

Transit Times

The Newsletter of the Action Committee for Transit, Montgomery County, Maryland
Volume 12, Number 3, September 1998

ACT's next monthly meetings will be on Sept. 8, 1998 and Oct. 13, 1998 at the Silver Spring Center, 8818 Georgia Avenue.

Sept. Topic: Discussion of Ride-On expansion in Shady Grove area.

Oct. Speaker: Rick Stevens (WMATA) on "Future Expansion of Metrorail."

around Metrorail Stations. The candidates have been scored on their responses on

Volunteers are needed to hand out the *Transit Scorecard* during the AM rush hours at Metrorail Stations during the first week of September (prior to the primary election). If you can, **please sign up** with Ben Ross at 301 913 2849.

Feature Articles

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Time Again for the *Transit Scorecard*

Ben Ross

The best way to get transit-friendly policies and practices put into place is to put into public office, candidates who are aware of transit issues and who will fight for transit as part of a larger package of community measures that improve the quality of life in Montgomery County. It has been traditional for ACT to rate candidates in contested County Council seats for their positions on transit issues (*Transit Scorecard* is enclosed as pages 2 and 3.)

This year, ACT identified four issues of paramount importance for this County: (1) Georgetown Branch Light Rail, (2) Expanding Metrobus service, (3) InterCounty Connector (ICC), and (4) development

these four major issues.

Summary of the National Capital Regional Congestion & Mobility Summit

Quon Kwan (invitee from ACT)

The summit was hosted by the U.S. Dept. of Transportation at the new Reagan International Trade Center, Washington, DC on May 28, 1998. 250 government officials and business leaders attended with very few transit advocates and environmental activists. Labor was absent.

The summit began with talks on the severity of congestion. The DC region has the nation's second worst congestion. This will worsen; while population is predicted to rise by 43%, vehicle trips will rise by 60% and vehicle miles traveled will rise by 79%, all by the year 2020. The challenge is to come to a consensus on a mix of solutions. Caution was expressed about no single silver-bullet solution. Also, "we can no longer build our way out of congestion." However, the American love affair with the automobile will not end, and thus, a solution cannot be based solely on transit.

Attendees split up into 6 break-out groups : (1) regional decisionmaking, (2) needed investments, (3) economic development and transportation, (4) traffic management and operations, (5) congestion reduction

WHERE THEY STAND ON TRANSIT

| Candidates | East-West Light Rail | Metrobus | Stop ICC | Grow Near Transit |
|-------------------------|----------------------|----------|----------|-------------------|
| <i>At - Large (Dem)</i> | | | | |
| Blair EWING | + | + | + | + |
| William O'NEIL | + | + | + | x |
| Ben KRAMER | + | + | - | + |
| Steven SILVERMAN | + | + | - | + |
| Michael SUBIN | + | + | - | + |
| Patricia BAPTISTE | - | + | + | - |
| Isiah LEGGETT | - | + | y | - |
| Fran BRENNEMAN | - | x | - | + |
| <i>District 5 (Dem)</i> | | | | |
| Derick BERLAGE | + | + | + | + |
| Marc ELRICH | - | + | + | - |
| <i>District 3 (Dem)</i> | | | | |
| Phil ANDREWS | + | + | + | x |
| William HANNA | + | x | - | + |
| <i>District 2 (Dem)</i> | | | | |
| Herman TAYLOR | + | + | x | + |
| Joscel QUINTO | + | z | - | z |
| <i>District 4 (Rep)</i> | | | | |
| Sindey BURNS | z | z | - | z |
| Kevin COLEMAN | + | - | - | - |
| William PATTON | z | z | - | z |

County Council Candidates

Primary Day —
September 15, 1998

Compiled by *Action
Committee for Transit*



KEY:

- + = Pro-Transit
- = Anti-Transit
- x = Answer not classifiable as simple plus or minus
- y = Did not vote due to conflict of interest.
- z = Did not answer questionnaire and has no public record on issue.

EXPLANATION: Information taken from voting records, public statements, and questionnaire.

East-West Rail Line - Plus supports moving immediately to build light rail line and bike trail from Bethesda to Silver Spring. Minus opposes this project, thinks more study is needed before a decision, or thinks other projects should come first.

