



ACTION COMMITTEE FOR TRANSIT

Transit Times

The Newsletter of the Action Committee for Transit of Montgomery County, Maryland
Volume 28, Number 4, October 2014

ACT's monthly meetings are 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.

Oct 14: **Speaker: Tanya Snider, Editor of Streetsblog USA - "Vision Zero"**

Nov 11: **Speaker: Casey Anderson, Chair, Montgomery County Planning Board - "The Future of Montgomery County"**

NOTE: Change of location for this meeting only: Please check the ACT website or call 240-308-1209 for location.

Dec 9: **Speaker TBD**

- Montgomery County and D.C. Councils Hold First Ever Transportation Meeting (p. 4)
- Indicators of Success for Rail Transit Projects (p. 5)
- 50th Anniversary of the Urban Mass Transportation Act (p. 6)

Hi Ho Silver (Line)!

Quon Kwan

Phase I of Metrorail's Silver Line opened on Saturday, July 26. The new rail line is the largest expansion of Metrorail — and the first time a new color has been added to the Metro map — since the Green Line opened in 1991. It is the first line not built by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (built by the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority). For the first time, Metrorail serves Tyson's Corner — the region's second largest employment center (100,000 jobs) outside of downtown Washington, DC. The Silver Line doubles service frequency to stations shared with the Blue Line. It also adds 11.7 miles and five new stations — McLean, Tysons Corner, Greensboro, Spring Hill (which train operators mispronounce as "Springfield") and Wiehle (pronounced "whee-lee") - Reston East — for a total of 118 miles and 91 stations in the Metrorail system. Construction of the Silver Line started in March 2009. It costs \$3.14 billion, of which the U.S. Government funded \$975 million.

Nearly 220,000 trips were taken to or from the five new stations during the first week (July 26 through August 3). On average, 15,942 riders

Feature Articles

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- In Memoriam: Edson Leigh Tennyson — Dedicated Civil Servant of Public Transit (p. 2)
- Washington, DC, Ranked #1 for Walkable Urban Places (p. 3)

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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)]
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You can join/renew online at our website, or send your check for the chosen category of membership to:

Action Committee for Transit

P.O. Box 7074

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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.

boarded at the five new stations each *weekday* in that week – roughly two-thirds of the way towards the estimate of 25,000 *weekday* riders after one year. Of the 15,942 riders, 8,000 - 9,000 were existing riders from the Orange Line; the balance of about 6,000 were new riders.

The new outdoor stations feel light and airy with a modern finish as opposed to the older, outdoor stations with a heavy, bulky finish. The new restrooms are publicly accessible in contrast to the existing hidden restrooms, which require someone to unlock them. Parking is provided at the new Wiehle - Reston East

station only. Work has already started on Phase II, which will extend the Silver Line 11.4 miles to six new stations, including Reston Town Center, Herndon, Dulles Airport and Ashburn.

In Memoriam: Edson Leigh Tennyson – Dedicated Civil Servant of Public Transit

Quon Kwan

Edson Leigh Tennyson, a loyal ACT member, dedicated civil servant, and professional rail transit engineer passed away on July 14 at the age of 92 in Vienna, VA. I remember Ed fondly, joining Jim Clarke and myself on December 18, 1998 testifying at the National Capital Regional Transportation Planning Board on the study for the I-270 corridor (see ACT Newsletter v. 13, n. 1). We all shamed the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) by pointing out its failure to analyze alternatives, including transit. At an ACT meeting on October 10, 2000, Ed discussed flaws in SHA's call for a busway over rail in the I-270 corridor. I also recall his vociferous opposition to a busway along Georgia Ave. in favor of rail. The last time I heard from Ed was in fall 2012 when he objected to the statement "*ridership is sparse on Phoenix's . . . light rail*" in Taras Grescoe's book, *Straphanger – Saving Our Cities and Ourselves from the Automobile* (which I reviewed in ACT Newsletter v. 26, n. 4). Ed indefatigably defended and promoted rail transit with massive facts and figures.

