Introduction

The Town of Chevy Chase has retained a consultant, Sam Schwartz Engineering (SSE), to conduct a review of the Purple Line Alternatives Analysis (AA) / Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) process. SSE issued its initial report on April 23, 2008 and issued an update of the initial report on July 31, 2008. Copies of the report are available on the Town website at:

http://www.townofchevychase.org/n/69

The Maryland Mass Transit Administration (MTA) has responded to the SSE review documents at various times in both letter and report form. Many of the responses are posted on the Town website. The MTA's response to the July 31, 2008 is dated 08/14/08 and is available at:

http://mcparkandplanning.org/transportation/projects/documents/chevychaseSSEAnalysisTechMemo814.pdf

In conjunction with the 08/14/08 report, the MTA issued a "White Paper" examining the results of selected additional model runs. The White Paper is available at:

http://mcparkandplanning.org/transportation/projects/documents/chevychaseMBRTVariationsWhitePaper.pdf

What follows is a brief summary of the prior reports and the staff's perspective on the various comments, findings, or results.

SSE Report of July 31, 2008

Two Major Comments of SSE Report

The low-cost Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) option presented by the MTA for Jones Bridge Road lacks many generally accepted features of BRT.

Existing and future population and employment are higher along the Jones Bridge Road alternative than along the Capital Crescent Trail (Georgetown Branch) alignment. With the Jones Bridge Road (JBR) alignment, more people and jobs will have direct access to the Purple Line. This will make the Purple Line more effective and more attractive to potential riders.

MTA Report of 08/14/08[1]

Two Major Findings of MTA Report

Assumptions used by SSE would be found unacceptable by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

[1] This report is attached for reference and includes a qualifier that the report is a "discussion document and not for public distribution." The staff received permission from the MTA to release the document inasmuch as the findings have been presented to the Town of Chevy Chase by the MTA.

SSE de-emphasizes the dominant travel market in the study area – downtown Bethesda – and the superior travel times afforded through travel on the master plan alignment.

MTA White Paper – Medium Investment BRT Variations Serving Medical Center – Purple Line AA/DEIS[2]

Major Conclusion

Applying the Medium Investment BRT features to the Jones Bridge Road alignment for the entire corridor results in a ridership gain of about 10,000 weekday boardings when compared to the Low Investment BRT (50,000 vs. a range of 37,000 - 40,000) and about the same number of weekday boardings as the Medium Investment BRT (50,000 vs. a range of 49,000 – 52,000) that is in the Purple Line AA/DEIS.

Routing the Medium Investment BRT to the Medical Center via Bethesda results in a ridership gain of about 18,000 weekday boardings when compared to the Low Investment BRT (58,000 vs. a range of 37,000 – 40,000) and about 8,000 more boardings than the Medium Investment BRT (58,000 vs. a range of 49,000 – 52,000) that is in the Purple Line AA/DEIS.

The respective cost effectiveness numbers are shown in the table[3]:

Alternative	In AA/DEIS	Not In AA/DEIS
Low BRT Via JBR	$18.24	N/A
Medium BRT Via JBR To Bethesda	N/A	$15.62
Medium BRT To Bethesda Via Master Plan Alignment	$14.01	N/A
Medium BRT To Medical Center Via Master Plan Alignment	N/A	$13.43

Upcoming SSE Response

The Town of Chevy Chase has indicated that SSE is preparing a response to the MTA Report of 08/14/08. A summary of that response will be added to this narrative and a link will be provided to the entire report.

Staff Responses

The Planning Department staff responded to the initial SSE report of 04/23/08. The link to that response is:

http://www.mcparkandplanning.org/Transportation/projects/documents/Staffreview_Schwartzreport.pdf

The MPAG has also reviewed the forecasts for

[2] The MTA White Paper is undated but was released by the MTA at the same time as the 08/14/08 report.
[3] Cost effectiveness in this instance is "annualized cost per hour of user benefit" and is one variable that is used by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to rate "New Start" projects. The lower the cost the better – i.e. the lower the cost the higher the "cost-effectiveness" rating by the FTA.

housing and job growth along the corridor. That information for Bethesda, Silver Spring, and the Medical Center area is provided below:

Description	TAZ	Households / Acre 2005	Households / Acre 2030	% Increase	% Annual Increase
NIH / Natonal Library of Medicine	24	1	1	1%	0.04%
Bethesda CBD	5	21	48	133%	5.33%
Bethesda CBD	4	16	30	89%	3.55%
Bethesda CBD	3	18	28	61%	2.44%
National Naval Medical / USUHS	26	0	0	34%	1.35%
West Chevy Chase Heights / Columbia CC	27	4	4	8%	0.33%
Town of Chevy Chase	28	3	4	15%	0.61%
North Chevy Chase / Audubon Society	32	2	2	2%	0.07%
Master Plan Alignmnet East of Conn Ave.	31	2	2	0%	0.00%
Walter Reed Annex Area	38	0	1	253%	10.11%
Lyttonsville Area	37	3	3	1%	0.03%
Woodside - North Side of CSX	30	3	3	1%	0.04%
Rosemary Hills - South Side of CSX	36	11	11	1%	0.03%
Woodside - Between 16th St & Georgia Avenue	40	3	3	10%	0.40%
Silver Spring CBD - Between Wayne Ave & Spring St.	35	18	37	100%	4.01%
Silver Spring CBD - Between E/W Highway and Fenton St.	34	4	39	784%	31.36%
Silver Spring CBD - Between DC Line and CSX	33	19	38	96%	3.84%