Metrobus - Plus supports more Metrobus service in County, minus favors Regional Mobility Plan or other plans that would cut Metrobus service.

Stop ICC - Plus opposes the Intercounty Connector, a proposed new interstate highway from Gaithersburg to Laurel. Minus supports it.

Grow Near Transit - Plus supports transit- and pedestrian-oriented development projects around Metro stations, such as Grosvenor transit village, Friendship Heights Master Plan and White Flint conference center. Minus opposes.

WHY EVERY TRANSIT RIDER SHOULD VOTE ON SEPTEMBER 15

As a regular rider, you know that Metro is a great way to get around Montgomery County. But once you leave the train, everything seems to be stacked against transit :

- If you drive to Metro, you pay a dollar-a-day parking tax. The County taxes parking only when it's next to a Metro station.
- If you take the bus, you sit endlessly at the first light, watching cars sail by. Traffic signals are timed to favor auto traffic over buses leaving stations.
- If you walk, you take your life in your hands crossing the street. The main streets of our downtowns have been turned into high-speed six-lane arteries.

And if your commute takes you east-west rather than north-south, don't even bother coming to the station. After the County spent \$10 million to buy land for a new rail line that will go from Bethesda to Silver Spring in 9½ minutes, the project was halted because a few wealthy campaign contributors in Chevy Chase don't want to look at the trains while they play golf.

The policies that make it hard to use transit aren't just an inconvenience for us riders. They threaten the quality of life of every resident of Montgomery County. A Planning Board study showed that without a vast expansion of transit use, traffic will be gridlocked all over the County by 2020. And reliance on the automobile feeds suburban sprawl. We get the ugliness of Tysons Corner and Rockville Pike instead of hometowns where we can take Metro to work, do errands on foot, and meet our neighbors in the street.

Action Committee for Transit

P. O. Box 7074
Silver Spring, MD 20907

I want to support better public transit in Montgomery County by joining the Action Committee for Transit. My \$10 dues are enclosed.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

The only way to turn this around is to elect public officials who share our values. We need new rail lines, not more highways. We must create walkable downtowns around Metro stations, not turn cornfields into office towers surrounded by acres of parking lots. Your vote as a transit rider is essential to make this happen — be sure to vote on September 15.

Authorized by ACT Voter Information Committee,
Benjamin Ross, chairman, Quon Kwan, treasurer.
Not Authorized by any candidate.

strategies, and (6) funding/financing strategies. The groups came up with the following:

(1) WMATA provides a good model for regional decisionmaking. The Transportation Planning Board should serve as an interim regional decisionmaking body with limited federal and widespread public participation.

(2) In terms of needs, rehabilitating Metro (\$100 million/year) was top priority followed by maintaining existing roads, making pedestrian and bike enhancements, and funding the Wilson Bridge.

(3) Expanded transit access and incentives for employers to locate near transit were recommended. Also land use and transportation should be linked. Exurban development should be contained while development in the inner core ("Smart Growth") should be spurred.

(4) Transit fares, schedules, and routes should be integrated, and intelligent transportation systems across the region should be developed.

(5) The Federal government was urged to exploit Metro-proximate locations for agency offices and to provide shuttle service to the Metro. Fee -- instead of free -- parking, location-efficiency mortgages, and reduced fares during peak periods were suggested.

(6) New revenue sources to meet transportation fund shortfalls should supplement -- not supplant -- existing State sources. Existing fee collection structures should be used as much as possible. The revenue sources must be broad-based, assure equal impact across the region, and incorporate value-pricing (e.g., incentives for ridesharing and disincentives for solo commuting).

Secretary of Transportation, Rodney Slater, concluded on the remark that the DC area should be the showcase for a capital

congestion solution for the world.

ACT Succeeds in Getting New Metrobus Route C8

Quon Kwan

ACT first proposed the C8, among many other comments, in the public hearing on the Glenmont-Aspen Hill bus route changes. While ACT President Ben Ross testified on February 17, 1998 in favor of all-day, Monday-Saturday service between **White Flint** and College Park, the County adopted rush-hour only service between **Glenmont** and College Park.