Ed was born in Orange, NJ. After two management engineering degrees at Carnegie Institute of Technology (Carnegie-Mellon), he began his career at Pittsburgh Railways and then Milwaukee Rapid Transit. From 1951 to 1956, he was appointed City Transit Commissioner for Youngstown, OH. In 1956, he became the Deputy Commissioner of Transportation in Philadelphia, PA. In 1972, Pennsylvania Governor Shapp appointed Ed as Deputy Secretary of Transportation. When his term expired in 1979, he consulted for San Diego Trolley, Inc. as they began light rail operations. In 1983, he was appointed Public Works Planning Coordinator for Arlington County to complete the Metrorail Orange Line, retiring in 1992. How many of us can emulate him?

Washington, DC, Ranked #1 for Walkable Urban Places

Quon Kwan

In June 2014, the School of Business of the George Washington University issued its report, *Foot Traffic Ahead: Ranking Walkable Urbanism in America's Largest Metros*. This report ranks 30 largest metropolitan areas in the U.S. for walkable urban places and concludes Washington, DC, is number one. This report is the third national survey of walkable urban places in the U.S. since the first one was done in 2007 by The Brookings Institution.

With the rebirth of walkable urban development (or urban renewal), no longer can metropolitan real estate be simply categorized as “urban (or central city)” or “suburb (or outlying counties),” which has been the practice of the U.S. census since 1950.

Walkable urbanism (walkable urban development or places) can and does occur in the suburbs (viz., Arlington and Bethesda). Walkable urbanism is characterized by much higher density and a mix of diverse real estate types, connected via transportation options, such as bus and rail, bike routes, and roads. In a walkable urban place, everyday amenities, including home, work, school, restaurants, and theaters are within walking distance.

What then are called the traditional suburbs, the type of development that dominated the second half of the 20th century? Such developments are called drivable sub-urban developments. Drivable sub-urban places are characterized by low-density development connected only by car or truck with segregation of homes from office from retail from industrial.

The research to identify the walkable urban places in each of the 30 largest metropolitan cities in the U.S. is based on a 2012 Brookings Institution methodology to set the criteria for scoring a walkable urban place. The criteria include the amount of office space and retail space and “Walk Score.”

The Walk Score algorithm gives points based on the distance to the closest amenity in

each category. If the closest amenity in a category is within $\frac{1}{4}$ mile, the maximum number of points is assigned. The number of points declines as the distance approaches 1 mile. No points are assigned for amenities further than 1 mile. Each category is weighted equally, and the points are summed and normalized to yield a score from 0–100. The number of nearby amenities is the leading predictor of whether people walk. Relevant amenities include residential property, businesses, schools, restaurants, and theaters.

Within the 30 largest metropolitan cities, there are 558 identified walkable urban places. The 30 largest metropolitan cities account for the following:

- 46% of the total U.S. population
- 146 million residents
- 58% of U.S. Gross Domestic Product

Metropolitan Washington, DC, ranks first in walkable urban places, followed in descending order by New York City, Boston, San Francisco, and Chicago. The 30th and last in walkable urban places is Orlando.

What does it mean for Washington, DC, to be ranked first? It has in the U.S., the most office and retail space in walkable urban places (43%) – even more than New York City (38%). Second, not only does Washington, DC, have the most office and retail space in walkable urban places, it has the most balanced distribution of walkable urban places between central city (51%) and suburbs (49%). Although New York City has a well-deserved reputation for walkability, that reputation is based on Manhattan – an island comprising only 8% of the metropolitan area’s 22 million population and 0.3% of the metropolitan area’s land. The fact that 89% of the walkable urban places are located mostly in Manhattan means much of the metropolitan area outside Manhattan has 11% of the walkable urban places; New York City is very unbalanced vis-à-vis Washington, DC.

Let’s take a closer look at walkable urban places in Washington, DC. The city has 45 walkable urban places that average about 408 acres each and total 17,500 acres. These 45 walkable urban places make up less than 1% of the metropolitan

area's land area but account for 48% of the metropolitan area's new office, hotel, and rental apartment square footage.

Washington, DC, was also ranked first in the first national survey (in 2007) of urban walkable places. Several reasons explain why Washington, DC, continues to be ranked first in urban walkable places. One is that 48% of the metropolitan area residents over 25 years graduated from college – the highest percentage in the country – compared with the national average of 30%.

Second is Metrorail, one of the three 1970s heavy rail transit systems (the others are the San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit and the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit). Metrorail has continued to expand aggressively, has the second highest rail ridership (New York City is first) in the U.S., and has the second highest heavy rail track mileage in the U.S.

