

Agenda

1. Review of the Final Purple Line Functional Master Plan Purpose and Outreach Report
2. Request to Extend DEIS/AA Review Period
3. Recommendation to Present the Detailed Analysis of Bonifant Street and Wayne Avenue Surface Operation
4. MD General Assembly Special Session Results
5. Open House Summary
6. Outreach Update
7. Trail Along CSX Corridor
8. Looking Ahead
9. Other Items

Master Plan Advisory Group (MPAG) Members: Ed Asher, Veda Charrow, Karen FitzGerald, Sue Knapp, Eric DeVaris, Peter Gray, Tony Hausner, Jonathan Jay, Byrne Kelly, Caleb Kriesberg, Mike Marsh, Andy O'Hare, Ted Power, Chris Richardson, Karen Roper, Issac Hantman (alternate - David Saltzman), Harry Sanders, Fred Schultz, Todd Solomon, Mier Wolf, and Rob Rosenberg

Absent Members: Phil Alperson, Pat Baptiste, Laurie Kelly, Bill Mellema, Anne Martin, Joe Rodriguez, Marcy Fisher, Clay Harris, Rob Lanza, and Judy Tso

Others: Tom Autrey (Staff), Katherine Holt (Staff), Pam Browning, Tina Slater, and Jane Gorbaty

Meeting Beginning

Tom Autrey began the meeting at 7:05 pm.

Review of Final Purple Line Functional Master Plan Purpose and Outreach Report (15 Minutes)

Copies of the "Final Version" of the report were made available at the meeting. The report is tentatively scheduled to be presented to the Planning Board on January 17, 2008. Tom noted that we are trying to secure a late afternoon time slot. The Board will be asked to approve the document as the Final Purpose and Outreach Report. The report, along with a staff memo introducing the report and providing an update on Purple Line planning, will be available on the Planning Board's web site no later than January 10, 2008 (or one week prior to the date of the meeting if the item is not on the January 17, 2008 meeting agenda). You can review the Planning Board agenda at:

<http://www.mc-mncppc.org/board/agenda/>

Recent changes incorporated into the report in response to comments received from the MPAG include the following:

- Pages 16 and 17 – the description of concerns in East Silver Spring has been modified in response to comments at our last meeting and e-mails received since the meeting.
- Pages 28 and 29 – the schedule has been changed to reflect the recommended review time for the DEIS/AA and the consideration of the Staff Draft of the Functional Plan after the review of the DEIS/AA and the selection of the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA).
- Appendix A – the maps shown will be replaced by similar but updated maps in the Final Report.

Looking ahead, the staff will do its best to get an updated version of the Report to the MPAG members by the close of business, January 2, 2008. The staff can consider additional suggestions for modifications to the report through January 4, 2008. The report and the accompanying staff memo will be available online on January 10th.

Additional comments on the report by the MPAG included the following:

On Page 3, in the project history in the section on the Georgetown Branch Master Plan, mention should be made that the plan specified a single track. The Georgetown Branch Master Plan Amendment would read "This Plan provides for the designation of the Georgetown Branch right of way as suitable for a single track trolley and the Capital Crescent Trail between Silver Spring and Bethesda." Also, the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Master Plan (1990) would read "This Plan confirms a single track light rail and a trail combination...."

The staff will change the wording to reflect that parts of the alignment as documented in the two plans include a signal track configuration. The reader also will be referred to page nine of the report where there is a more detailed discussion of the single track vs. double track issue.

Page 12, Neighborhood Impacts section needs to be reworked. This section should either list out all of the individual neighborhoods being impacted by the Purple Line or be broad. As the section is currently written, it does not include East Bethesda, Chevy Chase, and many other areas. The new language should be emailed out to the committee for their review.

East Silver Spring was specifically mentioned because the alignments were modified, partly as a result of concern expressed through the MTA's Community Focus Group process and also because of right of way constraints, cost concerns, etc.

Two replacement paragraphs will be inserted that state the following:

"A number of concerns have been raised about potential impacts on neighborhoods along the potential alignment. These concerns have been expressed through both the MTA's Community Focus Group outreach effort and some members of the Master Plan Advisory Group (see following section for a more extensive discussion of issues raised by the Master Plan Advisory Group).

Residents in neighborhoods in East Silver Spring, in East Bethesda, the Town of Chevy Chase, Chevy Chase Lake have expressed concern as have residents or businesses along Jones Bridge

Road, Briely Road, Altimont and Susanna Lanes, Coquelin Terrace, Edgevale Court, Wayne Avenue, Silver Spring Avenue, Thayer Avenue, Sligo Avenue, and Bonifant Street, among other locations.

