



## **ACTION COMMITTEE FOR TRANSIT**

# **Transit Times**

The Newsletter of the Action Committee for Transit of Montgomery County, Maryland  
Volume 22, Number 1, January 2008

ACT's monthly meetings are held at 7:30 PM, the second Tuesday of each month, at the Silver Spring Center, 8818 Georgia Avenue (near the intersection of Georgia Avenue and Spring Street), in the Woodside Conference Room.

The Silver Spring Center 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.

Please sign in at the Security Desk in the lobby when attending meetings. For meeting updates check our website listed on pg. 2.

Jan 8: Election of ACT Officers – see p. 8 for nominations. Come and vote;  
Bombardier Transportation: "Actual light rail operating systems, design of new rail cars, new technologies and types of propulsion."

Feb 12: Meeting Canceled.  
Primary Election Day. Be sure to vote!

March 11: Speaker TBD

- Navy's Bethesda Plans Yield Unnecessary Traffic Jams (p. 3)
- Opportunity Missed on Growth Policy (p. 4)
- MARC Expansion Plans (p. 5)
- ACT Supports Housing and Stores at Glenmont (p. 6)

## **MTA Releases Ridership Forecasts for Purple Line**

Quon Kwan

The Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) released ridership forecasts for the Purple Line on the evening of December 3 at the MTA Public Meeting for the project at East Silver Spring Elementary School. In 2030, ridership could be as high as 47,000 per day on the high-investment light rail option. On the other hand, ridership could be as low as 29,000 per day on the low-investment option of dedicated bus.

The light rail ridership figures are commensurate, if not above, the ridership figures of current light rail lines. The average daily ridership forecast for proposed light rail projects moving through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) approval process for funding is 31,400. The ridership forecasts strongly favor the Purple Line for FTA funding although other factors need to be taken into consideration.

## **Feature Articles**

- MTA Releases Ridership Forecasts for Purple Line (p. 1)
- Silver Spring Residents Organize for Purple Line (p. 2)
- Metro Fare Increases: A Sad Day (p. 3)

## **It's Time to Renew Your Membership**

You can renew or 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)**

You may also give your membership dues to Treasurer John Carroll 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.

The MTA ridership forecasts are conservative in that they do not take into account student trips to and from the University of Maryland College Park campus or trips to attend cultural and athletic events there. The MTA is continuing to refine these ridership forecasts.

When the ridership forecasts are finalized, they will be formally included in the draft environmental impact statement for the Purple Line. The draft environmental impact statement is scheduled for completion and public release in spring 2008.

## **Silver Spring Residents Organize for Purple Line**

Webb Smedley

The Purple Line has taken a beating in Silver Spring over the past few years with MTA failing to respond effectively to the concerns of local civic associations. Unfortunately, the heated discussions have included considerable misinformation and failed to acknowledge the potential of the Purple Line to help preserve the livability of Silver Spring neighborhoods currently seeing a rise in traffic resulting from the successful revitalization of the downtown.

The Action Committee for Transit has many supporters in these neighborhoods, many of which include residents who have given up their cars in favor of public transit, or who are regular weekday commuters by metrorail or bus. If you are in that category and are concerned about how the Purple Line is being characterized in your local civic association's meetings or list serves, a group is forming to attempt to reinstall civility and rationality into the debate about the role of transit in the area's future. If interested, you may contact: Jonathan Elkind, a resident of the Seven Oaks-Evanswood neighborhood at [jonelkind@yahoo.com](mailto:jonelkind@yahoo.com).

Another important initiative was launched in Silver Spring during December. IMPACT Silver Spring, a group attempting to empower tenants and moderate income residents of the community, held a forum on

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the Purple Line and is working to raise the issue among the many apartment dwellers who would benefit from the project. For current bus commuters, daily travel time savings from the Purple Line can be well over one hour, depending on the specific trip. This translates directly into more time that these commuters will have with their families. For information or ways to support IMPACT's initiative, contact the group's Executive Director, Frankie Blackburn at [frankie@impactsilverspring.org](mailto:frankie@impactsilverspring.org).

