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TRANSIT TIMES

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NEWS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

MARC DOINGS. MARC issued a new schedule July 6. Featured is the opening of a new station on the Met. The station's name is Metropolitan Grove and it will be served by five of MARC's commuter runs. MARC has begun work on two stations on the Penn line. An actual station will be built at Seabrook, and the Bowie station will be replaced by a new facility near Bowie State College (near the site of the former Jericho Park station). Elsewhere on the Penn line, the new AEM-7 electric locomotives have gotten more coverage than anything else MARC has done in a long time. They've been mentioned in Potomac Rail News, NARP's Newsletter, Trains Magazine and Extra 2200 South. MARC must still borrow Chessie and Amtrak units for its service on the Brunswick line. The schedule also features an increased number of runs on the Penn Line as well as some holiday service on all lines.

BALIMORE MTA extended its subway 6 miles to Owings Mills on July 19. The MTA also has new funding for a 3-mile extension to Johns Hopkins University. Let's hope this bodes well for state funds for future WMATA construction, particularly since the new MD DOT secretary, Richard H. Trainor (this pun wasn't mine - honest!), should be familiar with local concerns about subway construction, since he headed Baltimore's DOT.

SENATOR SUPPORTS METRORAIL. When WMATA witnesses appeared before the Senate Appropriations Transportation Subcommittee on April 30, Senator Tom Harkin urged them to consider a circumferential rail line. (The line would roughly parallel the Capital Beltway). Harkin is chairman of the DC Subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee On Transportation. Representatives from UMTA also appeared as witnesses. Ross Capon wrote Senator Harkin a nice letter expressing ACT's support of the rail line and thanking him for his comments.

RIDE-ON PROMOTES ITSELF. A new county transit map was introduced in May at a motorcade and display sponsored by Ride-On. Various wheeled vehicles (busses, taxicabs for the handicapped, etc) were available for public inspection on Saturday, May 9. The motorcade began at the Kiss And Ride Lot at the Silver Spring Metro Station, went through Bethesda and ended up at the Mid-Pike Plaza near the White Flint Metro. On Friday, June 26 Ride-On sponsored a free jazz concert at their operations center at Crabbs Branch Way (near the Shady Grove Metro Station). On July 11, Ride-On sponsored another free concert at Wheaton

Plaza.

SUPPORT FOR US 29 LRT CONTINUES (at least within ACT...) Ross Capon wrote a 2-page letter to County Executive Kramer on May 15. The letter explained the advantages of light rail along US 29 and urged inclusion of light rail in the study of US 29. Mr Kramer's response came in a letter dated June 17. It was one paragraph long and didn't even mention light rail. It did make statements regarding "significant transit and ridesharing incentives" as well as "possible improvement of rail passenger service" on MARC.

THE RETURN OF JINGLE A metrobus public hearing was held on July 16 to consider the return of the "Jingle Bus Transfer." This promotion was effective last December. For one dollar, riders could purchase a transfer that was good anytime after the morning peak period (and all day on weekends) on both Metrobus and Ride-On. Only two people testified at the hearing. Tom Fuchs expressed ACT's support of the transfer and went further to suggest that Metro's Maryland-only flashpass could be accepted on Ride-On. The other person suggested that the transfer feature reduced fares for the handicapped and that it be accepted on the Prince George's-Silver Spring Line (metrobus routes F4 and F6). According to Mr. Daniel, the transfer proposal has been approved.

LOTS OF LOTS? Metro has held public hearings concerning the construction of two new parking lots. The public hearing concerning the lot at Shady Grove was held on July 29. Six people testified, including MD state delegate Carol Petzgold and ACT Co-Chairman Ross Capon. Everyone spoke in favor of the new lots. Additional suggestions included a light rail network, a network of bike paths and realigning the bus bays on the east side of the station to improve accessibility to the station entrance. The public hearing concerning the lot at Rockville was held on August 5. Five people testified, including ACT's Tom Fuchs. Again, everyone was in favor of the new lot. Suggestions included that the lot be temporary so that the property could be used for the offices originally intended for that site, the completion date for the lot be earlier than projected and that some sort of notification be given when the lot was full. Carlton Sickles chaired both hearings. Other officials included Mr. R. Bockner (WMATA), Mr. F. McCandlish (WMATA), Mr. R. McGarry (MC DOT) and Mr. E. Daniel (MC DOT).