During the hearing on the County's operating budget, ACT fought for the full C8. Ben Ross testified that student schedules do not follow a regular 9-5 pattern but are irregular, warranting mid-day, evening, and Saturday service. Furthermore, he contended that shortening the C8 at Glenmont would be detrimental.

Extending the C8 to White Flint would attract riders from the east to destinations on Rockville Pike while riders from the west would be attracted in the opposite direction to the University of Maryland, generating bidirectional flow. Shortening the C8 at Glenmont forces riders to transfer. Because riders are less likely to make trips involving transfers, the flow becomes unidirectional with the predominant flow from Glenmont to the university in the AM and the reverse in the PM. Bidirectional-flow routes are much more efficient and cost-effective because of a balance of riders both ways and the absence of deadheading.

ACT was able to persuade civic, business, environmental, and labor groups to support the full C8 during the County Council hearings on the operating budget. ACT succeeded in getting the County Council to approve funding for the full C8. After approval, Gail Miller with the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 689 assisted in

disseminating a press release.

To publicize ACT's precedent-setting accomplishment -- Ben Ross and Quon Kwan -- secured an informational advertisement, "This bus route didn't just happen" in the C8 schedule. The ad acknowledges all of the groups and Council members supporting the C8. This is also the first ad that ACT has ever placed. Thanks go to ATU Local 689 for their financial support of the ad.

Unfortunately, there have been delays in start up of all-day Monday - Saturday service on the C8. The all-day service was supposed to have started on July 27 but has been postponed to September 28. (The all-day C8 schedule with ACT's ad will be included in the next newsletter). Whether it will be extended to White Flint is unclear at this time. Nevertheless, ACT members should be proud of this revolutionary feat.

Progress on the Push for Transit Alternatives in the I-270 Corridor Study Quon Kwan (ACT liaison on the I-270 Focus Group)

About a year ago, ACT, along with the Greater Shady Grove Alliance and the Sierra Club, stopped the State Highway Administration (SHA) from obtaining concurrence from the National Capital Regional Transportation Planning Board (NC RTPB) on the Major Investment Study (MIS) for the I-270 Corridor. The NC RTPB is the Metropolitan Planning Organization, which by law, must concur all MISs for the region before proceeding with the draft environmental impact statement or placing the project on the Constrained Long-Range Plan.

Ed Tennyson and Quon Kwan urged the NC RTPB not to concur on the MIS for several reasons. The MIS was highway-biased, did not provide for a transit-mode alternative, and violated the requirements for a "level-playing

field" between modes (i.e., highway and transit) as mandated by the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act. Ed Tennyson pointed out the bias favoring highways due to errors in the limited transit studies. Quon Kwan pointed out SHA's error in requesting concurrence when SHA failed to complete transit studies that SHA promised to perform and include in the MIS. ACT was backed by staff members of NC RTPB, Federal Highway Administration, and Federal Transit Administration. Consequently, NC RTPB compelled SHA to pursue the promised transit studies and include them into a revised MIS before coming back to the NC RTPB for concurrence.

ACT participated in the I-270 Focus Group meetings to review the transit-only studies. Several transit-only alternatives were proposed: double-tracked light rail along the entire CSX (via Old Towne Gaithersburg), double-tracked light rail along the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) (via Life Sciences Center and NIST), and a busway along the CCT. Ed Tennyson's suggestion of a hybrid consisting of a single-tracked light rail along the CSX (express in the flow direction during rush hours only) and a double-tracked light rail along the CCT was rejected by SHA. SHA rejected the hybrid, saying that it could study no more than 3 transit alternatives could be studied. SHA's preference for the third alternative was a busway in the CCT.

Encouraged by Montgomery County Planning Board, transit use was studied with an aggressive land density model (1/2 of all new growth near transit). Unfortunately, the year 2020 forecasts showed only 5% more transit trips.

The use of certain measures of effectiveness, data assumptions, and analyses (with respect to capital and operating costs, safety, highway flow rate, average vehicle occupancy, modal split, and fuel consumption) prompted Ed Tennyson to take issue with the preliminary study results. Not

all of these issues have been resolved satisfactorily. At the last Focus Group meeting of July 9, 1998, SHA reminded us about the point of the transit studies -- not to show beyond doubt that light rail is better than busway or even expanding I-270, but -- to come up with a viable transit alternative for more detailed study as part of the draft environmental impact statement.

