



# ACTION COMMITTEE FOR TRANSIT

## Montgomery County's Advocates for Better Transportation

### Transit Times

The Newsletter of the Action Committee for Transit of Montgomery County, Maryland  
Volume 25, Number 2, April 2011 (revised)

ACT's monthly meetings are held at 7:30 PM, the second Tuesday of each month, at the Silver Spring Center, 8818 Georgia Ave, in the Woodside Conference Room.

The Silver Spring Center is located on the northwest corner of Georgia Ave and Spring St, just south of Ballard St and east of 1st Ave. Enter the parking lot from Ballard St. Enter the building on the Georgia Ave side.

It is a ten minute walk north of the Silver Spring Metro Station; it is a two-block walk from the nearest Ride-On #5 stop; and, the Metrobus "Q" and "Y" routes pass in front of the Center.

For meeting updates check our website listed on pg 2.

April 12: Speaker: Art Guzzetti, Vice President for Policy, American Public Transportation Association - "Current Trends in Transit Ridership"

May 10: Speaker TBD

June 14: Speaker: Ira Silverman, Maryland Transit Administration - "Turning the MARC Growth & Investment Plan into reality on the Brunswick Line"

- Letter to State Legislators to Raise Gas Tax to Pay for Better Transit (p. 4)
- Does Graphics Design Make a Difference for Transit? (p. 5)
- The Sanders-Henn Community Hero Award (p. 8)

#### Letter from New ACT President

Tina Slater

I'm excited to be your new ACT President and feel supported by our Board members (both new and former), our previous president Ben Ross, who served for 15 years, and others who have served in this role – like the late Harry Sanders, who prodded me into transit action. ACT is an incredible group that mobilizes people to speak up for better transportation outcomes for Montgomery County. Your commitment and volunteerism have sustained and grown ACT into the organization it is today – one to be reckoned with. People listen when ACT speaks. In fact, this fall we'll celebrate ACT's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. If you'd like to lend a hand with ideas or time – we'd love to hear from you --- so we can plan a party!!

Taking on the presidency is daunting, but I'm excited because of the many members with expertise in the subjects that affect transit in our county. We have amazing volunteers who leaflet at Metro stations and

#### Feature Articles

- Letter from New ACT President (p. 1)
- ACT Goes for All-Day MARC (p. 3)
- RAIL~VOLUTION 2011 Comes to Washington DC in October (p. 3)
- ACT Comments on County's Transportation Priorities (p. 4)

## 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)]

[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](http://www.actfortransit.org)  
[www.twitter.com/actfortransit](http://www.twitter.com/actfortransit)

You may also give your membership dues to Treasurer Ted Van Houten 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.

**Thanks** to our new young volunteers  
**Calvin Yeh & John Gallagher**

for leafleting at the Frederick "First Saturday" on March 5, 2011 about the MARC expansion plan. We hope to inspire more young volunteer students like you to join ACT!!!

neighborhoods (in all kinds of weather) to inform the public about the Purple Line, MARC expansion, and threats to bus service. Volunteers inform voters via ACT's candidate scorecard. Our leaflet map of "The ACT Vision" for the I-270 corridor is opening eyes and minds.

Thank you for volunteering, writing your officials, testifying, making phone calls, stuffing envelopes, talking to your neighbors, and bringing the transit perspective into conversations. It is amazing how this one-on-one contact can help people start to think about things they might not have considered before. So you can see that we rely on our members to move our ideas forward.

Speaking of the expertise of our members, webmaster Jeri Roth Lande converted our website into one that is alive with color and easy to navigate. Staff member Cindy Snow keeps the daily machinery purring by keeping us organized, answering queries, scheduling volunteers, and distributing mailings. Editor Quon Kwan has been producing the Transit Times newsletter for more than a decade and integrates pertinent articles that are read by more than 1,000 people.