## Metro Fare Increases: A Sad Day

Ben Ross

In a press release on Oct. 2, 2007, Action Committee for Transit (ACT) and Prince George's Advocates for Community-Based Transit (PG-ACT) denounced proposed Metro fare increases as excessive and unfair to transit riders. The two groups said that both auto commuters and transit riders should pay their fair share of increasing transportation costs, with Metro fares increasing no faster than the gasoline tax.

On December 13, 2007 ACT released the following statement regarding the WMATA fare increases:

*This is a sad day. For the fourth time since 1993, Metro fares will increase while gasoline taxes in our region remain unchanged. The inevitable result of this decision is more traffic jams and more pollution.*

*No one should blame Metro for what happened today. The fault lies with our region's elected officials, who have chosen to profligately subsidize the automobile while placing an increasing financial burden on transit riders. By denying Metro the funding it needs and deserves, they have made these fare increases unavoidable.*

*We must change course. Our governments must heed the voice of the public and give Metro the resources required to provide the quality of service we deserve on the expanded bus and rail network that we need.*

## Navy's Bethesda Plans Yield Unnecessary Traffic Jams

ACT Press Release on December 10, 2007

The Navy's design for an expanded Bethesda Navy Hospital represents a monumental planning failure, the Action Committee for Transit charged today. According to the Environmental Impact Statement just released, transit usage at the facility will be sharply reduced while auto commuting will increase.

Ignoring the legal requirement to study alternatives with reduced environmental impacts, the Navy studied two alternatives that both add 1800 heavily subsidized parking spaces, far more than the 2200 new employees (many working weekends and shifts) and new hospital visitors will need. The Navy refused to analyze a no-added-parking alternative proposed by ACT and endorsed by the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chamber of Commerce. "1800 and 1800 is not two alternatives," commented ACT Vice President Ben Ross. "This ignores the basic purpose of an EIS, which is to look at alternatives with less environmental impact."

According to the EIS (Appendix C, page 50), if new employees generate commuting and visitor trips at the same rate as existing Bethesda Naval employees, the proposed 2200 new employees would put 418 cars on the road during the most congested 60 minutes of the evening rush hour. The ACT proposal would further reduce this number by clustering buildings near Metro and making transit more accessible. But the EIS projects 921 auto trips during that hour - more than double the number generated by an equal number of current employees.

"The predicted BRAC transportation disaster is entirely avoidable," Ross commented. "The Navy needs to bring its transportation planning into the 21st century."

## Opportunity Missed on Growth Policy

Ben Ross

The much-ballyhooed tighter growth controls adopted by the County Council in November represent an opportunity missed.

Instead of abandoning the misguided policies that have gotten us into our present transportation mess, the Council made a minor course correction. While there are changes that pay a little bit more attention to transit, the disastrously mistaken idea that traffic congestion can be eliminated by building more and more traffic lanes remains the basis of the county's growth policy.

Montgomery County's growth policy - contrary to what many believe - does not limit growth. Rather, its purpose is to compel developers to use their money and their political clout to make sure that infrastructure gets built at the same time as new homes and new offices.

The basic concept behind the county's growth policy - new developments are held up until congested intersections in the vicinity are widened and overcrowded schools nearby get new classrooms - remains in place. As applied to schools, this concept makes perfect sense (although there are disputes over the details) - building a new school doesn't cause anyone to have a baby.

But building roads creates more auto travel. Widening an intersection near a new development may speed traffic through one traffic light, but all the new traffic then crowds up the rest of the county's roads. Not only that, wider roads are harder for pedestrians to cross, making it harder to walk to a transit station and thus creating even more traffic. A growth policy that is supposed to prevent congestion winds up making traffic jams even worse.

ACT, along with the Coalition for Smarter Growth (CSG) and other environmental groups, entered the debate over growth policy with a call for a fundamental change of direction.