Pages 14 to 15 – in the discussion about the Inner Purple Line vs. Purple Line Loop, it should be noted that the vote against any further consideration of the Purple Line Loop should note that the decision was in part based upon an assumption that (at the time) capital funding for the Inner Purple Line would be available sooner because additional study would result in a delay of the implementation of any (other) alternative. In addition, the description should note that the decision was made without knowledge of the relocation of staff (and related patients and visitors) from Walter Reed Army Hospital to the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda.

The discussion about the January 2003 decision by the Planning Board will be revised to note that the staff report noted a potential two to four year delay to as well as cost concerns (about the Purple Line Loop) . In addition, the discussion will be revised to note that the decision was made prior to the announcement of the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) plans for the area; an important factor that some members of the MPAG believe is reason to consider alignments other than the Master Plan alignment. The BRAC reference will note the scope – 2,500 new employees and an additional 484,000 patients and visitors annually.

Page 15, two different trails are listed on this page. The word “the trail” is used throughout this page and the report should be defined or distinguished. Specifically, whenever the Capital Crescent Trail is referred to as "the trail," it should be capitalized, as "the Trail," so readers could know it refers to only this specific trail (there are instances of this at least from pages 12-16).

We will revise the report to clarify when we are referring to the Capital Crescent Trail or the Metropolitan Branch Trail. There was also a question about the Metropolitan Branch Trail and its relationship to the Purple Line. The Metropolitan Branch Trail is planned to meet the Capital Crescent Trail at the new Silver Spring Transit Center. The Metropolitan Branch Trail from the Silver Spring Transit Center east is included in the plans for the Silver Spring Transit Center and as part of the DPWT facility planning effort – see the link below for further information.

<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/dpwt/capital/dcd/index.asp?pageid=2&pid=330>

A member sent an email to staff asking to include a statement that “some MPAG members also expressed concerns as to whether all efforts have been made, as stated in MTA’s goals, “to minimize and mitigate impacts to the natural and human environment “of East Silver Spring neighborhoods and small businesses.”

We will add this statement to the discussion under Silver Spring Avenue / Thayer Avenue.

One member of the committee shared their concern of people emailing staff with recommended changes to the report without the committee’s knowledge. This form of communication did not promote open discussions of the proposed changes to the report with the committee. Are people going to discuss changes at the committee or discuss changes via email? How will we use our time?

The staff prefers not to try and set up e-mail rules of some type or form. We think these after meeting summaries – along with the expanded meeting agenda notices - provide a useful means of introducing any modifications to draft reports or other items, including the introduction of issues raised since the meeting, and clarifications and/or expansions of statements made at meetings. In effect, we want to try and keep the focus on participation, accuracy, and transparency in a setting where we all recognize there are differing viewpoints on some important (and complex) issues.

On page 17, the last paragraph on this page needs to be reworked. The terms cost and cost effectiveness need to be defined better. The cost effectiveness means costs per hours saved in this sense. Are we trying to use FTA guidelines of cost effectiveness? There is not a direct correlation between cost and cost effectiveness. Sometimes the higher cost of a project may in fact result in a higher rating of cost effectiveness.

We will delete the last paragraph on page 17 that begins “The staff has been taking a look at LRT ...”.

Was historic preservation considered in this report? If not, it should be included in the report. Historic preservation is considered in MTA’s analysis, which is underway.

“Historic sites” are noted briefly on page 14 of the draft. We will expand this paragraph to more accurately describe the scope of both the issue and the effort taken to document potential impacts and identify stakeholders.

In addition to historic preservation, how will affordable housing be preserved and addressed in the report? This is very important for Arliss Street east to Takoma Park because there is an assumption that the Purple Line will price people out of the affordable housing. How would it be possible to preserve affordable housing with several private properties?

There is a Master Plan (i.e., a Sector Plan in this case) update underway for the Takoma – Langley Park Crossroads area. That effort was recently started and it is being closely coordinated with the Purple Line planning activities. The study or boundary area for the Takoma – Langley Sector Plan is the area within a one-half mile radius of the intersection of New Hampshire Avenue and University Boulevard, the location of the planned Takoma – Langley Park Transit Center and a future Purple Line station location. Arliss Street is close to, but not included within, the Sector Plan area.

More information on the Takoma – Langley Park Sector Plan is available at:

http://www.mncppc.org/Takoma_Langley_Crossroads/

Once the Takoma – Langley Park Sector Plan draft is completed - around the summer of 2009 – it is anticipated that the next planning initiative will involve the development of a concept plan for the existing commercial core in Long Branch – a plan that could ultimately involve proposals for additional mixed use development in this Purple Line station area. Conceivably, this could increase the amount of affordable housing in what is an area that is now almost entirely commercial. Work on the concept plan could eventually lead to consideration of how best to

continue to preserve the existing affordable housing inventory that is located immediately outside of the commercial core. Development in this area is currently guided by the East Silver Spring Master Plan that was adopted in December 2000. The primary tool for preserving the existing affordable housing inventory along the Purple Line alignment is through adopted master plans- not functional plans like the Purple Line Functional Master Plan..