Please renew if you have not already; encourage your friends to join. We have a great website, we offer TWEETS, and we expect to get our Facebook page up and running soon. All this "new technology" reminds me that we would like to ramp up our youth section, as students do "get" transit. Let's reach out to them. And with gas prices on the rise, even more people will be open to our message. I want to collaborate, hear your ideas and tap into the expertise and energy out there, so please get in touch with me, Tina Slater, at 301-585-5038, [slater.tina@gmail.com](mailto:slater.tina@gmail.com)

## Did You Know?

May is National Bike Month

May 16-20, 2011 is Bike to Work Week

Friday, May 20, 2011 is Bike to Work Day

## ACT Goes for All-Day MARC

ACT Press Release of February 28, 2011

Action Committee for Transit launched a leafleting campaign today calling for all-day two-way train service between Washington D.C and both Frederick and Brunswick, MD. Leaflets will be distributed to Maryland Area Rail Commuter (MARC) train riders, at park-and-rides, and in downtown Frederick.

A plan drawn up four years ago by Maryland transportation planners, called the MARC Growth and Investment Plan, would vastly improve service on the commuter train line from Washington to Frederick and Brunswick. Trains would run all day in both directions. During rush hours, trains would run every 15 minutes from Union Station to Point of Rocks and then diverge to either Frederick every 30 mins. or to Brunswick every 30 mins. Train frequency in mid-day, evenings, and weekends would be less.

ACT President Tina Slater pointed out that the Maryland legislature is considering an increased gas tax to fund transportation. The citizens group asks MARC riders and other voters to urge their state legislators to use a portion of the gas tax money for the MARC train improvements. Total cost of the planned improvements on the trains to Frederick and Brunswick is \$560 million, but the plan can be carried out in stages as money becomes available. All-day MARC service is part of the comprehensive transit plan that ACT advocates for the I-270 corridor.

*"MARC is a great way to commute if your schedule fits the MARC schedule,"* said ACT vice-president Miriam Schoenbaum of Boyds, *"but right now the trains only go one way for a few hours in the morning, and the other way for a few hours in the afternoon. It could do a lot more if it ran all day both ways."* Schoenbaum organized a successful effort four years ago to stop closing of the Dickerson and Boyds train stations.

ACT member Brian DiNunno of Frederick suggested, as a first step, the Maryland Transit Administration 991 commuter bus route to Shady Grove be extended to the train station in

downtown Frederick. There it would connect with eight Frederick Transit bus routes, opening up new job opportunities in the I-270 corridor to Frederick families with only one car. DiNunno, who writes the *Green Pivots* blog about land use and transportation in Frederick, pointed out that better transit connections would enhance the economic health of downtown Frederick and support creation of walkable neighborhoods through the proposed East Frederick and the Golden Mile redevelopment projects.

## RAIL~VOLUTION 2011 Comes to Washington DC in October

Barbara Sanders

Harry Sanders always liked Rail~Volution a lot - considering it hands-on and applicable to the real world. I remember spending a lot of times at several of them, especially years ago in St. Louis, talking with representatives of the citizen groups that were supporting projects, seeking funding referendum, and all other ways of exchanging info on each other's strategies and triumphs. So put this conference on your schedule, October 16-19, since it is in Washington, DC this year. Former ACT President, Ben Ross, has submitted a proposal to speak on the organizing experience ACT has had and lessons that might be useful for other cities. Here is some information on the conference:

Rail~Volution is a national movement led by people dedicated to creating healthy, economically vibrant, socially equitable and environmentally sustainable communities with transit. Since 1995, it has been a driving force for livability. Every year, people gather in a transit-rich community for workshops, charettes, networking and toolbox sessions. Last year in Portland, OR, over 1,200 people attended. For more information, go to [www.railvolution.com](http://www.railvolution.com).

## ACT Comments on County's Transportation Priorities

Tina Slater

In a letter dated February 7, 2011 to Councilmember Roger Berliner, Chairman of Montgomery County Council Transportation & Environment Committee, Action Committee for Transit commented on the County's transportation priorities as follows:

1. The County should reaffirm its commitment to the Purple Line because it provides the missing, fast connection between the two branches of the Metrorail Red Line; it is central to the County's economic development strategy and future land use.

2. The Maryland Area Rail Commuter (MARC) Growth and Investment Plan of 2007 should appear on the County's priorities. The Plan would provide all-day, two-way train service between Frederick and Union Station, tripling ridership.

3. The County should ask the State to study the all-transit alternative for the I-270 Corridor. ACT has called for this alternative since 1997. With \$4 billion slated for various I-270 improvements, we need to compare what \$4 billion would buy in an all-transit alternative.