Description	TAZ	Jobs / Acre 2005	Jobs / Acre 2030	% Increase	% Annual Increase
NIH / Natonal Library of Medicine	24	50	61	22%	0.89%
Bethesda CBD	5	62	68	10%	0.39%
Bethesda CBD	4	137	158	15%	0.61%
Bethesda CBD	3	76	87	15%	0.62%
National Naval Medical / USUHS	26	25	32	31%	1.23%
West Chevy Chase Heights / Columbia CC	27	3	3	22%	0.88%
Town of Chevy Chase	28	1	1	5%	0.21%
North Chevy Chase / Audubon Society	32	1	2	72%	2.89%
Master Plan Alignmnet East of Conn Ave.	31	2	3	5%	0.20%
Walter Reed Annex Area	38	9	11	17%	0.68%
Lyttonsville Area	37	1	1	0%	0.00%
Woodside - North Side of CSX	30	1	1	5%	0.18%
Rosemary Hills - South Side of CSX	36	2	2	15%	0.59%
Woodside - Between 16th St & Georgia Avenue	40	0	0	106%	4.24%
Silver Spring CBD - Between Wayne Ave & Spring St.	35	121	143	19%	0.75%
Silver Spring CBD - Between E/W Highway and Fenton St.	34	85	94	11%	0.43%
Silver Spring CBD - Between DC Line and CSX	33	47	56	21%	0.82%

As noted above, the forecast densities for jobs are generally greater within the two CBDs than on the campus settings of NIH/Naval Medical. In addition, the CBD's have households where NIH and the Naval Medical have none (or little).

One major point being made by the SSE work is that the households and jobs in TAZ (Traffic Analysis Zone) 5 are not really within walking distance of the Bethesda Metrorail (or Purple Line) station and would be better served by a stop between the Bethesda Station and the Medical Center Station.

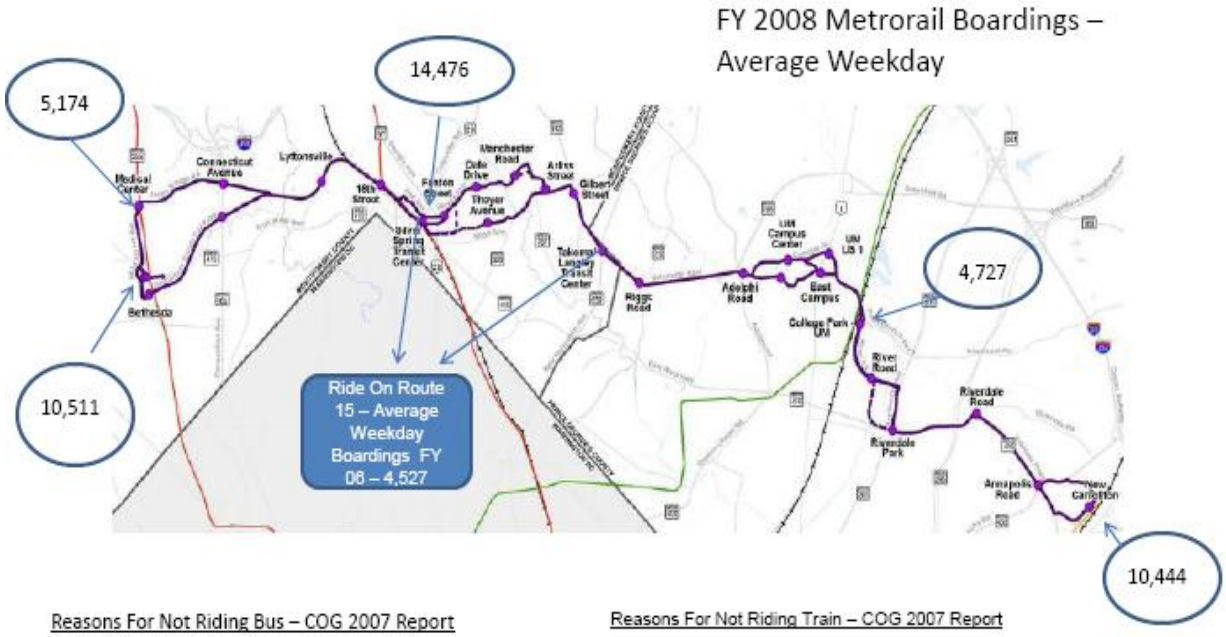
The MTA White Paper above compares the ridership and cost effectiveness of alignments between Silver Spring and Bethesda – using either the Master Plan alignment or Jones Bridge Road with the former serving the Bethesda CBD first and the latter serving the Medical Center

first. The analysis also includes a station between Bethesda and the Medical Center to more directly serve the households and jobs in that area – in response to the SSE critique.

The model results indicate that a medium investment level BRT via Jones Bridge Road to the Bethesda CBD would carry about the same number of passengers as a medium level BRT that uses the Master Plan alignment and ended at the Bethesda CBD. A medium investment BRT alignment that would end at the Medical Center after first stopping in Bethesda would carry about 8,000 more passengers than a similar alignment that would end at Bethesda.

The model results reflect the higher densities of Bethesda and Silver Spring, the shorter travel time provided by the Master Plan alignment, and the additional ridership from the additional stop.

The model results are not inconsistent with what is happening today given the boardings at the respective Metrorail stations and the premium placed upon travel time savings. The chart below presents the Metrorail boardings and the results of the latest survey of area commuters as to why they do not use public transit.



Reasons For Not Riding Bus – COG 2007 Report

	2007	2004	2001
Takes Too Much Time	31%	32%	27%
Need Car For Work	16%	15%	19%
No Service / Don't Know of Service	19%	16%	21%

Reasons For Not Riding Train – COG 2007 Report

	2007	2004	2001
No Train Service / Don't Know Of Service	30%	38%	43%
Takes Too Much Time	22%	21%	16%
Need Car For Work	16%	14%	18%