

ACTION COMMITTEE FOR TRANSIT

Transit Times

The Newsletter of the Action Committee for Transit of Montgomery County, Maryland
Volume 27, Number 2, April 2013

PLEASE NOTE OUR MEETING LOCATION HAS CHANGED:

ACT's monthly meetings are now held at the Silver Spring Civic Building, One Veterans Place 20910, in the Ellsworth Room at 7:30 PM, the second Tuesday of each month.

The Silver Spring Civic Building is located at the corner of Fenton St & Ellsworth Dr. It is an eight minute walk north from the Silver Spring Metro Station. The nearest bus routes are: Ride-On routes #9, #12, #15, #16, #17, #19 and #20; and, Metrobus routes Z6 and Z8.

Parking is available at the Town Square Garage just across Ellsworth Dr from the Civic Building; it is free after 6:00pm.

For meeting updates check our website listed on pg 2.

April 9: Speaker: Delegate Heather Mizeur, District 20
"Transit - The Key to Equitable Economic Development"

May 14: Speaker: Larry Cole, Montgomery County Planning Department - "Planning for Bus Rapid Transit and MARC Expansion"

June 11: Speaker TBD

- Momentum: WMATA's Strategic Plan 2013 – 2015 (p. 4)
- Denver RTD's Eagle Project Exemplifies P3 Financing (p. 5)
- Relationship between Transit Reliability and Ridership (p. 6)

President's Message

Tina Slater

Monthly ACT meetings are now held in the new, transit-accessible Silver Spring Civic Building. At the January meeting, Project Manager Mike Madden said 74,500 riders will use the Purple Line in 2040, MTA is publishing new economic benefits statistics, and the new stations will include neighborhood-related artwork. In February, at our new meeting location, Metro Assistant General Manager Shyam Kannan briefed us on "Momentum" – a strategic plan for expanding Metrorail and Metrobus. In March, Howard County Executive Ken Ulman spoke about alleviating the huge traffic backup to/from Ft. Meade, the need for expanding MARC, and transit needs on congested US 29.

In January, on the first anniversary of the public revelation of bad concrete at the Silver Spring Transit Center, ACT called for a special public meeting to get answers. Also in

Feature Articles

- President's Message (p. 1)
- Leggett Ranks the Purple Line as the County's Highest Transportation Priority! (p. 2)
- Upcounty Pedestrian Forum (p. 3)

Join ACT Now

You can join ACT by remitting membership dues. Your membership dues are based on the category of membership that you choose:

\$10 [rider (code R on mail label)]
 \$25 [activist (code A on mail label)]
 \$50 [conductor (code C on mail label)]
 \$100 [engineer (code E on mail label)]

[the two digits after your category of membership code indicates year paid]

Send your check for the chosen category of membership to:

Action Committee for Transit
P.O. Box 7074
Silver Spring, MD 20907

www.actfortransit.org

[www.twitter.com/actfortransit](https://twitter.com/actfortransit)

www.facebook.com/actfortransit

You may also give your membership dues to Treasurer John Fay at the next ACT meeting. The address on your check will be used as the mailing address unless otherwise indicated.

Your dues support ACT Activities and this newsletter.

January, ACT held its first ever up-county forum on pedestrian safety. New members joined, activists organized, and ACT followed up with a letter to the county's Director of Transportation.

With transportation funding an issue, ACT joined "Get Maryland Moving", a coalition of 40 environmental, business, and civic activists supporting Governor O'Malley's plan to raise the gas tax and fund transportation infrastructure. More than 1000 petition signatures and 500 e-mails were sent to legislators. To get the word out, ACT leafleted at Greenbelt Metro in Prince George's County. Thanks goes to Kelly Blynn, Coalition for Smarter Growth, for organizing this huge effort.



Thank you to everyone who called and wrote to support increased transportation funding – as of March 29, the transportation bill passed both houses – a HUGE victory for transit!