4. While bus rapid transit (BRT) is already a County priority, ACT is concerned about funding large, expensive BRT projects without making the needed policy changes for BRT to succeed. The County should first attempt low-cost BRT projects on existing highways, do bus priority projects on existing roads, and make all roadway operation and configuration changes recommended in the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority priority corridors initiative.

## Letter to State Legislators to Raise Gas Tax to Pay for Better Transit

Excerpt from Joint Letter of January 24, 2011 from Action Committee for Transit (ACT), Prince George's ACT, Amalgamated Transit Union Local 689

Maryland's transportation system is failing and more revenue is desperately needed. Transit expansions - the Purple Line, the Baltimore Red Line, and the MARC Growth and Investment Plan - are long overdue. Equally important is money to fix crumbling roads and bridges and maintain existing transit, which carry growing passenger loads on an aging infrastructure.

The immediate cause of the funding crisis is the sharp decline in the user fee paid by drivers - the difference between the gas tax and the sales tax paid on other purchases. Over the 17 years since the gas tax was last raised by the General Assembly, the burden of supporting Maryland's transportation system has been lifted off of drivers and placed on transit riders. In 1993, gas was \$1.10 per gallon. The gas tax of 23.5 cents was 27% of the pretax price of the gas. Today, the tax rate on a \$3.05 gallon of gas has fallen to 8.3% of the pretax gas price, only slightly more than the 6% sales tax. While drivers contribute less, transit riders pay more - during those 17 years, fares were raised many times.

We urge you to make this exciting vision a reality by restoring the highway user fee - only a partial restoration is necessary - closer to the 27% gas tax that was enacted in 1993. Resources are needed to free Marylanders from the tyranny of traffic jams by building frugal, cost-effective transit. This year's legislature has a great opportunity when it takes up the gas tax - not just to solve an immediate crisis, but to set us on a new path toward a far better future.

### *Congratulations*

ACT President Tina Slater has been appointed to County Executive Ike Leggett's Transit Task Force. The announcement was made on February 24, 2011. The mission of the group is to make a comprehensive bus rapid transit system a reality in Montgomery County. The Task Force will advocate for developing and implementing a system that is consistent with state transportation objectives and complements regional transit operations.

## Does Graphics Design Make a Difference for Transit?

Excerpted from "Metro's 'Mad Men' Running High" Zev's Blog posted Oct. 10, 2010

Yes, you can bet on it. Los Angeles is a good example of where graphics art made all the difference. Why? Los Angeles, home of the movie, television, and recording industry is image-conscious. Also, Los Angeles is where the gas-guzzling car is king and transit is a stigma. It took 8 years for good graphics design art to turn around the lagging image of the transit agency, the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LACMTA), and to turn around the stigma of transit.

What had been the images? In the mid-1990s, the image of transit in Los Angeles was that it was useless or dysfunctional. After investing billions in L.A.'s first subway system, LACMTA's finances crumbled, and headlines routinely billed the LACMTA as profligate, quarrelsome and prone to engineering screw-ups.

Matt Raymond was an ad man on a mission when LACMTA headquarters hired him in 2002 as incoming Chief of Creative Services (aka "Communications"). His first order of business was finding his new office at One Gateway Plaza. His second: "To make transit here cool." He didn't do so well finding his new office. "*You know how, when you get off the subway here, if you go one way you go to our building, and if you go the other way you go to Union Station?*" Raymond confesses, chuckling, "*Well, I went the wrong way.*" So his first job was fixing the problem he encountered by designing better signs – clearer and cleaner signs for all of Los Angeles's subway stations.

Next was changing the image of the LACMTA: he believed that the transit agency needed a single, strong voice if the agency had any hope of getting through to auto-centric Southern California. "*Unbelievably, the agency didn't have a central communications unit,*" recalls Maya Emsden, deputy executive officer for creative services. LACMTA had over 300 departments or programs, each with its own logo and communications. The public didn't even know some

of them were part of the agency. Raymond corralled all those initiatives under a single communications department.

How about making transit "cool"? Raymond came from Dallas Area Rapid Transit, where marketing—not just to riders, but to businesses and community stakeholders—had been central to the mission. Advertising to him was not just billboards and commercials to persuade a car culture to try mass transit; everything from the look of the buses to the ease of reading the transit maps has to be part of the sales pitch.

