

**Agenda:**

1. Welcome & Introductions
2. MPAG Housekeeping
3. Draft Purple Line Functional Master Plan Purpose and Outreach Strategy Report
4. Comparison of “New Start” Projects
5. Wrap-up
6. End of Meeting



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**Master Plan Advisory Group (MPAG) Members:** Phil Alperson, Michele Cornwell (Alternate - Ed Asher), Pat Baptiste, Veda Charrow, Eric DeVaris, Karen FitzGerald, Peter Gray, Tony Hausner, Jonathan Jay, Laurie Kelly, Byrne Kelly, Sue Knapp, Caleb Kriesberg, Allison Driver (Alternate - Mike Marsh), Bill Mellema, Heather Dlhopsky (Alternate - Ginanne M. Italiano), Andy O’Hare, Ted Power, Chris Richardson, Joe Rodriguez, Karen Roper, Issac Hantman (Alternate - David Saltzman), Harry Sanders, Fred Schultz, Todd Solomon, Judy Tso, Mier Wolf

**Absent Members:** Marcy Fisher, Clay Harris, Rob Lanza, Rob Rosenberg

**Others:** Tom Autrey (Staff), Katherine Holt (Staff), Marnie Shaul, Helen Reed, Terri Mannarini, Angela Fedi, and Pam Browning

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**1. Welcome & Introductions**

Tom Autrey began the meeting at 7:05 pm. Each member of the MPAG introduced themselves as did people in the audience.

**2. MPAG Housekeeping**

As is the case in the formation of any new group, it is important to try and get some of the more mundane (but still important) stuff out of the way so we can move on to items that are specifically related to the Purple Line. Items discussed under “housekeeping” included the following:

- Do we need someone to speak on behalf of the group to the public, press, etc.?

*Tom noted the advisory nature of the MPAG and the fact that it is by design comprised of individuals that represent different geographic areas along the alignment as well as different viewpoints on the objectives and merits of the project. The MPAG exists as an Advisory Group to the Planning Board and staff. Individual members of the MPAG are encouraged to let the Planning Board and staff know of concerns and areas that they*

*think should be reviewed in MPAG meetings. Given that context, members of the MPAG agreed that a spokesperson was not required.*

- What about guidelines for conducting the meetings?

*Tom presented the following as general guidelines to consider:*

*Please Participate – we need to know your concerns, especially if that specific concern has not been brought up before.*

*Be Courteous – don't interrupt and avoid negative stuff that might be interpreted as directed at a particular person or group.*

*Be Concise – we have 30 folks in the group plus the staff. Try to get your thought or concern conveyed in a one to two minute statement. Tell the staff to move on when they go on too long. Be considerate of any visitors we may bring in for presentations!*

*Judy Tso also had previously forwarded the following guidelines:*

- *Treat each other with respect*
- *Listen to understand*
- *Agree to try on new ideas*
- *Ensure equal participation (step up or step back)*
- *Stay engaged*
- *No side conversations*
- *Question constructively*

*One additional guideline:*

- *Raise hands and be called upon*

*Taken together, the above two sets of guidelines should provide us with what we need to keep the discussions and reviews moving while still allowing most (if not all) to be heard on the various issues. **Please let Katherine know via e-mail if you believe these guidelines are reasonable and/or if you think we have overlooked something.***

- Does a facilitator need to conduct some of the meetings to make sure the MPAG functions well? If so, staff can try to make arrangements for a facilitator to help with the process.

*While there did not seem to be any wide-spread support at the meeting for trying to bring in a facilitator, two members have since indicated that it may be worth considering. Tom will check with Rick Hawthorne to see what options may be available. There may also be something to be said for limiting the number of agenda items – given the issues, the size of the MPAG, and the desire to limit the meetings to no more than two hours. There may also be some advantage to limiting the meetings to no more than one every four weeks once the organizational / schedule issues are resolved. The additional time between the meetings can be used to develop more detailed meeting packages that may help address some of the questions that arise both at, and between, the meetings.*

- What about record-keeping, documentation, communication, and transparency?