April 21 – 27, 2013 is National Volunteer Week

- a time to honor individuals who dedicate themselves to taking action and solving problems in their communities. This describes our wonderful ACT members who work in little ways and big to advocate for more and improved transit in our County. Kudos to all of you who have supported ACT and better transit through writing letters, sending emails, attending meetings, paying dues and making contributions to ACT, leafleting, helping with mailings and attending rallies, just to name a few. We couldn't be as successful as we have been without you.

Leggett Ranks the Purple Line as the County's Highest Transportation Priority!

At a hearing in Annapolis on transportation funding on March 15, 2013, County Executive Ike Leggett, along with the County Exec's of Prince George's and Howard Counties, was asked, "What would be your number one transportation priority if you get funding, but not all the funding that you'd want?" Ike answered, "Purple Line."

Upcounty Pedestrian Forum

Quon Kwan

ACT sponsored its first community forum on upcounty pedestrian issues on January 26, 2013, in Germantown, attended by a crowd of 50. Jeff Dunckel, Montgomery County's (MC) Department of Transportation (MCDOT) pedestrian safety coordinator, spoke about the County's "Complete Streets" policy. (Complete streets safely accommodate **all** users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities). In spite of the County's "Complete Streets" policy, the forum identified seven problem places and four problem issues for upcounty pedestrians, all of which ACT, in a letter dated February 4, 2013, asked Arthur Holmes, Director of MCDOT to address. (We received a reply dated March 18, 2013.)

Seven Problem Places

1. *Germantown Rd., between Wisteria Dr. & I-270.* On this 0.7-mile stretch of Germantown Rd., pedestrians face high-speed traffic on multi-lane roads with widely-spaced intersections. **Five pedestrians have died here since 2007.** MCDOT needs to classify this stretch as a High Incidence Area, conduct a Pedestrian Road Safety Audit, and implement the suggestions.

2. *Crosswalk across Muddy Branch Rd. north of Suffield Dr.* This marked crosswalk accesses Muddy Branch Square shopping center, but vegetation is overgrown and drivers speed. **Since 2009, 2 pedestrians have died here.** MCDOT needs to add pedestrian signals and traffic calming.

3. *Intersection of Dairymaid Dr. & Great Seneca Hwy.* This unmarked crosswalk accesses Kingsview Village shopping center. MCDOT needs to post the necessary signs and markings to make this unmarked crosswalk safe.

4. *Intersection of Mateny Rd & Clopper Rd.* There is a pedestrian signal and pavement markings on only one of the four legs of this intersection (the sole pavement marking consists only of parallel lines) with bus stops on three corners of this intersection. MCDOT needs to add suitably-timed pedestrian signals, high-visibility pavement markings, and provide signage for drivers to all four legs of this intersection.

5. *Intersection of Shady Grove Rd. & N. Frederick Rd.* Lacking a marked crosswalk across N. Frederick Rd. on the south side of this intersection, bus riders must walk 8.5 minutes to cross traffic lanes between the bus stop on the northeast corner and the bus stop for the eastbound Shady Grove Rd. bus using marked crosswalks. MCDOT and Maryland State Highway Administration (MD SHA) need to add high-visibility pavement markings, signs, and suitably-timed pedestrian signals to all four legs of the intersection.

6. *Intersection of Observation Dr. & Stringtown Rd.* This unmarked crosswalk accesses Clarksburg Elementary School. MCDOT needs to add the necessary signs and markings to make this crosswalk safe.

7. *Roads in the more rural parts of upcounty.* People are unable to get safely to destinations within walking distance, such as parks, post offices, rail stations, bus stops, churches, schools, and neighbors' houses, due to high-speed traffic and a lack of sidewalks and shoulders. MCDOT and MD SHA need to design and operate rural roads to safely accommodate pedestrians.