The report is missing information about the benefit of the Purple Line to the transit rider. Who would have shorter or longer trips and who might be benefiting?

The staff will add a section under “Issues Raised By The Master Plan Advisory Group” that will present general information that is now available on ridership, cost and travel time. The staff memo that will accompany the Final Version of the Purpose and Outreach Strategy Report will also document the initial estimates of ridership, cost, and travel time in more detail.

Request to Extend DEIS/AA Review Period (10 Minutes)

The MTA’s current schedule calls for the DEISA/AA to be available in late spring with a public hearing also held in the late spring. The MTA staff has indicated that they have targeted the end of the summer of 2008 as the point at which the agency would like to have selected a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA).

The staff expressed a concern about conducting a review and forwarding comments within 45 days of the DEIS being available for review.

One member of the MPAG noted that regardless of the length of the review period, our schedule as presented in the Final Purpose and Outreach Strategy Report should note the schedule is dependent upon the availability of the DEIS within a certain time frame and that is something that we do not have control over.

The staff will make that change to the schedule shown in the report. We also note the number of days for each schedule milestone.

Clarification needs to be made to describe the review process. What does the review process encompass?

Once the DEIS has been signed by the sponsoring agencies (federal and state in this case), a notice of availability is published and the DEIS is circulated for comment. The circulation period must last a minimum of 45 days and a public hearing must be held. The public notice of the public hearing must be provided at least 15 days prior to the public hearing. In effect, the review period need not by law be more than 45 days with the public hearing taking place within that 45 day period.

Under existing state law, the Planning Board will also have an opportunity to review the Purple Line project as a project submitted under Mandatory Referral – typically at, or near, the end of Preliminary Engineering, or at about 30% of completed design.

Are we adjusting MTA's schedule if we ask for an extension of the DEIS review period?

The MTA has indicated they would like to publish the DEIS, complete the 45 day review period, select the LPA) and submit the documents to the FTA to request authorization to enter preliminary engineering – all by the end of this summer. A request to add another 45 days to the circulation period will certainly not help the MTA meet that schedule. The case could be made, however, that the MTA would be unlikely to meet this schedule anyway – unless the DEIS circulation period began in early spring (e.g., the first half of March 2008). Regardless, the staff believes a request to extend the circulation period from 45 days to 90 days is reasonable given the scope of the project. As a point of clarification and in response to a question posed at the meeting, the staff recommendation will be to extend the circulation period from 45 days to 90 days and not to extend the circulation period to a date that would end 90 days after the public hearing. We will also recommend that the public hearing be scheduled no earlier than 30 days after the date the DEIS is made available. In this case, "circulation period" is the same as "review period". The former term is the term used in the FTA guidance on the subject.

How does this change of schedule fit with the federal time line? Since we are competing for money, will this extension of review of the DEIS hurt us in the competition?

The staff is unaware of anything in the FTA evaluation process or funding program that would change as a result of an extended circulation period. We will, however, ask the MTA about this before including it as a recommendation.

For the ICC comment period, an extension was granted for the review period. This extension should be looked at to see if it could be worded the same for the Purple Line review extension.

On February 3, 2005, the MDOT Secretary extended the deadline for public comment on the ICC DEIS from February 15, 2005 to February 25, 2005. This was the second extension. The total length of the ICC comment period was 95 days.

Recommendation to Present the Detailed Analysis of Bonifant Street & Wayne Avenue Surface Operation (15 Minutes)

The staff solicited MPAG input on submitting a formal request to the MTA to make a presentation on the analysis that has been done to date on the issue of surface operation of either LRT or BRT on Bonifant Street and Wayne Avenue. In response to a request from a MPAG member, the staff also confirmed that both the Low BRT and Low LRT include operation in shared lanes on Wayne Avenue and that the Medium LRT now includes operation in shared lanes with additional left turn lanes at selected locations.

The matrix the staff provided at the December 4, 2007 meeting will be changed to reflect those modifications.

At the MPAG meeting in January, it would be good to have MTA show a simulation, left turn lanes, traffic numbers, and how the Purple Line will work – information needed prior to publication of the DEIS. How the ridership and travel time numbers were should be explained by MTA along with the origin and destination data.