ROSS ON THE AIR. Ross Capon was interviewed on the Fred Fiske Show (WAMU-FM) on July 20. The interview lasted from 8 - 9 pm and was conducted by guest host Matt Coates. The main subject was NARP's Campaign for New Transportation Priorities, and ways in which the government fosters dependence on the automobile. They talked quite a bit about the Bethesda-Silver Spring line and its wealthy neighbors who oppose light rail. Mr. Coates was very sympathetic to ACT's point of view (yes, ACT was mentioned). All of the callers were sympathetic to rail but wanted to talk about Amtrak, etc. and not local issues.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

The RAIL COMMITTEE and the COMMUNITY OUTREACH COMMITTEE jointly put together a slide show that was presented at the Rosemary Hills Community Center. The show was presented on the evening of August 12.

The BUS COMMITTEE did not meet in May. It was decided to schedule Bus meetings for the same date, place and time as the rail committee whenever possible. Also,

Ross Capon decided to step down as chairman of the Bus Committee because of his hectic schedule. Tom Fuchs accepted the position in Ross' place.

The Bus Committee did meet on July 9. Three of the committee members were present. It was decided to compartmentalize the committee. Bruce Gilson would act as Ride-On specialist, Tom Fuchs would act as Metrobus specialist and Ross Capon would act as Intercity/Charter specialist. Each specialist would keep track of upcoming service changes, hearings, etc. The specialist would also be prepared to draft testimony to present at public hearings. WMATA and Montgomery County DOT were contacted so that ACT could be put on a mailing list. The bus committee would also draft a letter that could be mailed to civic associations. Ross and Harry were to decide how to write the letter and the best way to coordinate interaction with other groups.

SPECIAL REPORT

The following is a summary of the Georgetown Branch Study as prepared by Harry Sanders.

"Since my last report the following has happened:

Type of Transit Vehicle

"All three committees of the Task Force have now voted to exclude non-electric buses from further study for the transit option. The continuation of studying a 'newer' technology diesel bus received NO votes from the Citizens Committee or the Steering Committee. The choice for the transit option comes down to primarily an electric bus on two lanes or a light rail system mostly single track with passing sidings at station/stops.

Usage Forecasts

"The consultant has done a projection of usage of a hiker-biker trail using the Georgetown Branch right-of way. The projection is for 700 to 1700 hikers/bikers per day. There has been criticism that the estimate doesn't include people walking to work or Metro and under estimates [sic] the connection to other trails.

"Glen Orlin of the County Dept. of Transportation has rerun the COG transit ridership model in order to project ... ridership for the transit alternative. The model projected 17,000 transitway riders by 2005. The increases from the previous estimate were due to growth in [the number of] office workers and population, along with a significant slowing of the automobile commuting time on East-West highway. Also, by 2005 Metro-rail will be running to Wheaton and Greenbelt. Using 17,000 riders, a bus system would require a bus every 2-3 minutes or the 'platooning' of buses every six minutes. This higher projection tilts the likely transit alternative to a rail system since it can operate in 'trains' of cars and could carry that many riders even with a [headway] of 10 minutes between trains.

Crossing the [Metropolitan Branch]

"The consultant will be examining [a tunnel] under the B&O main-line [sic] instead of [a bridge] over. A short tunnel would cost more than a bridge

crossing, but would [produce less environmental impact] while not restricting train/bus speed as much as a bridge would.

East-West Highway Study

"The citizen's committee voted to send a letter to the State Highway Administration recommending a study of traffic safety and traffic movement on East-West Highway. The Citizen's Committee will not wait [for] the study's result since it is not clear when or even if the state will program any funds for it."

REMINDER

The next ACT meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 23rd.