

Agenda

1. Meeting Began
2. Schedule
3. Chevy Chase Report
4. Woodmont East Question
5. Pros and Cons
6. Current Boarding At Metrorail Stations and on Ride-On Route 15
7. Upcoming Meetings

Master Plan Advisory Group (MPAG) Members: Pat Baptiste, Caleb Kriesberg, Andy O'Hare, Sue Knapp, Veda Charrow, Tony Hausner, Jonathan Jay, Karen Roper, Harry Sanders, Michele Cornwell (Alt. - Ed Asher), Mier Wolf, Joe Rodriguez, Peter Gray, Byrne Kelly, Anne Martin, Ted Power, and Todd Solomon

Absent Members: Rob Rosenberg, David Saltzman, Gigi Godwin, Fred Schultz, Judy Tso, Laurie Kelly, Lisa Fadden, Phil Alperson, Bill Mellema, Michael Marsh, Karen FitzGerald, and Chris Richardson

Others: Katherine Holt (Staff), Tom Autrey (Staff), Tina Schneider (staff), Heather Dlhopsky, Nicole Maisel, Dan Stojowski, Pat Burda, Webb Smedley, Jessica Slater, Tina Slater, and Don Slater

1. Meeting Began

Tom Autrey began the meeting at 7:05 pm.

2. Schedule

Tom handed out the revised schedule after discussions with Mike Madden earlier that day. The schedule reflects the MTA releasing the AA/DEIS on October 17, 2008.

When will the MPAG go before the Planning Board? Per the schedule, is it December 4 or January 8? The preference is January 8.

The earliest date that the staff memo will go before the Planning Board is December 4 since the Purple Line is booked for this date for the Planning Board. At this point, January 8 is not a confirmed date to go before the Planning Board and we are awaiting approval for this date. Staff agrees that January 8, 2009 would be the preferred time, but cannot commit to this date right now.

After writing the summary, Tom and Katherine secured a Planning Board date of January 8, 2009 and will not present the information on December 4, 2008.

Could the schedules of the Planning Board and the County Council be overlaid on this schedule to show the recess each body takes in December and January?

Yes, this will be included in the schedule.

For the MTA public hearings, would Tom attend the hearings to illustrate comments captured from the MPAG? If not, how will comments that were not address in the DEIS go to MTA?

Tom and/or Katherine will attend some of the public hearings to listen to people testifying. We will not speak at these meetings. Staff will review the DEIS and compile information from various departments in Park and Planning and the MPAG to go into a staff report. The memo will contain the pros and cons discussed from the two September meetings as well as comments about the technical analysis by MTA and non-transportation related concerns per other non-transportation staff. The initial thinking is that the pros and cons list will be in the appendix or attachment to the staff memo. This report will go to the Planning Board. The Planning Board will discuss staff's findings and will forward this information to the County Council. Individual members of the MPAG are free, of course, to testify at the MTA public hearings.

Our process is essentially a parallel process to MTA's process within the 90-day review period. The MTA has indicated that they will accept comments from public bodies like the County Council or the Planning Board shortly after the 90 day period ends. We expect the Planning Board to consider the Purple Line DEIS before the end of the 90 day period and we expect County Council to consider the issue right after the 90 day period. The holidays falling within the circulation period complicates the scheduling.

Will the MTA have staff's analysis of the report before the MTA public hearing?

No – the MTA will not have the final staff memo.

How much time does the MPAG have for the staff memo to the Planning Board?

The initial staff (draft) memo will be available on November 14, 2008. We do not expect that memo to be necessarily complete but we do expect it to have enough in it for the MPAG to review and comment upon. The MPAG meeting of 12/09/08 will be devoted to a review of the staff memo. We need to have the final staff memo posted on the web on or about December 22, 2008 if the Planning Board is going to consider the issue on January 8, 2009.

MTA has shortened the period between the release of the DEIS/AA to the beginning of its hearings from 40 days, as was the case in the schedule announced two weeks ago, to 29 days. MTA should move the hearing date back to provide more time for review before the public hearing. At least 40 to 45 days would be more appropriate.

We can check with the MTA but we do not expect them to change the dates for the public hearings. (Note: the MTA has – since the MPAG October 1, 2008 meeting - stated that they will not change the public hearing dates).

How long do people have to testify at the MTA public hearing?
3 minutes according to Tony.

It is not clear that the public's written comments submitted during the 90-day comment period will be shared by MTA with and reviewed by the Planning Board, the County Council, or the Governor before they make their respective decisions. It also appears that MTA's required responses to comments received at the public hearing might not be completed until long after the locally preferred alternative is chosen.

We will try to get clarification on this.

Thirty days is not enough time to review the DEIS before the hearings. How will the DEIS be distributed by MTA?

The MTA will make copies available at local government offices. There will be a copy here at the Montgomery Regional Office in Silver Spring for public inspection. You will also be able to download a copy from the MTA web site or order a CD from the MTA. Finally, the staff will burn CD's for members of the MPAG. We do not expect these CD's to be available for pick-up by MPAG members before 10/21/08.

Should Mike Madden present a summary of the DEIS to the MPAG?