*"The experience of 50 years and studies by the National Science Foundation prove that road expansion will only generate more traffic," Cheryl Cort, policy director of the Coalition for Smarter Growth, told the County Council. "The transportation test for new development being considered by the Council should focus on directing future development to Metro station areas and improving transit service, walking and bicycling in urban areas, towns and transit corridors."*

ACT seconded these comments: *"It's a mistake to focus on road building as the answer to congestion. We'll only get more traffic. We can take cars off the road by providing better transit and offering mixed use places that make walking and bicycling real options for many trips."* *"A wealth of experience from Arlington County's Rosslyn-Ballston Metro Corridor shows 30 million square feet of development has been added with virtually no increase in traffic,"* added Cort. *"Transit-oriented development works."*

The two groups warned that a growth policy focused on widening congested intersections could wind up driving development away from Metro stations, where roads are often most congested, towards areas that can only be reached by automobile and thus creating even more traffic. The groups urged the Council to support transit-oriented development by improving transit service, parking management, bicycle/pedestrian facilities, and incentives that would maximize alternatives to driving alone. *"Transit-oriented development is the key to building a sustainable future for the County's residents and workers,"* Cort said.

ACT and CSG recommended a growth management policy based on achieving reductions in the total number and length of auto trips generated by new developments, instead of requiring more traffic lanes on nearby roads, which tend to fill up almost as quickly as they are built. Specifically, the groups called for:

- 1) An incentive structure that directs development toward Metro stations and discourages scattered, auto-dependent development in greenfields.
- 2) A regional traffic test that measures the "vehicle miles traveled" (VMT) induced by new development and favors those developments that induce the lowest VMT per capita.
- 3) A local traffic test that measures the vehicle trips induced by new development and favors those developments that minimize the total number of daily vehicle trips per capita.
- 4) Parking policies that include cost- and demand-based pricing, separate costs for parking and homes or offices; and sharing of spaces between uses, so that fewer parking spaces are needed in new buildings near Metro stations and the number of new parking spaces can be limited to what is really needed.

This approach, unfortunately, was not adopted by the Council. The ironic result of the new growth policy could be to favor scattered development that consumes more land and requires more and longer car trips, and in the end makes traffic congestion worse rather than better.

## MARC Expansion Plans

Miriam Schoenbaum

In September, the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) announced an expansion plan for Maryland Area Rail Commuter (MARC) service, with the overall objective of almost quadrupling passenger capacity from 27,000 to 103,000 by 2035. The plan will require cooperation from Amtrak and CSX, owners of the tracks on which MARC trains run. The total projected cost is about \$4 billion (in 2007 dollars) at a time when, according to Maryland Transportation Secretary John D. Porcari, Maryland already has a \$40 billion backlog in unfunded transportation improvements.

Immediate improvements to MARC service, to be completed within the year, include

adding a peak train, a late evening train, and weekend service on the Penn Line [between Washington, DC and Baltimore (or Perryville) via Odenton], and adding a mid-day train on the Camden Line [between Washington, DC and Baltimore via Laurel]. These would add 1,500 seats and require a total of about \$10 million and \$6 million per year in capital and operating costs, respectively.

For the Penn Line, currently the most populous of MARC's three lines, improvements include additional service to account for 3,400 more seats by 2010 and 12,000 more seats by 2015, as well as lengthening station platforms, expanding parking, buying new rail cars, and upgrading track. Service would also expand north to Newark, DE by 2015 and south to Northern Virginia by 2020. By 2035, MARC would have four tracks through Baltimore.

For the Brunswick Line, which runs between Washington, DC and either Brunswick, MD, Martinsburg, WV, or Frederick, MD, improvements include lengthening trains by 2010, doubling service to Frederick by 2015, adding limited reverse-peak service by 2020, and adding weekend service by 2035, as well as expanding parking and adding limited triple tracking. The plan for 2020 also includes "improving running times by consolidating stations", as well as a new "Outer Montgomery" station, suggesting that MTA has not yet given up closing the MARC stations in Boyds and Dickerson. [MTA was forced to abandon the planned closures in 2006 after public outcry.]

For the Camden Line, currently the least populous of MARC's three lines, improvements include adding a mid-day train by 2010, connecting Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) buses by 2015, making mid-day service regular, and adding service to Northern Virginia by 2020, and adding weekend service as well as service to Bayview in Baltimore by 2035, with extensive triple tracking.

