commuter bus
- Focus on service to major activity centers within the corridor
- There is concern regarding competing funds and capacity. SHA is planning up to 10 lanes on I-95. How can we determine what an appropriate highway vs. transit capacity expansion is required to meet the needs of the future? How can we unity on political priorities on transit and highway improvements?
- What is the likelihood of MARC improvements? Diane Ratcliff responded that the investments are meant to be incremental and therefore would be revisited as capital programs are being established and needs reevaluated.
- It was pointed out that there are a lot of policy discussions occurring at various levels that could influence the priority that the State puts on transit in the Corridor (and the State), such as the ongoing Climate Change Commission that is being convened by the Maryland Department of the Environment. It is anticipated that slowing the growth rate of VMT will be one of the Commission's recommendations.
- A suggestion was made that MDOT could strengthen its oversight of Smart Growth law in relation to allocation of funds to projects within vs. outside of Priority Funding Areas.
- There needs to be a stronger mechanism for prioritizing funds. The State looks to local counties to identify priority projects each year as part of the annual capital programming process.
 - Diane Ratcliff suggested that local counties could help by identifying the need for operating funds for specific transit projects in their annual prioritization letters. (Anne Arundel County was identified as having done this for several years in a row.) She also said it would be helpful if counties would coordinate their priorities so that there aren't conflicting studies requested of the MTA each year by the Maryland General Assembly.
 - Heather Murphy noted that the Southern Maryland region submits one consolidated list of regional project priorities through the Tri-County Council of Southern Maryland. Each county also submitted their own list of individual project priorities, but this list was devoted to projects of regional significance.

- The MPOs were noted as a potential forum for developing regional project priorities. It was mentioned that the Baltimore-Washington Corridor spans two MPO jurisdictions, which poses some potential problems. One person noted, for example, that combining MPO models to do mode share and ridership estimation will be a challenge.
- It was suggested that MDOT use the Maryland Transportation Plan as a means to identify priority projects and initiatives as well as impose funding constraints.
- One participant suggested that the State pick a project and go with it!
- BRAC should be a major focal point for investment in the Corridor. Quote of the event by Wayne Schuster, “If it’s not BRAC, don’t fix it!”
- It was noted that the BRAC timeframe doesn’t allow time for major investments. Instead, the BRAC timeframe is immediate through 2020, while most major investments would not be ready until 2030 or later. Pipe line development in the counties are similarly timed.
- Does commuter bus offer a shorter term solution that could help develop transit markets? New services could be planned for future implementation in the “mid term”, 5-15 year timeframe.
- It was noted that there lacks long term transit plans. SHA has long term plans for highway widening and development. WMATA was based on a comprehensive rail system plan. In order for local governments and State government to prepare for these investments, these plans need to be well-established.
- Someone noted that there is likely latent demand that is not projected related to long headways and other service limitations.
- Someone suggested looking to successful models / case studies from around the country to focus on how other States/transit agencies successfully fund and develop their transit systems.

Local Government/Development Issues

- Local counties have pipelines that extend at least twenty years. Projections for households, jobs, etc. will be allocated according to the development that is anticipated. The development pattern will result in a “many-to-many” land use distribution of households and jobs that is difficult to serve with traditional high capacity transit.
- There is little incentive for local governments to ask pipeline developments to go back through the process and play by new rules.
- Could consider transit hub with feeder systems as a way to accommodate transportation needs.

Specific Projects

- MARC Plan and priorities should be revisited and tweaked as needed to respond to growth and other factors that may change over time.
- There is an interest in testing demand on a commuter bus service from Columbia to Odenton and Annapolis.
- There is interest in studying an extension of WMATA heavy rail to Muirkirk and Laurel.

Next Steps

The study team informed the group that they would synthesize the information collected at this event and brief senior policy leadership on the market analysis and input received at the day's event.