At this point, even though the citizens on the I-270 Focus Group unanimously want light rail and the data on the viability of a busway are questionable, SHA emphasized that no single solution alone (i.e., neither widening I-270 nor transit) will solve the congestion. SHA also left the transit alternative open to either light rail or bus.

The SHA will be requesting the NCRTPB to concur on a MIS with the following alternatives for I-270: (1) no-build baseline, (2) transportation system management/transportation demand management, (3) widening I-270 plus a busway or light rail along the CCT, (4) widening I-270 plus slip ramps for a busway on I-270 (no light rail), and (5) adding HOV-only lanes to I-270 plus a busway or light rail along the CCT. Alternate (5) is the only build-alternative meeting Montgomery County Master Plans; it is not a purely transit-only alternate because HOV is not considered transit and general purpose lanes are proposed in Frederick County. Also, the busway or light rail for all of the alternates will run only between COMSAT and Shady Grove.

Intersection and Transit Improvements Proposed for the ICC Study Area and Other Cross-County Movement

Quon Kwan

The Montgomery County Council sent a letter on October 30, 1997 to David Winstead, Secretary of Transportation, to consider a

Network of Improvements Alternative in lieu of a continuous InterCounty Connector (ICC). The improvements desired for consideration include links [segments of the original ICC (such as between I-370 & Layhill Rd. and between US 29 & I-95/US 1), intersection upgrades (e.g., Randolph Rd. and MD 97), and transit enhancements (e.g., new Shady Grove-Ft. Meade service).

In response to the letter, the State Highway Administration (SHA) identified 37 intersections for upgrading in Montgomery County and 14 similar intersections in Prince George's County. The Mass Transit Administration proposed 11 enhancements to existing Metrobus service and 7 new potential Metrobus routes spanning between Montgomery and Prince George's Counties. The enhancements include decreasing headways on the Metrobus C2, C4, C8, F2, F6, J1, J9, Q2, R3, T15, T16, T17, and Ride-On 39. The potential new bus routes include: New Carrollton to Bethesda (via Beltway), Glenmont to Greenbelt (via Randolph Rd.), Columbia to Bethesda (via US 29 and Beltway), Shady Grove to Ft. Meade (via MD 28 and MD 198), Greenbelt to Montgomery Mall (via White Oak, Wheaton, and Rock Spring Park), Hollywood and Daniels Park to College Park, and Bowie Fringe Park and Ride to Laurel MARC Station (via Ft. Meade). Call Harry Sanders at 301 587-1323 or Quon Kwan at 301 460-7454 for maps.

All of the proposals were presented to the public in a series of three late afternoon workshops during the middle of June. However, it did not appear that transit enhancements received equal consideration compared to intersection upgrades. The transit exhibit, consisting of a map, was shunted to a corner, which the public could detour after being viewing 50 overwhelming exhibits of intersection upgrades.

At the July ACT monthly meeting, members raised concerns about the intersection improvements. Intersection improvements

often mean widening intersections in order to add double turn lanes and acceleration /deceleration. This sacrifices pedestrian friendliness, which in turn hurts transit usage. Widening roadways intimidates pedestrians by lengthening the time for crossing the street, facilitating increased vehicle speeds, and ignoring the need for safety islands.

Another concern raised was the cost-effectiveness of intersection improvements compared to transit improvements. SHA declined to give costs of grade-separated intersection upgrades. These generally run into the \$20 - \$50 million dollar range. Grade-separated interchanges save automobile commuters only seconds of travel time. The benefits to commuters are much greater if the same amount of money was invested in transit enhancements.

On July 27, the County Council's Transportation and Environment Committee was briefed on the intersection upgrades and transit enhancements. Ben Ross faxed a letter stating ACT's position that supports all proposed service with emphasis on all-day service along major corridors. ACT commended all agencies involved for an excellent job on the transit proposals.

Opinion Poll Shows Preference for Improving Existing Roads and Transit Instead Of Building ICC

Quon Kwan

A recent survey of 301 randomly selected registered voters in Montgomery County was conducted by Bannon Research, a respected opinion research firm in Washington, DC. The poll was conducted from May 31 to June 5, 1998 through telephone interviews.