For a full summary of MTA's expansion plan, see the MARC Growth and Investment Plan: <http://www.mtmaryland.com/marc%20plan%20full.pdf>

## ACT Supports Housing and Stores at Glenmont

Ben Ross

A plan to build housing and stores across Glenallan Ave. from the Glenmont Metro - the beginning of the area's needed transformation from ugly sprawl into a livable, walkable community - has hit roadblocks that ACT is working to overcome.

The project meets county requirements for transportation improvements with new facilities for pedestrians, transit riders, and drivers. But a county zoning examiner has held up the project because some of the improvements help only pedestrians and transit riders, and not drivers.

The examiner's decision is a textbook example of the bias against transit riders and pedestrians that pervades transportation and land-use policy. The examiner wrote:

*[Non-roadway] improvements are important, and would undoubtedly be beneficial to pedestrians and transit users... but nonetheless, the question of whether the net result for the community would be a benefit or an adverse impact has not been explored. It may be that non-roadway improvements would draw people out of their cars and onto transit, taking enough trips off the roads to offset the traffic impact of the new units, but the Applicant did not submit any evidence to that effect.*

In other words, pedestrians and transit users are excluded from the community for whose benefit the county's land-use regulation system operates. Pedestrian and transit improvements are a benefit only to the extent that they remove cars from the road and thus help drivers to move faster.

This is the thinking that has created the current transportation mess. The decision is being appealed to the County Council, where ACT will testify on January 15.

## Thanks to ACTivists

John Carroll

ACT keeps an eye on the press and occasionally checks the public record in Rockville. There was evidence of ever growing interest in safer streets and improved transit across Montgomery County. Thanks to all these citizens who sent letters to editors, or sent messages to government on transportation, bike, and pedestrian issues:

Richard Arkin, Lila Asher, Andrew & Lynne Barnes, George Barsky, Joseph Boggi, Marcia Bond, Carolyn Bryant, Jean Buergher, Robert & Sandra Burk, Robert Chaddock, Michelle Chovan, David & Margaret Clark, Susan Clifford, Marilyn Cohen, Generosa Collins, Lori Commins, Cheryl Cort, Joann Volk & Patrick Corvington, Julia Craighill, Mary Jo Danton, Judith Deitz, Olivier de Messieres, Lee Dennison, Ricardo Dent, John Doak, Brian Dorothy, Bruce & Penny Douglas, Lisa Durant, Robert Dyer, Gerald & Debbie Ehrenstein, Donna Elliot-Moore, Allen Feldman, Shalom Fisher, David & Katherine Flaxman, Mike Flood, George & Eleanor Ford, Ruth Fort, Bill Frick, Joe Fox, Karen Green, Ron & Nancy Goor, John Gross, Jon Gubits, Jong-On Hahm, Avi Halpert, Carl Henn, Barbara Shepp & Jon Hiatt, Loc & Madeleine Hoang, Alice Horowitz, Betsy Johnson, Tracey Johnstone, Naomi and Irving Kaminsky, Linda Katz, Laura Kelsey, Ellen Kerley, Alan Lauer, Walter Ligon, Florence Lloyd, Erwin Mack, Lisa Mayo, Judith McGuire, Connie McKenna, David & Carole Metzger, Kathleen Patterson & Mac Norton, Naomi Morse, Jeff Owrutsky, Adam Pagnucco, George Painter, Wayne Phyllaier, Philip Porado, S. Price, CA Proctor, Virginia Richardson, Michael Rubinstein, Jacqui Sapper, Scott Schneider, Stewart Schwartz, I. Snyder, Jane Terry, John Wetmore, Walter Wiesch, Larry & Nita Vorisek, Francis Walters, John Whitty, David Wunderlich.

These are just the names we noticed. There may have been many more. Apologies to those we missed.

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## Corrections to Last Issue

Ed Tennyson

In the last issue, a correction needs to be made to the article, "Not All Transfers Are Created Equal." All transfers do not discourage "use of transit". Some transfers get people where they could not otherwise go. Some save time. True, transit use must be encouraged and some transit managers pay less attention to transferring than needed. Research shows that **a majority of transit riders prefer to transfer when doing so will save 7 or more minutes. At 12 minutes saved, 90% will prefer to transfer, such as from a slow bus to a faster train.** A fraction of riders will not transfer for any reason. Timed transfers and long headway bus waits (briefly) for slightly delayed trains are essential. Published connections are essential. Bus-to-bus transfers on long headways will not work unless coordinated, but that is not always possible.