*At this point, the staff will continue to rely on the web site to post the meeting agenda and agenda background information, meeting summaries, staff memos, and other MPAG related material. We can also provide direct mailing to MPAG members upon request. In response to a request at the 11/15/07 meeting, we intend to send out a draft of the MPAG summaries for review by the MPAG members before the summary is posted on the web site. **In that regard, please provide Katherine with any comments you have on this draft of the 11/15/07 meeting summary by the close of business 11/29/07 if at all possible.***

- Should there be a place on the web site to allow MPAG members to discuss topics or issues related to MPAG business?

*There was considerable discussion on this with opinions mixed on the advisability of any type of open forum. A number of members indicated that an open forum is somewhat duplicative of open discussion at the meetings and (group) e-mails that can be sent to all MPAG members. Hearing no consensus, Tom indicated that we would re-visit the issue later if some felt strongly that some type of open forum on the web site was needed.*

- What are the three or four main things that the staff is looking for from the MPAG?

*The primary function of the MPAG is to provide input from the community's perspective on the Purple Line project as a whole and proposals/issues related to the Purple Line – specifically, the alternatives under consideration by the MTA in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), the staff memo on the same to the Planning Board, and the drafts of the Purple Line Functional Master Plan.*

*The staff has an obligation to familiarize the MPAG with some of the issues surrounding the Purple Line in advance of the publication of the DEIS. To that end, staff has started to review selected specific items that will hopefully give you some additional context from*

*which to draw upon as you advise and provide input to the staff. The public orientation sessions, for instance, reviewed the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) New Starts process. The MTA Project Manager gave a project overview at the Oct. 30<sup>th</sup> MPAG meeting. Staff is also reviewing what is an admittedly complicated schedule for the delivery of a recommendation on a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) and a Staff Draft of the Functional Master Plan. In addition, and in advance of the MTA Open Houses, staff will be reviewing certain information about projects already in the FTA pipeline (see below). There have been requests to look at other issues before the DEIS is released – potential funding sources, the forecasting methodology, neighborhood compatibility, etc.*

### **3. Draft Purple Line Functional Master Plan Purpose & Outreach Strategy Report – May 2007**

This Draft Report was reviewed at the meeting so that revisions can be made and a final version presented to the Planning Board in December. The Draft was prepared in May 2007 at the time the Planning Board approved the report distribution and authorized the staff to establish the MPAG. In the interim, the MTA has modified some of the alternatives discussed in the report. In addition, the schedule has slipped a bit and the MPAG has asked for clarification and modifications related to the timing of the selection of a LPA and the development of the Staff Draft of the Functional Master Plan. **The Draft Report can be found on the web site (the link is in the upper right hand corner) if you do not have a copy. The link is at:**

[http://www.mcparkandplanning.org/board/agenda/2007/documents/20070517\\_PurpleLine.pdf](http://www.mcparkandplanning.org/board/agenda/2007/documents/20070517_PurpleLine.pdf)

*The section on the alternatives (beginning on page 13 of the draft report) needs to be updated a bit. It was originally the staff's intent to get through at least the first MTA Open House and then start work on updating this part of the report. The MTA, however, held a Project Team meeting on 11/14/07 where a new matrix of the alternatives was presented. It is this matrix that will be used to update the description of the alternatives in the Purpose and Outreach Report. Staff is also going to make sure that the maps are legible in any subsequent printed version.*

*In addition, the draft report is where staff would potentially modify the schedule – move the Staff Draft of the Functional Master Plan up to coincide with any recommendation on the LPA - as proposed by some in our first meeting on October 30. A revised (Draft) schedule that reflected this change was presented for discussion (at the 11/15/07 meeting). It was clear from the discussion that the MPAG believes additional clarification is needed on the schedule. Specifically, the scheduled needs to be reviewed to (1) determine if a Planning Board Public Hearing can be held on the LPA in advance of the Planning Board approving a Staff Draft of the Functional Master Plan – while providing enough time to also present a staff recommendation on the LPA and the Staff Draft Plan within 45 to 60 days of the release*