Four Problem issues

1. *Cell phone use.* Maryland state law does not allow police officers to issue citations for cell phone use while driving, unless there is a primary offense (e.g., speeding). MCDOT and MC Police need to work with state legislators to change the law so that using a cell phone while driving is a primary offense.

2. *Lower speeds.* Because of the high vulnerability of children, drivers should be more careful when approaching schools. MCDOT (working with MD SHA) needs to install signs lowering speed limits and warning of increased fines for speeding around every school.

3. *Crosswalk markings.* Many of the marked crosswalks are either faded or marked only by two parallel lines – not very visible even when the markings are fresh. MCDOT needs to ensure all marked crosswalks are highly visible and to prioritize crosswalk maintenance.

4. *Driver awareness campaigns.* MCDOT needs to increase driver awareness of and compliance with pedestrian safety laws to stop for pedestrians in both marked and unmarked crosswalks.

Momentum: WMATA's Strategic Plan 2013 – 2015

Quon Kwan

On January 24, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) issued its strategic plan, "Momentum – The Next Generation of Metro" for 2013 - 2015. WMATA Assistant General Manager for Planning and Joint Development, Shyam Kannan, presented the plan at ACT's monthly meeting on February 12th.

In short, the strategic plan for Metro aims to continue system rehabilitation as well as accommodate future growth. Rehabilitation is to address the effects of years of chronic underfunding of maintenance as manifested by aging equipment, deteriorating infrastructure, and less-reliable service. At the same time, Metrorail ridership has grown from 100,000/day in the late 1970's to over 750,000/day today and is projected to be 950,000/day in 2025. Weekday Metrobus ridership hovers at roughly 450,000/day and is projected to be approximately 500,000/day in 2025. The strategic plan stipulates four goals to reach by 2025:

- Build and maintain a premier safety culture and system.
- Meet or exceed customer expectations by consistently delivering quality service
- Improve regional mobility and connect communities
- Ensure financial stability and invest in employees and assets

WMATA plans to attain these goals by 2025 via seven initiatives. These seven initiatives (total cost: \$6 billion) will increase system core capacity and improve both the rail and bus networks:

- Enable Metrorail to run all 8-car trains at peak periods, and have the rail cars, power traction system, and vehicle storage to accommodate 35,000 more riders/hour.

- Complete the Metrobus Priority Corridor Network (PCN) along 24 corridors, which would carry over 50% of the riders. Improvements would require bus-only lanes, limited-stop service, bus stop amenities, and transit signal priority. This will accommodate 100,000 more riders.
- Improve core stations by building pedestrian tunnels between Farragut North and Farragut West Stations and between Metro Center and Gallery Place Stations. Entrances, mezzanines, stairs, escalators, and elevators would be added at Metro Center, Gallery Place, Union Station, and L'Enfant Plaza.
- Add pocket tracks, turnbacks, and interlockings on Metrorail system as necessary to eliminate choke points.
- Add infrastructure to increase Blue Line service between Pentagon and Arlington, to decongest Rosslyn Station, and to connect between Orange/Silver Lines (west of Rosslyn) and existing Blue Line (south of Rosslyn) that bypasses Rosslyn. [Alternative is to build another Rosslyn Station to split the Blue Line and Orange/Silver Lines.]
- Install a next-generation communications infrastructure for customer-facing needs (i.e., trip planning, fare payment, and regional transit network navigation).
- Accommodate Metrobus service growth through fleet expansion and more garages.

National Train Day is May 11

At Union Station, 50 Massachusetts Ave NE, Washington DC 20002 / 11:00 AM

The National Train Day event at Washington DC Union Station will feature free kids' activities sponsored by Chuggington, interactive and educational exhibits, model train displays and giveaways. Visitors will have the chance to tour private luxury railcars, freight and commuter trains, as well as current Amtrak equipment.