There are obviously different opinions on this among the MPAG members. Some thought it would be useful. Others believed that MTA had spoken at a number of MTA meetings over the last year, that there would be virtually no meetings and little time as it was for the MPAG to review, evaluate, and discuss the DEIS/AA, and any briefing would probably be no broader than any executive summary of the DEIS/AA that would be available in any event.

While not stated at the October 1, 2008 MPAG meeting, staff has opted to devote the next meeting to wrapping up the Pros and Cons list, spending some additional time on the East Silver Spring and Takoma Langley end of the alignment, and reviewing the latest schedule and MPAG review process. We will post the latest response from the Town's consultant on our project web site.

The turnaround time for the DEIS review period is too short and quick to ponder a decision. The entire analysis should be done in March with all of the data and information available.

Staff should reserve the right to ask for an extension of 90-days because the DEIS is a large document and the holidays are in the review period. It may be in the best interest of the group to get the DEIS and then ask for an extension in the review period.

The ICC comment period was extended. What process was used to get the comment period extended?

The Planning Board requested an extension from the required 45 days to 90 days. The MTA agreed to this extension. The request for the extension and the granting of the extension is similar to what occurred with the review of the ICC report. The staff understands the concern related to the holidays falling within the review period but does not feel that that fact alone justifies another request to extend the review period.

3. Chevy Chase Report

Handouts of Chevy Chase's response to MTA's white papers were given out at the meeting. This information can also be found at the Town of Chevy Chase web site. [Click here](#).

Mier suggested that the Town of Chevy Chase consultant (Sam Schwartz Engineering) discuss their finding to the MPAG at the next meeting on October 14, 2008 pending the approval of the Town Council. Another member suggested that Mike Madden also be present to discuss their response to Sam Schwartz.

See staff response above.

Staff response to the Sam Schwartz Engineering report is available online by [clicking here](#).

Will the DEIS address the low cost of the BRT option given by Sam Schwartz? The goal of the process is to find the best alternative, which should be covered in the DEIS through the white papers.

Staff will address both MTA's analysis and Sam Schwartz's analysis in the staff memo.

Some members have suggested that the Town of Chevy Chase consultant be invited (with the Town's concurrence) to appear with Mike Madden.

Some members do not want to spend another night discussing Bethesda and Chevy Chase area. Some members would like to devote more time discussing the routes through Silver Spring and east of Silver Spring.

Wayne Avenue route is not the best option and should be stated before the DEIS is released. There is lack of detail for the Thayer tunnel with a concern about ridership numbers.

The State is expressing concern about the impacts on the residential area along Jones Bridge Road while ignoring these same impacts on Wayne Avenue in Silver Spring.

Some members would like a meeting dedicated solely to Silver Spring and agree that Silver Spring should have had three meetings dedicated to it. East of Silver Spring has not had a lot of time. The next meeting should focus on east of Silver Spring to the Prince George's County line.

Discussing the Town of Chevy Chase's concerns would be fine at the October 14 meeting unless others can come up with other valid topics to address.

Can Mike Madden give a briefing to the MPAG about the DEIS discussing the Executive Summary on the evening of October 16 since the DEIS will be released on Oct. 17? This was done for the BRAC DEIS.

We will check with Mike but do not expect him to be able to brief anyone in advance of the October 17, 2008 availability date. If he is available, it would likely take the place of the October 14, 2008 meeting. For now, please assume that the next MPAG meeting is on 10/14/08 and it will consist of the agenda items noted above.

4. Woodmont East Question

At the last meeting Tom asked MPAG members to send him an email with their thoughts on a BRT preference moving through Woodmont East plaza or a stationary LRT preference. Staff received a couple of emails from MPAG members, which can be seen below.

- If I had to choose between a moving bus and stationary rail in Woodmont East Plaza, I would go with the moving bus. It would only have a single track vs. double track for light rail which would permanently impact the plaza. I also think the bus would be a better option for the trail which could then use the tunnel.
- This is in answer to your question about a preference between a stationary light rail double track vehicle(s) occupying space (most likely fenced off permanently) in the Woodmont East Plaza and the choice of a single track, moving BRT. Of the two choices offered, I strongly prefer the BRT for two reasons: first, BRT will provide for an at grade, pleasant and safe trail connection through the tunnel--a high priority for thousands of trail users; secondly the BRT is single track. Moreover it could provide an access point/station in the busiest part of Bethesda. (This would involve moving the station from under the tunnel where it would access the "elevator to nowhere" in favor of a station where people might actually use it and in the process save the county 60 million dollars.)
- Left out of the choices you gave the MPAG is the low cost BRT which would not have any negative impact on the Woodmont Plaza, would be the least expensive and thus most likely to actually be funded, would serve the BRAC/NIH area, would enhance smart growth by serving the Woodmont Triangle area of Bethesda, and do less harm to the residents of Jones Bridge Road than will be inflicted on the Dale Drive/Flower Avenue

residents under any of the rail or bus proposals connecting Silver Spring with the Langley Crossing.