For eight years, Raymond's in-house creative services department, a staff of 13, has been selling Los Angeles on mass transit the way gas-guzzling cars have been pitched for generations by private ad agencies. Raymond's department has been churning out the kind of prize-winning work usually associated with boutique ad firms. He and his team have reshaped the public image of the nation's 3<sup>rd</sup> largest transit agency. His creative services department generates all the ads, maps, graphics, web/mobile data, merchandising and fleet design. Raymond was personally recognized this year for "dramatic improvements" in changing the perception of transit at the industry's *International Metro Awards*.

The most successful effort was re-branding of bus service in Los Angeles. LACMTA buses were repainted to drive home that friendly, consistent image — bright red for bus rapid transit, "California Poppy" for local buses (see picture below), and blue for express buses. Other bus systems, including our own Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, mimicked LACMTA's scheme of using color to brand their bus service as local, express, or bus rapid transit. LACMTA with Raymond has won over 50 awards in 5 years for its re-branding efforts.

Matchbox had never done a transit bus until it decided to reproduce one of LACMTA's re-branded red "rapid buses," which came out without the LACMTA logo (white "M" on a backdrop consisting of a black circle). When LACMTA asked Matchbox to put its "M" logo on the Matchbox bus, it obliged.

What made transit “hip”? The answer was a series of highly effective advertising campaigns that sold LACMTA as the simple solution to traffic, gas prices and other problems in 2008. One award-winning campaign used simple pairs of black-and-white logos to depict LACMTA (“Metro”) as, for example, the “hero” to the smoggy car “villain”, the “sweet” solution to “bitter” gas prices, or the “relief” to the “stress” of auto traffic. This was known as the “Opposite Ads Campaign” or “Naughty and Nice Campaign” against the automobile and for transit. The ubiquitous images appeared on everything from bus benches to the t-shirts of baristas at Los Angeles cafes (look carefully at ad on back of bus in the picture below).

The creative services group was transformed into LACMTA’s own mini advertising agency and print shop, saving the agency hundreds of thousands of dollars on outside consultants. The group also taps local universities and art schools for 10-15 interns. *“Interning for LACMTA has become a coveted job in these design schools, not only because we’ve been winning awards, but also because of the pace and quantity of the work,”* says Emsden. *“Most internships work months just to get a single*

*brochure out. Here, LACMTA produces, like, two a week.”*

Ethan Arpi, who analyzes transit marketing for EMBARQ, the transit arm of the World Resources Institute, says a key to LACMTA’s success has been the organizational stature given to its communications chief. Although it is difficult to assess the impact of LACMTA’s marketing, transit advocates widely credit the communications group with persuading Angelenos that the LACMTA everyone loved to hate in the 1990s is actually a clean, hip, worldly alternative to their beloved cars.

According to public opinion and customer satisfaction surveys, public approval of LACMTA rose in the past 8 years to a current 64% from 41% in 2002. Some 98% of the public has heard of the agency, 79% are familiar with its buses and subways, and 75% know about a specific bus stop or rail line, near them. Also, this is no mean feat, given the number of names the agency has had over decades—54% of the public now refers to the agency by just one name, “Metro” (as opposed to LACMTA or the MTA). There is no reason why public transit cannot be promoted the same way here in the Washington, DC metropolitan area.