For more information about National Train Day: <http://www.nationaltrainday.com/s/>

Denver RTD's Eagle Project Exemplifies P3 Financing

Quon Kwan

The last issue of *Transit Times*, [see "Report of Insufficient Funds for Purple Line & Other Transit in Maryland"] alluded to the Maryland General Assembly's Department of Legislative Services report, "Financing Options for Transit Expansion." The report suggests alternative financing tools, for the days of funding multi-billion dollar transit projects with pay-as-you-go revenues and tax-exempt bonds are over. The report presented a case study of Denver Regional Transportation District's (RTD) public-private partnership (aka "P3"), which could apply to building the Purple Line.

The use of P3s is still relatively new in the U.S. Although some U.S. road projects have involved P3s, very few transit projects have done so besides the RTD's project. The State of Maryland has had some experience with P3s, namely, the Seagirt Marine Terminal and the travel plazas on I-95. However, Maryland has not yet used a P3 agreement with availability payments. Notwithstanding, by utilizing several different financing techniques, RTD was able to move the \$2 billion Eagle Project much sooner than if it had waited for traditional funding. The same could be done for the Purple Line.

RTD embarked on its P3 project, the Eagle Project, in 2004, which includes the 22.8-mile East Corridor, the 11.2-mile Gold Line, the electrified segment of the Northwest Line, and a commuter rail maintenance facility.

For the Eagle Project, the RTD selected a private consortium under a P3 agreement to design, build, finance, operate, and maintain over 30 miles of new commuter rail lines. The Eagle Project received substantial attention because it (i) is the country's first transit project to use an availability-based payment stream (discussed later) and (ii) uses a mix of financing sources.

Financing of the \$2 billion for the Eagle Project is as follows: Federal New Starts grants 50%, private debt (described in more detail later) and equity 24%, Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) loans 14%, sales tax revenue 5%, local contributions 4%, and Federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement grant 3%. None of the Federal grants have to be

repaid. However, the TIFIA loans (\$280 million) have to be repaid. TIFIA loans offer favorable interest rates and flexible repayment terms. RTD estimates saving \$164.0 million in financing costs by using the lower-interest rate TIFIA loans rather than revenue bonds. Repayment of the TIFIA loans will come from RTD's sales tax revenues. Denver voters recently approved a raise of 0.4% in the sales tax for transit.

How do P3s work in the context of the Eagle Project? The P3 winning bid was from Denver Transit Partners (DTP) – \$300.0 million lower than RTD's own estimate. The P3 agreement spans 34 years while most P3 agreements utilizing availability payments run 25 to 30 years. The 34 years include 5 years for DTP to design and build the commuter rail lines followed by 29 years for DTP to operate and maintain the commuter rail lines. The RTD will set all fares and retain all assets and revenues (from fares, advertising, and parking).

While DTP finances \$398 million of the project up front, it receives a return on its investment through so-called "availability payments" from the RTD over the life of the 34-year agreement. The availability payments will total \$5.3 billion, of which \$1.2 billion are for construction. Availability payments allow RTD to repay the private capital and pay for ongoing operations and maintenance. Availability payments for capital construction costs are similar to debt service on bonds, but the key difference with availability payments is that payment levels are performance-based. Deductions to the payment may be made if service quality does not meet standards in the P3 agreement. In years 6 through 34 of the P3 agreement, \$4.2 billion of the \$5.3 availability payments by RTD will be to repay DTP for the \$398 million in private activity bonds and to pay DTP for operations and maintenance.

When structured properly, P3s provide risk-sharing benefits. Risk is usually assigned to the party best able to mitigate risk. For example, design-build contracts move the risk of construction cost overruns and delays to the private sector. However, this risk movement comes at a premium – the private sector wants to be compensated for taking on this risk, thus, increasing project costs. Rates for private sector financing are typically higher than for traditional tax-exempt financing, but these increased costs may be mitigated by whole life-cycle cost efficiencies provided by the private sector.