The poll shows that 59% of the people surveyed indicate that traffic and congestion is the foremost concern surpassing even schools (49%), crime (32%), and

environmental pollution (29%). The second highlight of the poll is that 52% of the people surveyed prefer adding more transit service and improving existing roads compared to 27% of the people who preferred building the ICC. The third highlight of the poll is that of all the transportation projects needed in this area, the ICC did not rank high. 76% of the people surveyed prefer a new Wilson Bridge, 66% prefer a circumferential Metrorail line that parallels the Beltway, and 65% prefer a Metrorail Blue Line extension to Largo and Bowie, over the ICC.

Many of the other questions asked concerned people's perception of Metrorail and Metrobus service. 74% of those polled agree that traffic congestion would ease if public officials would expand Metro. 65% agree that expanding Metrobus would improve service across jurisdictions. 58% agree that bus service in the metropolitan Washington, DC area should be coordinated rather than broken up between Metrobus and local government bus service. The survey was commissioned by ATU Local 689.

Copies of the survey, procedures for conducting the interview, telephone interview questions, demographic characteristics of the people surveyed, and a compilation of responses to the questions can be obtained from Quon Kwan at 301 460-7454.

Vision 2020 Symposium

Neil Greene

ACT, along with Sierra Club, American Planning Association, and the Potomac Valley Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (head sponsor), helped to host the "Vision 2020" Symposium. The Symposium, attended by over 100 people, was held on June 22, 1998 at the University of Maryland Business School at College Park. There were 3 workshops, lasting 9 hours, devoted to energy, planning, and transportation. Speakers included Senator Ida Ruben,

Senator Brian Frosh, William Hussman, Bruce Adams, Stephen Del Giudice, Lon Anderson, Jim Clarke, Pam Lindstrom, Stewart Schwartz, Ralph Bennett, Jamie Karn, Michael Replogle, John Mathias, Harry Sanders, John Corkill, Neil Payton, and Greg Smith. Neil Greene served as Symposium Chair. Senator Ruben was honored for legislation obtaining \$30 million in State funds for the County's burden of the Washington Metro system.

The Symposium explored the concept of a working regional land and transportation plan by the year 2020. A vision is a prerequisite to large-scale regional transportation planning. A regional governmental agency with more authority (than the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments) is needed to plan and fund a balanced transportation system. Such an agency should be responsible for planning where growth and development should occur. These would be active urban centers served by transit on its own right-of-way.

In contrast with the current situation where economics determines growth (which is largely, in turn, set by avaricious developers), the Governor's "Smart Growth" Policy should be implemented. In "Smart Growth," development is directed towards existing communities (such as Silver Spring and Bethesda) and to improving existing infrastructure and public facilities. This also would mean slowing suburban sprawl, saving natural resources, and preserving rural farmlands, forests, and wetlands with resulting cleaner air and water.

There was general agreement that the Board of Trade's \$ 30 billion road building plan is not the answer and that new roads (such as the ICC) only encourage more auto traffic on Washington's gridlocked roads. Priorities and higher gas taxes should go to funding improved transit, existing highway improvements, and enhanced traffic management. Most important was the sense

of first getting a plan approved by the County and the State and then seeking funding for it.

Support was widespread for the Georgetown Branch Light Rail and, especially, the Purple Line. The Purple Line is a proposed circumferential light rail line from College Park via Silver Spring and Bethesda to Tyson's Corner. Eventually, this line would extend around the region similar to the Beltway and connect all existing radial Metrorail lines. This would be highly effective in controlling future congestion around the Nation's capital, channeling planned growth, and encouraging development at intersecting nodes.

The input from the audience and the consensus of the speakers will be summarized at an upcoming meeting with recommendations addressed to the Governor and other State and County elected officials. For more information, contact Neil Greene at 301 897-3975.

The Glenmont Line and Trench Warfare

Wes Vernon

"When the final map was drawn for the Metrorail system, the world had not heard of a fax machine, a cell phone, or cable television," noted Governor Glendening at the dedication ceremony for the Glenmont Metrorail station on July 25, 1998. He also noted that it was February 13, 1968 when the opening political shots were fired in what would be a 30-year war to construct the Glenmont line.