In the last issue, on page 7, there is an inaccuracy in "Commuting In America" by Alan Pisarski although the quote is correct from the 1990 and 2000 census. Las Vegas looks so good only because it had no significant bus service at all 30 years ago. A new service gets an infinite increase at first.

Also, it is not true that rail ridership gains in the National Capital area did not offset bus losses. The census had a flawed sample. Actual records from American Public Transportation Association and Federal Transit Administration show that the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority service area increased transit passenger-miles by 15% from 1.74 billion in 1990 to 2.0 billion in 2000. The population grew 10%. Passenger-miles per capita grew 4% from 544 to 565. Policymakers need correct data to win support for the Purple Line and the Corridor Cities light rail.

	Millions of Passenger-miles	
	1990	2000
Fairfax Connector	12.0	38.0
M A R C	102.8	160.1
Metrobus	563.7	452.9
Metrorail	994.2	1,190.4
PRTC	19.0	23.0
Ride-On	49.3	66.0
VRE	0	67.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,741.0</b>	<b>1,998.0</b>
Population	3,202,700	3,534,500

## PURPLE LINE NOW SHOWS ITS COLORS AT OCTOBER FUNDRAISER!

Purple Line Now

Hundreds of Purple Line supporters converged on Montgomery College October 10th to push for construction funding for the Purple Line. The event, held in the College's new Student Services Center, showcased the diversity of support for the light rail transit line. Besides raising money (nearly \$15,000 net) the event was also to announce that the Coalition to Build the Inner Purple Line is named Purple Line Now.

Emcee and entertainment duties fell on Silver Spring's own jazz phenom: Marcus Johnson. Maestro Johnson provided personal accounts of the importance of transit while growing up in the Washington area and in his life today.

Mike Tidwell, a prominent environmental activist who is Director of the Chesapeake Climate Action Network, initiated a short program of speeches by noting the tremendous contribution to global warming resulting from the over-reliance on automobiles for transportation. AFL-CIO Metropolitan Council President Josh Williams followed up by declaring that union members in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties want and need the Purple Line. Gigi Godwin, President of the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce, underlined the problems families and businesses face as a result of traffic congestion. Ms. Godwin also underscored the most critical goal of the hour -- to ensure that a funding plan for Maryland's Transportation Trust Fund includes \$600 million in dedicated annual revenue.

Maryland State Comptroller Peter Franchot and Congressman Albert Wynn rounded out the program by highlighting the major lift to the Purple Line resulting from the election of Governor Martin O'Malley. Congressman Wynn declared that he would continue his strong efforts for the Purple Line in the future.

## Report of the Nominating Committee for 2008 ACT Board of Directors

The Nominating Committee is proud to present its nominations for Officers for Action Committee for Transit for 2008. Please see the column to the right for the list.

This eight member group of nominees include representatives from all five County Council districts as well as six of the eight county Legislative Districts.

In addition to these nominees, non-voting, but to attend the board meetings that deal with Purple Line, will be Harry Sanders and Webb Smedley as president and chair, respectively, of Purple Line Now.

Nominating Committee Members:

John Fay  
Kathy Jentz  
Ben Ross  
Harry Sanders

## Editorial Remarks

Your Transit Times editor is Quon Kwan. Cutoff date for receiving materials for the next publication is March 11. Send your materials to Quon at: **siufung@erols.com** or call him at: (h) 301-460-7454.

## ACT Officers Nominated for 2008:

President: Ben Ross  
V. Pres: Jim Clarke  
V. Pres: Hans Riemer  
V. Pres: Miriam Schoenbaum  
Secretary: Tracey Johnstone  
Treasurer: John Carroll  
Board Member: John Fay  
Board Member: Jason Waskey

Come to the Jan. 8 meeting ready to vote. Nominations from the floor will be accepted.

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Staff Member: Cindy Snow  
**actfortransit@mail.org**  
(note new email address)

FORWARDING SERVICE REQUESTED

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