Relationship between Transit Reliability and Ridership

Quon Kwan

A most interesting presentation at the 92nd Annual Transportation Research Board Meeting on January 14, 2013 in Washington, DC was "Passengers' Perception of and Behavioral Adaptation to Unreliability in Public Transportation" by Andre Carrel *et al* from the University of California at Berkeley. This is the first study to address how riders are affected by transit unreliability and how they adapt their transit usage to cope with it. Reliability is a key aspect of public transit usage and is valued by users even more so than travel time.

Most commonly, researchers refer to reliability as travel time variability. Some refer to it as schedule adherence, arrival punctuality, repeatability, or predictability. Some refer to it as likelihood of finding a seat. However, on an individual level, reliability depends on what a passenger considers to be the norm. Riders who use a published or posted schedule consider reliability as schedule adherence, but when the trip was during rush hours, they would NOT consider transit as unreliable because of expected delays due to congestion. On the other hand, they would consider transit as unreliable if unexpected delays occurred on a non-rush hour trip.

Andre Carrel *et al* conducted their study by carrying out a survey of current and former riders on the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Authority's (MUNI) transit services (bus, trolleybus, streetcar, light rail, and cable car). Current riders were queried about what unreliable service they had experienced in the past and what strategies they had to cope with it. Current riders were also asked about their frequency of transit usage and their familiarity with real-time departure information, and then to rate 26 measures of unreliability and how important they were, and finally, to say the last time that they experienced each one. Former riders were asked about reasons for no longer using MUNI (e.g., changing jobs, service cuts, and so forth). Former riders were also presented with a list of unreliability events and asked approximately how frequently they encountered each one and how it mattered to dropping MUNI.

Not surprisingly, the overall survey results (for both current and former riders) showed that reliability was rated as highly important on work trips and not as important on non-work trips. Second, for both types of riders, reliability in transferring proved to be the most important characteristic, i.e., being able to make a scheduled connection and do it in less than 10 minutes. This is why it is important for transit agencies to "guarantee" a connection even if it means holding the connecting vehicle. Also, being able to walk to a stop and not having to wait more than 10 minutes for the next MUNI vehicle was next most important. What was fascinating was that riders who do not rely on schedules but use real-time data (available via smart phone apps or *Next Bus* message signs) consider it very important for the vehicle to arrive at the indicated time. Rated least important by both types of riders was the likelihood of a seat.

The majority of current riders said either they have a strategy to adapt to unreliability or they reduced MUNI usage due to unreliability. Strategies for adapting to unreliability include shifting from local to express buses, shifting to other routes, shifting to another transit mode, allowing extra time. The strategy of shifting time of travel (e.g., from rush to non-rush hours) was fairly unpopular. As for former users giving reasons for dropping MUNI, 50% cited unreliability and 40% said other MUNI service aspects or service cuts.

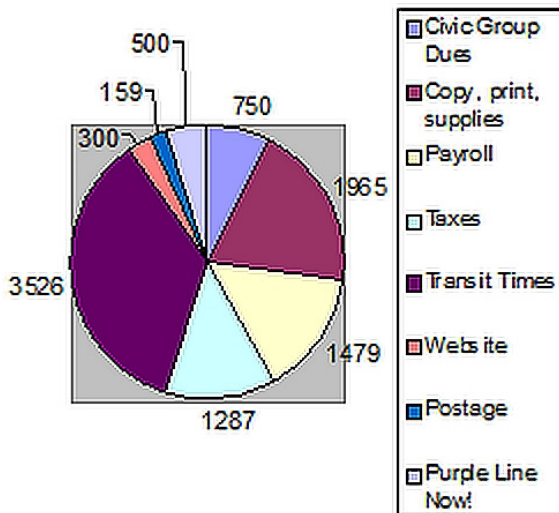
As expected, riders are more forgiving of problems perceived as being outside the transit agency's control (e.g., traffic light outages). In fact, out of all reliability issues in the study, the strongest effect on dropping transit usage was delays due to operational problems, such as problems downstream on a rail line not immediately visible to the rider. This is why it is important to announce reasons for a delay. The point in a transit trip where a delay is encountered does matter to the rider. Experiencing long delays or gaps at a transfer stop contributes to riders dropping transit usage more than twice as strongly as delays or gaps at the originating stop.