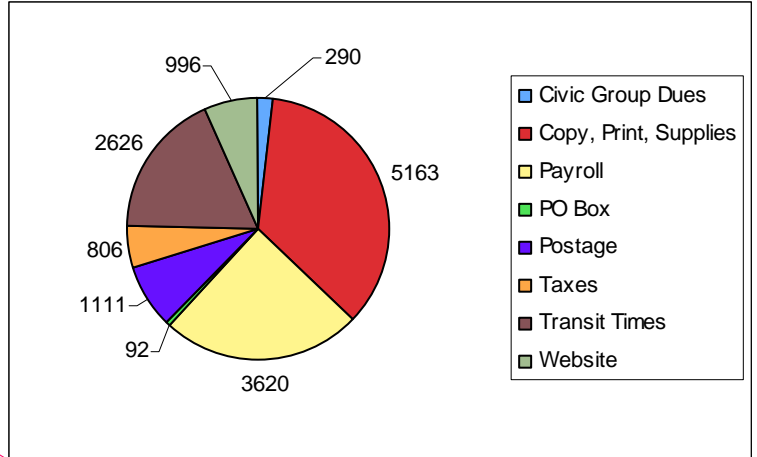


### Treasurer's Report

Ted Van Houten

ACT started 2010 with \$4,685 carried forward from the previous year. Our 2010 income came from dues / \$9,358, donations / \$3,254, and contributions for printing Transit Scorecard / \$3,405; for a total income of \$16,017. Expenses were \$14,704. We ended 2010 with \$5,998 in our account at EagleBank. The chart on the right shows the distribution of expenses.

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### Time to Celebrate Action Committee for Transit's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!

Save the Date: Tuesday, October 11, 2011

Location being arranged in Takoma Park (5 blocks from Metro).

If you like to plan parties we could use your help, contact Cindy Snow at admin@actfortransit.org or 240-308-1209.

### National Volunteer Week is April 10–16, 2011

Established to “Honor the people who dedicate themselves to taking action and solving problems in their communities.”

That is You, our members of ACT who support us year in and year out, who take ACTION and write letters supporting our transit goals. And that is You, our wonderful volunteers who leaflet at the Metro and the buses and in the community, who hold banners to make our message visible, who leaflet door-to-door, who staff ACT tables at events, who stuff envelopes for our many mailings and who work behind the scenes, unrecognized, keeping ACT going.

Thank you. We couldn't accomplish what we do without You!

### ACT is “Fierce”

Noted by Tracey Johnstone

In a op-ed commentary on the lethargy in advocating the Metro Heavy Rail Red Line in Baltimore on February 17, 2011 in the *Baltimore Sun*, Damien O'Doherty upholds Action Committee for Transit as an example that should be followed: “For example, look to the urgent monikers of Montgomery's fierce transit advocates: Purple Line Now, or Action Committee for Transit (ACT). I don't sense that political fervor and accountability in the Baltimore region to support transportation thought-leaders . . .”

### Visit the National Capital Trolley Museum

This Museum was founded in 1959 after the abandonment of streetcar service in Washington, D.C. In 1969, it started at its present location in Northwest Branch Park at 1313 Bonifant Road, Colesville. It is accessible by Ride-On Route 26.

Take your friends and relatives to the museum and ride a streetcar on weekends between noon and 5 PM. Rumors that the museum closed since the 2003 fire or the 2010 construction of MD 200 are not true.

Volunteers maintain/operate a collection of 14 streetcars: 6 from Washington, D.C., 5 from Europe 1 from Canada, 1 from New York City, and 1 from Iowa.

# Transit Times

Action Committee for Transit, Inc.  
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## The Coalition for Smarter Growth Creates the Sanders-Henn Community Hero Award.

*"In 2010, the smart growth community tragically lost two of its greatest volunteer advocates, Harry Sanders and Carl Henn. To honor their memory and incredible contributions to the Washington region, we are naming our new Community Hero Award after them. This award will be given annually to local residents who demonstrate records of service and dedication to their community and make outstanding contributions to smart growth in the region. Our inaugural 2011 award recipients will be presented with their award at the CSG annual fundraiser on Tuesday, May 3, 2011, from 6:30-8:00 pm, at the National Trust for Historic Preservation in Washington, D.C."*

Both men were ACT members. Harry was a co-founder of ACT and past president. The award couldn't be named after two better heroes.

## Editorial Remarks

Your Transit Times editor is Quon Kwan. Cutoff date for receiving materials for the next publication is **June 14**. Send your materials to Quon at: [gykwan@gmail.com](mailto:gykwan@gmail.com) or call him at: (h) 301-460-7454.

## ACT Officers/Staff for 2011:

President: Tina Slater  
V. Pres (program): Ben Ross  
V. Pres (upcounty issues): Miriam Schoenbaum  
V. Pres (policy): Cavan Wilk  
Secretary: Tracey Johnstone  
Treasurer: Ted Van Houten  
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Ralph Bennett: Purple Line Now!  
Richard Hoye: Pedestrian & Bike Safety

Webmaster: Jeri Roth  
Staff Member: Cindy Snow  
[admin@actfortransit.org](mailto:admin@actfortransit.org)