*of the DEIS and (2) determine what constraints might exist to providing more than 45 days to review the DEIS – the time estimate provided by the MTA. **With respect to the latter, the staff agreed to draft a letter for the Chairman’s consideration that would focus on the need for a review period that is longer than 45 days. In addition, the staff is going to work on providing a more detailed flow chart depicting the schedule and respective responsibilities.***

*Other comments on the Draft Report included the following:*

- *Page 9, technology should be included in some of the choices. The choices seem to lock into rail and bus, but they don’t consider hybrid approaches or acknowledge flexibility provided through advances in technological.*
- *Maintenance yard locations need to be addressed in the report. The Georgetown Branch Master Plan included a maintenance yard.*
- *The Purple Line Loop should be included in the section on prior study efforts.*
- *Page 13, it would be helpful to show how long things will be closed, construction phasing, and a schedule for construction.*
- *This document does not include what was done elsewhere. What about outreach? Is there an example that is similar to this project or is there a better connection for the trail from Silver Spring to Sligo?*
- *Page 22, November to March would be a good time for MPAG become acquainted with the alignments through walking the alignments, while gaining knowledge of the project.*
- *Any place that the Georgetown Branch Master Plan alignment is mentioned in the report, there needs to be a note that states the alignment is a single track alignment along some segments.*
- *There should be reference to the fact that some MPAG members believe that the DEIS/AA and Master Plan process should be re-scoped to include consideration of the Purple Line Loop and that, in general, the current process is placing too much emphasis on developing lower cost alternatives.*
- *In conjunction with the above bullet, certain MPAG members believe that the expansion of the National Naval Medical Center and its transformation into the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center should be taken into account when considering the Purple Line and all of its alternatives since it will affect the transportation system.*
- *The Planning Board should hold a public hearing after staff submits a draft recommendation on the LPA to ensure public comments on the staff draft.*
- *The Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chamber of Commerce supported the DEIS/AA study for the double track corridor with trail between Bethesda and Silver Spring and agrees with the modification of any single track references (currently in the Georgetown Branch Master Plan Amendment). It also supports the light rail and trail as the preferred and most effective mode (not BRT).*

- *The Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chamber of Commerce has consistently supported the alignment in the existing Master Plans along the Georgetown Branch alignment, going from the Bethesda CBD to the Silver Spring CBD (no position on Silver Spring alignments/alternatives).*
- *The Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chamber of Commerce supports the coordination of the light rail and trail and believes that they are compatible and complementary joint uses for the existing right-of-way; the policy guidance for development along the alignment should support transit oriented uses and redevelopment opportunities; and the Chamber has supported the phasing of the Purple Line to start with the Bethesda to Silver Spring alignment as Phase One (since that portion has been in the Master Plans for decades) if necessary for funding*

***MPAG members were encouraged to send any additional comments to the staff via e-mail as soon as possible so that it can be included in the Final Report. It is the staff's intent to try and have the Final Report available for MPAG review prior to the 12/04/07 meeting.***

#### Other Comments/Concerns

*Some members of the MPAG expressed a concern that the open houses conducted by MTA are problematic because there is not a record of what people say or what is said back to the public – there is a question of accountability.*

*As noted above, there was a general concern expressed by the staff and some MPAG members about the amount of time that would be available to review the DEIS/AA. Tom stated that would talk to Mike Madden for clarification and then draft a letter for the Planning Board Chairman's consideration. The letter would express concern about not having adequate time to review the document and would request additional time.*

#### **4. Comparison of “New Start” Projects (30 min.)**

There had been some interest expressed at taking a look at other projects across the country that are in this same competition (e.g., the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) “New Starts” process) to possibly get an early rough idea of how we might compare. Getting an idea of how we might generally compare might also help us start to get our arms around important issues like the extent to which costs associated with tunneling (as an example) or other added costs might impact the project competitiveness. The information on other systems is also good background to have going into the series of MTA open houses.