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ACT Treasurer's 2012 Report

John Fay

ACT began 2012 with a bank balance of \$13,737.12. Income for 2012 of \$12,493.31 came from Dues -- \$7590, Donations -- \$3653.31, and remaining 25th Anniversary Gala Donations -- \$1250. After expenses of \$9966.97 ACT ended 2012 with a balance of \$16,263.46 at Eagle Bank. The chart on the right shows the distribution of expenses rounded to the nearest dollar.



Congratulations to ACT Member Alexander Radichevich!

Cindy Snow

Alexander received a 2012 Beautification Award from Prince George's County for:

"30 Years of Dedicated Service . . . in County Beautification."

The project that won him this award was the garden that he grew in *"the barren space in front of the Metro station just up the street from his home"* - namely the College Park Metro. Alexander joined ACT in 2003 and has been a frequent attendee at meetings. If you ever get to the College Park Metro, be sure to stop and smell the flowers, courtesy of our very own. Thanks Alexander.



Take a Bike Ride with the Montgomery County Sierra Club, learn about their new Bicycle Statement, filled with ideas to make biking a safe and common activity for teens through seniors.

When: Saturday, April 20, 10am – 1pm (rain date is Sat, April 27)
Meet: One Veteran's Place, Silver Spring

Bicycle Advocates will take participants on the Metropolitan Branch and Sligo Creek trails. You'll also briefly ride on the city streets, exploring a variety of semi-urban biking landscapes. Free and open to the public. For more information and to make a reservation, contact Ethan Goffman at ethan.goffman@maryland.sierraclub.org.

Bike to Work Day 2013 is Friday, May 17



Bike to Work Day prompts thousands of area commuters to bicycle to work to highlight and promote this clean commute option. For the DC area it is being organized by Commuter Connections and the Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA).

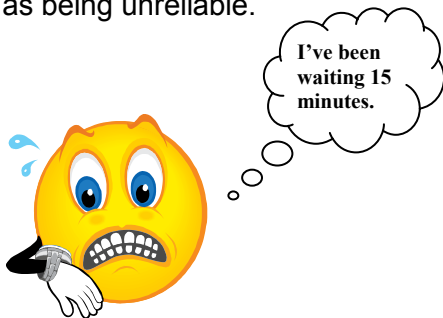
Hop on a bike and join the fun. Register Early and Ride in Style – Free t-shirts will be available for the first 12,000 registrants who are in attendance at the pit stop they registered for. Choose from over 70 Pit Stop Celebrations – Each pit stop will offer food and beverage, entertainment, dynamic speakers and chances to win bicycles and other prizes. You must register with your pit stop location to be eligible for prizes. Join a Commuter Convoy – These will be led by experienced bicycle commuters, and many routes are available

For more information and to register online go to www.biketoworkmetrodc.org or call 800-745-RIDE.

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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There were two observations: First, a rider running to the transit stop but missing the vehicle tends not to blame the transit agency, but a rider left behind due to vehicle crowding tends to blame the transit agency. Second is the impact of technology. In fact, 93% of the riders used real-time arrival data. Also, riders did not stop using real-time data after a bad experience because (i) real-time data services are branded by the vendor so riders tend not to blame the transit agency and (ii) real-time data is better than nothing. A consequence of relying on real-time arrival data was that such riders, not knowing timetables, perceived infrequent service (more than every 10 minutes) as being unreliable.



Editorial Remarks

Your Transit Times editor is Quon Kwan. Cutoff date for receiving materials for the next publication is **June 12**. Send your materials to Quon at: gykwan@gmail.com or call him at: (h) 301-460-7454.

ACT Officers/Staff for 2013:

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admin@actfortransit.org