- The B-CC Chamber supports the LRT mode (and trail) for the Georgetown Branch alignment for numerous reasons, but with respect to your specific question on the treatment of the Woodmont East end area, we prefer the treatment MTA has depicted (in coordination with the Woodmont East developer) for the ending of the LRT- with the stationary LRT vehicle at the end of the line (with a simple barrier) and maintenance of the streetscape along Woodmont Avenue and less impacts to the public spaces and retail edge. The BRT "ending" does not end there, as it creates a travel lane and curb cut within the streetscape, public spaces and retail frontages, and requires moving and more frequent BRT vehicles because more are needed to address the travel demand (although we agree with the analysis that LRT will increase ridership, not BRT). That intersection does not need another curb cut for the BRT and an additional vehicle/pedestrian conflict (the Planning Board should remember the confusion of this intersection from the Lot 31 and Woodmont East discussion).
- The treatment that MTA has shown for that end of the Purple Line – (the terminus of LRT which they have worked out with the developer) is far preferable to a BRT travel lane which continues on from there. Adding another “intersection” for buses, additional conflicts between pedestrians and autos is not preferable.
- LRT design is much less intrusive for the following reasons:
 - 1) The LRT tail track does not extend all the way to Woodmont Avenue as the bus option does. In addition, the MTA is working with the developer on the design of the plaza to insure good pedestrian flows and plaza esthetics.
 - 2) The tail track would be used infrequently as a storage area for vehicles out of service. This is because the actual maintenance yard is only 3 miles away and vehicles would normally be moved there when not in service.
 - 3) For pedestrians and users of the plaza, a moving vehicle is more intrusive than a stationary vehicle.

The MTA also has some new renderings of how the Woodmont East plaza design could be with LRT. They show an entirely different viewpoint than that shown in drawings from opponents of the Purple Line.

5. Pros and Cons

Katherine created a summary (two page paper) of the Pros and Cons given at the September 2008 meetings. The goal was to take all of the information gathered at the meetings and consolidate it to show items that are common throughout the separate groups. The large list of pros and cons will go into the staff memo as an appendix, but the abbreviated version will go into the text of the memo. The reason why pros and cons were gathered for the alignments

was to show that there is some shared views on broad Purple Line issues. The Planning Board has expressed an interest in identifying any areas where there is any consensus at all.

There was a suggestion to remove duplicate pros and cons and combine everything from each group into one large document. Another suggestion was to rank the pros and cons to get a super majority. Alternate idea was to allow staff to pick the pros and cons from the combined list. The last suggestion heard was to vote yes or no for a pro and con for the summary.

The summary does not accurately reflect any consensus. A member pointed out that each individual in a small group agreed and statistically you can only tell that certain people agreed.

The list of pros and cons east of Silver Spring near Long Branch and other segments may reflect that some participants did not completely understand the alignments. Several groups did not understand that there was more than one option for the Purple Line in these areas. More information should be provided for these options to clarify some of the pros and cons in this area.

The staff will take another stab at creating a summary with the understanding that reaching a general agreement on any summary of the “pros and cons” may not be possible. We would like to give it a try however. Keep in mind that the agreement being sought is not whether you agree with the pros and cons, but rather that the summary fairly represents the issues raised.

6. Current Boarding At Metrorail Stations and on Ride-On Route 15

Tom showed a chart depicting boardings at the Metrorail stations in the Purple Line study area – along with the boardings on Ride On Route 15 that runs between Takoma Langley and Silver Spring via Wayne Avenue (similar to one of the proposed Purple Line alternatives). The purpose of the chart is to show what is happening today and to note specifically that there are more boardings at the Silver Spring Metrorail than Bethesda Metrorail and more boardings at Bethesda Metrorail than Medical Center. In addition, the boardings on Route 15 are pretty close to matching the boardings at about half of the Metrorail stations in the County. The Route 15 boardings do not seem to match MTA’s projected Purple Line boardings on Wayne Avenue west of Sligo Creek Parkway, where the Route 15 boardings are much lower than the projected Purple Line figures.

The Route 15 boardings are very low at Dale Drive; yet, MTA projects what some believe are unrealistically high boardings for a Purple Line stop at Dale.

These ridership numbers don’t seem reasonable since we are comparing existing information with future data especially with BRAC.

That is fair point. The intent is not to say what is happening today will happen tomorrow. It is just a check. It is sometimes useful to ask ourselves if the model for 2030 reflects what is happening today – or at a minimum, is it inconsistent. The staff does not think it is inconsistent. Bethesda and Silver Spring are busier today than Medical Center. We have reviewed the forecast growth in these areas before and do need to provide the summary so everybody can take another look at it in the context of the on-going discussion between the MTA and the Town of Chevy Chase consultant.

It would be interesting to know where people live and work per TAZ to see how things change or might change when people are relocated from Walter Reed for BRAC.

We will see what information we can get on this from the various reports.

7. Upcoming Meetings

As a reminder, the tentative upcoming meeting dates are:

October 14, 2008

October 28, 2008

Note: There will be no MPAG meetings in November because:

- The MTA public hearings are in November
- The elections are in November
- Thanksgiving week in is November
- We need to be close to finishing our staff memo in November

The next meeting after the month of October is tentatively scheduled for December 9, 2008.