At the time, there were 3 votes for Glenmont, 1 undecided vote, and 2 votes for directing the eastern end of the Red Line on a westward path out of Silver Spring along the CSX tracks. (If you young ones are scratching your heads saying, "the CSX alignment does not make sense," you're right!) Cleatus Barnett, a Councilmember at that time and now WMATA Board Chairman,

is credited with persuading the undecided member in getting a majority vote in favor of Glenmont. Although he modestly declines claiming credit, if it had not been his determination, the Glenmont line would not have been built.

You see, common sense was not necessarily a factor as the debate over Glenmont continued over the next 30 years. It was trench warfare all the way over Glenmont. My neighborhood group, Winding Orchard Citizens Association, was the only one in the community to support building Glenmont. Basically, it was the NIMBY (not in my back yard) argument that kept the debate alive. There were those in the area who seemed to fancy themselves as country squires, shielded from such urban intrusion as (gasp!) a subway.

I encountered this rhetoric as member of the mid-70's Citizens Committee on the Glenmont Station and Storage Yard, in the Allied Civic Group, and on into the 90's when, earlier, this year, the country squires hurled insults at a hapless county bureaucrat whose sin was holding a hearing on keeping Metrorail commuters from parking in residential neighborhoods all day. The country squires were angered at the thought of paying \$20/year for enforcement.

In the 70's battle, I confronted two Glenmont-area politicians who goaded the NIMBYs. One was Idamae Garrott, a longtime Councilmember, later a WMATA Boardmember, and most recently State Senator, who told me that the political realities simply could not allow 2 Metrorail lines in a county as wealthy as Montgomery. Second was then-Councilmember Jane Ann Moore, concerned that WMATA was not hurrying quickly enough to build its lines in the inner city of Washington, DC for the folks who really needed it. On the other hand, Metrorail, would be a waste in the more affluent Glenmont area, of course.

Using class warfare as an argument against mass transit was only one of many absurdities advanced to block the Glenmont line. With this history of trench warfare (of which the above is only a smidgen), it was with some measure of pride that I was the first passenger to board the very first revenue-service train leaving Glenmont, joined by Montgomery DOT Transit Analyst and longtime friend, John Morris. Ed Daniel, Montgomery County's Special Assistant for WMATA, briefly chatted with John just before Operator Owens shut the doors at 8:03 AM.

John and I marveled at the engineering skill and hard work that had gone into tunneling through the hard rock in the 1.8 mile segment between Glenmont and Wheaton.

We got off the train at Wheaton, crossed the platform, and soon boarded the very first revenue-service train to arrive at Glenmont. On the first car, we were greeted by ACT co-founder Harry Sanders and his wife, Barbara, who had boarded in Silver Spring to observe this historic occasion. Then came the golden words that had appeared only in my dreams during the past quarter century, "Red Line train to Glenmont!"

Later that morning at 11:00 AM, the ceremony took place under a tent in the busbays. It was a grand celebration, but not without reminders from ACT members (thanks to Harry Sanders and Richard Hoyer) that much remains to be done. "KEEP THE TROLLEY ON TRACK!" read the placards, a signal of another ongoing NIMBY fight.

Some speakers, which included leading politicians who have pulled the levers of power to make this day possible, spoke of a circumferential Purple Line to connect the Metrorail Lines radiating from the inner city to the suburbs. That, too, is a battle that will have to be fought.

But the fight for true balance in the area's transportation system likely will never end in

our lifetime. There is indeed much to be done. We all know that the Glenmont line really should go on to Aspen Hill and Olney. Much more trench warfare is in store. Sometimes it is like watching the grass grow, which in turn prompts many ACT members to row all the harder in the right direction.

Other Announcements

Rail-Volution '98, the fourth such conference, will be held in Portland, Oregon September 12-16, coinciding with the opening of the western light rail MAX extension. Call Harry Sanders at 301 587-1323 for more information.

Editorial Announcements

Your provisional *Transit Times* editor is Quon Kwan (w) 301 621-8432, (h) 301 460-7454; please direct your comments, criticism, submission of articles for the next issue, and suggestions for a permanent editor (preferably someone with desktop publishing software) to him. Thanks to Dharm Guruswamy for serving as former editor of *Transit Times*.

ACT Officers

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED