

"Federation Corner" column
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Rapid transit news updates

by Dan Wilhelm
MCCF Transportation Chair

A number of transit related actions have occurred over the last month.

Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan

This was once called the Master Plan of Roads and Transitways. The date for release of the Planning Department staff draft is being pushed back from the end of December to March, when it will be posted on the Planning Board's web site. The extra time is needed by staff to undertake additional studies. The Board's public hearing is tentatively scheduled to take place in early May. The MCCF is currently working on putting together a program for our April meeting which will give Federation delegates and the public the opportunity to learn about the staff draft.

2012 County Capital Improvement Program (CIP) amendment

The County Executive has submitted a Supplemental Appropriation request to the Council, an amendment to the current fiscal year Capital Budget seeking \$1m to facilitate further study of a countywide Rapid Transit System (RTS). The Council hearing on the funding request took place on Tuesday of this week, January 15. A worksession in the Transportation, Infrastructure, Energy and Environment Committee is scheduled for the morning of January 17, with a full Council vote likely to occur on January 22.

The CIP amendment requests the \$1M to undertake a number of needed studies which were identified by the Transit Task Force (TTF). Many speakers at the September public hearing on the Transit Task Force's recommendations indicated they wanted the answers that further studies could provide.

The original package from the County Executive was not entirely clear but has since been clarified. The Executive is focusing on the TTF's phase 1 network which covers MD 355, US29, Randolph Road, the InterCounty Connector (ICC) route, the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT), Viers Mill Road, and Georgia Avenue between Glenmont and Olney.

The ICC is already built so no additional study of that route is needed. Studies are already underway by the state for the CCT, Viers Mill Road, and Georgia Avenue. The Transit Corridors Function Master Plan will be looking at a number of corridors including MD355, US29, and Randolph Road. Also recall that Governor O'Malley selected the use of dedicated bus lanes over light rail for the CCCT, and the project has been submitted to the Federal Department of Transportation for some possible funding.

The \$1m CIP amendment will cover work other than the design of the corridors, including:

- service planning and integration of Ride On and Metrobus with the new rapid transit routes;
- pedestrian and bicycle access to the stations;
- vehicle parking requirements at stations;
- signal prioritization at intersections;
- corrections to organizational structure to efficiently and effectively design, build, operate and maintain the Rapid Transit System and ensure sustainability and integration with Ride On and Metrobus services; and,

- development of the framework and polices associated with future right-of-way and operational agreements with the state (most corridors use existing state road right-of-way).

FY2014-2019 CIP

The biannual six-year Capital Improvements Program (CIP) will be submitted to the County Council in the middle of January. We understand that part of it will include some new CIP projects. At this time, we don't know what they will cover. The Council will hold hearings on the entire set of CIP projects, and then make a decision in May about which ones to fund and the amount of the funding.

Rapid Transit System (RTS) Steering Committee

The County has formed a RTS Steering Committee to support and provide advice to the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) and County Executive on the implementation of an RTS in the county, within the framework of adopted and soon-to-be adopted Master Plans for various areas of the county, and within the fiscal constraints and overall policy direction of the County Executive.

The Committee has sixteen voting members, including three members from the County Executive's Transit Task Force, two public members who are transit experts, a number of county department heads, and representatives from WMATA (Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Administration) and MD DOT (Maryland Department of Transportation). I am one of the three TTF members on this committee. In early December we had a kick-off meeting. The presentation from that meeting can be found at

<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/dot/index.html>

The views expressed in this column do not necessarily reflect formal positions adopted by the Federation. To submit an 800-1000 word column for consideration, send as an email attachment to theelms518@earthlink.net