In response to a letter forwarded by the Seven Oaks/Evanswood and Park Hills Citizen's Associations, the MTA project team (in a response dated December 17, 2007) offered to brief the associations at the Seven Oaks/Evanswood meeting on January 17, 2008. We have asked the MTA if they could provide a similar briefing to the MPAG at the MPAG meeting on January 22, 2008. The MTA briefing would also cover the methodology used in forecasting ridership and travel times.

Some members of the MPAG indicated that they feel the MTA has been unresponsive to some of the questions posed – one example cited was the concern about traffic on Wayne Avenue.

As noted above, the MTA provided a response (received after the MPAG meeting) to some of the questions about how Wayne Avenue might function. The staff encouraged the MPAG members to forward any additional questions to the staff by January 10, 2008 so that we can let the MTA team know in advance of the MPAG meeting on January 22, 2008.

MD General Assembly Special Session Results (5 Minutes)

The staff provided a brief summary of what is known at this point about Purple Line planning issues related to the recently completed special session of the Maryland General Assembly. As we understand it from an editorial in the Washington Post, some funds were set aside specifically for the purpose of supporting preliminary engineering for both the Purple Line and the Corridor Cities Transitway. The staff will forward additional information on this issue once it becomes available.

Open House Summary (15 Minutes)

A brief discussion of the information presented at the open houses at Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School and the Takoma – Langley Community Center was held. Specific questions, comments, or concerns are summarized below.

How did MTA obtain ridership numbers from the model? Is the same model required for everyone's use throughout the country? A greater explanation of what makes the ridership numbers would be helpful along with statistics to support the data.

One member of the MPAG noted that the model that MTA used was version 7.0a Council of Governments (COG) Regional Model. However, post-processing has not occurred with the ridership numbers hence they are still preliminary. There are different models used throughout the country, but everyone has to use the same post-process model called Summit software created by Federal Transit Authority (FTA).

Some MPAG members expressed a concern that some members of the MTA project team were unable to answer specific questions about certain aspects of the project.

As previously noted, the staff encourages the submittal of written questions at any through the process. We will attempt to answer as many as we can and then pass on to the MTA project those questions more appropriately addressed by them.

Outreach Update (15 Minutes)

The question of the extent of our outreach activity was raised at the last meeting.

The staff attended an informational session with Impact Silver Spring on December 6, 2007. There were about 25 to 30 residents in attendance. There were 142 at the East Silver Spring open house, 175 at the Bethesda Chevy Chase open house, and 45 at the Takoma Langley open house. The difference in attendance is to be expected to some extent because of the issues related to the trail and East Silver Spring, among other items. Nevertheless, the difference is significant. Given that, we would like to identify no more than three MPAG members that could work with us in an effort to reach more residents in these areas – especially between now and the release of the DEIS/AA.

There is a need for people in MPAG to help with outreach especially in the Takoma Park area. A suggestion was made to talk to Laurie Kelly since she has established a group of people who could possibly help. The concern is that it is difficult for people in this area to make evening meetings. One suggestion was to contact Casa de Maryland for help and go to the Day Labor site.

It was decided that the staff would meet with the MPAG representatives from the Takoma Langley Park area to review specific actions that might be taken to make the community aware of the Purple Line planning activities.

Members of the MPAG are to keep their communities abreast of decisions made in the MPAG along with how the process works.

While there was not a specific follow-up on this at the meeting – it is an important point. Both our staff and the MTA project team have made it clear that they are available to meet with community groups about the project as part of the outreach activity.

The Trail along the CSX Corridor (10 Minutes)

A brief overview of the trail along the CSX corridor was conducted. The emphasis was on the MTA's preference at this time to keep the trail on the north side of the CSX tracks in the area immediately west of Colesville Road.

Looking Ahead (15 Minutes)

A brief discussion of future MPAG agenda items was held. Some members agreed that the list below that was distributed before the meeting represented a reasonable approach at this point. Some members felt that the staff needs to be careful about not having too many issues on the agendas. Some members suggested meeting more than once a month and others seemed to be against meeting more often.

January 2008

Ridership Forecasting Procedure/Results
Travel Time – including Wayne Ave. analysis
FTA Rating Process
Outreach

March 2008

Potential Field Trip
Other Systems Operating Profile
Outreach
Design Issues

February 2008

Vehicle Types
Funding Issues/Profile
Cost Estimation
Outreach

At this point, the staff recommends we try to follow this general list and continue to meet once a month. More frequent meetings will likely be required after the DEIS/AA is made available. A review of design issues has been added to the above list (in March) in response to a comment by one MPAG member. The concern was that design is often an element of large infrastructure projects that is often overlooked at this stage with the result being that the initial cost estimates provide for a product that falls well short of what the community expects.

Other Items (10 Minutes)

As a reminder, the tentative upcoming meeting dates are:

- January 22, 2008
- February 19, 2008
- March 18, 2008
- April 15, 2008