The staff reviewed summary information provided in the packet on other projects in the FTA “pipeline”. This information, for the most part, was taken from the FTA's Annual Report on Funding Recommendations for Fiscal Year (FY) 2008.

Questions that were raised during the review of the material included the following:

Does the list that is in the information packet include a selected set of projects or all of the systems in the United States? Do you have a competition list?

*The spreadsheet includes all of the projects that are included in the FTA Annual Report on Funding Recommendations for FY 2008. We do not have a list of projects that are at the same stage as the Purple Line project.*

Is the information shown for average weekday trips? What qualifies as a commuter?

*The ridership estimates reflects average weekday ridership. The estimated reflect average weekday boardings on the system (project) in the forecast year.*

Is there a standard method of getting ridership numbers?

*Yes, there is a standard method that is approved by FTA and is used across the country.*

Have the ridership numbers been verified?

*FTA and the MTA Project Team work closely to ensure that the ridership estimates are reasonable and are arrived at through methods that are accepted as being consistent with the current best practices for forecasting ridership. This has been an issue in the past and the FTA has recently change its procedures to insure that projects reflect reasonable ridership estimates before proceeding to the next phase of project development. The staff recognizes that ridership forecasting is an issue because of the approximate one-year delay that was attributable to problems with the forecasting model. The staff will work to schedule a session in the near future on the general approach to forecasting ridership - as recommended by a MPAG member. The Transportation Research Board has tentatively scheduled a session at its Annual Meeting on January 14<sup>th</sup> entitled "Predicted Costs and Ridership of New Starts Projects vs. Actual." We will provide the MPAG with a summary of that report as additional background.*

Will the DEIS and this document include information about capital spending versus ridership? Will it include operation cost and maintenance?

*The DEIS will include information on ridership, capital costs and operating costs for each of the alternatives.*

The capital cost per weekday rider information was put together by Tom. What is the capital cost share? Fifty-fifty?

*Federal law provides for up to 80% federal participation for capital costs. However, as you can see from the material provided on current projects in the pipeline, most projects have been approved for consideration at a 40-50% federal participation level.*

Are there any public/private partnerships?

*Tom stated at the meeting that the Dulles project was an example but that is technically incorrect. The Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority oversees the project and is using toll roads revenues and transportation improvement district levies to fund the local share.*

A cost per hour user benefit would be useful. What is the impact on cost and competitiveness for the tunnel versus the trail?

*We will likely not have cost per hour of transportation user benefit until the DEIS is distributed. As noted by one MPAG member, the Georgetown Branch is probably one of the most cost effective segments of the Purple Line because the right of way is owned by the County. The MTA has indicated the cost of tunneling under the trail could be as high as \$150 million. The MTA has also indicated that a cost increase of that magnitude could affect the viability of the project. Another MPAG member noted that the FTA rating system does not take into consideration the public good – benefits that may be derived from less tangible measurements than travel time savings (as an example).*

## **5. Wrap-up (15 min)**

One resident at the meeting indicated that there was evidently a presentation made to a neighborhood civic association that upset the residents because the presentation was slanted. There were no pros or cons, which is what the residents hoped to see. The presentation seemed dishonest and indifferent to community concerns, according to this individual.

*Tom stated that he will discuss this offline to gain a better understanding of who gave the presentation and the exact nature of the issue.*

**The next meeting will be Dec. 4<sup>th</sup> at Park and Planning Office in the auditorium from 7 pm until 9 pm with another meeting tentatively scheduled for Dec. 18<sup>th</sup>.**

## **6. Meeting End**

The meeting concluded at 9:00 pm.