Third is the relatively small number (seven) of local government bodies (namely, District of Columbia and Arlington Loudoun, Montgomery, Prince George's, Fairfax, and Prince William) and a few small cities with the authority to regulate land use. This small number of local government bodies is far less than for the other 30 largest metropolitan areas. This small number of local government bodies makes regional coordination easier. Moreover, most of the suburban jurisdictions have encouraged higher density, mixed-use zoning around Metrorail stations.

Fourth, developers in the metropolitan Washington, DC, area have mastered developing urban walkable places as real estate even though they are more risky and complex than the simple, well-known, cookie-cutter, drivable sub-urban formulas.

The authors point out that the three national surveys of walkable urban places found that a majority of office and retail absorption took place in walkable urban places, and that those walkable urban places occupy less than 1% of the land area in each metropolitan area. If this relationship continues, sprawl will begin to end. To confirm this trend, the authors suggest an analysis of all real estate products, particularly, for-sale housing. Only recently, have new data been made available for for-

sale housing in walkable urban places. Second, the authors admonish that the end of sprawl will not be immediate; rather, its end merely marks a gradual shift from drivable sub-urban development as the dominant real estate to walkable urban place development.

The authors predict that the evolution to walkable urban places will accelerate in Atlanta, Denver, Los Angeles, Miami, and Portland. As far as Washington, DC, is concerned, urban walkable place development may be reaching a plateau. Why? The Washington, DC, area is absorbing 75% of all office space, and the majority of rental apartment space is in its walkable urban places. Future growth will be less at the expense of drivable sub-urban places and more at the reliance on general regional growth. Walkable urban growth in the DC area will depend on the overall economic health of the area, not just capturing demand from increasingly obsolete office parks, strip malls, and suburban home subdivisions.

Nominees for the ACT Board Being Accepted - to be voted on at the Annual Meeting and Election of ACT Officers (January 13, 2015). If you would like to nominate yourself or someone else, please send their name and contact info to admin@actfortransit.org or call 240-308-1209.

Montgomery County and D.C. Councils Hold First Ever Transportation Meeting

On July 16, 2014 ACT members Tina Slater, Bee Ditzler, and Kelly Blynn were among the people observing the first ever meeting between the Montgomery County Council and D.C. Council Transportation & Environment Committees, held under the auspices of the Transportation Planning Board/Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. Following are some notes taken by Tina Slater:

- Roger Berliner of the Montgomery County Council spoke of the multi-jurisdictional opportunities for Montgomery County (MC) and D.C.
- Mary Cheh of D.C. Council Ward 3 noted that we are one transportation area, that neither transportation nor the environment recognizes political boundaries.

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Indicators of Success for Rail Transit Projects

Quon Kwan

In July 2014, the Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) published a landmark report, *Making Effective Fixed-Guideway Investments: Indicators of Success*. Not since 1982, when *Urban Rail in America: An Exploration of Criteria for Fixed-Guideway Transit* (authored by Boris Pushkarev and Jeffrey Zupan of the New York Regional Plan Association) has there been any other comprehensive, peer-reviewed analysis of the criteria for determining the success of a rail transit project. The immense costs of rail transit projects, ranging from tens of millions to several billions, make such projects among the costliest largest infrastructure in which cities invest. Decision-making involving such projects require serious attention to predicting their success.

Urban Rail in America had been the canon for defining the corridor-level thresholds of ridership necessary to support rail transit. Since *Urban Rail in America*, new transit modes (e.g., bus rapid transit), new policy issues, and new analytical tools emerged. Also, rail transit systems built within the last 32 years are not addressed in *Urban Rail in America*.

The authors of *Making Effective Fixed-Guideway Investments: Indicators of Success* (henceforth called TCRP Report 167) are researchers (including the renowned Robert Cervero) at the Institute of Urban and Regional Development in the University of California, Berkeley. Their objectives were to identify the characteristics necessary to support fixed-guide transit systems and provide guidance on evaluating proposed fixed-guideway projects. TCRP 167 focuses only on light rail, heavy rail, and bus rapid transit.

The authors collected data on fixed-guideway project ridership, capital costs, service frequencies, measures of connectivity (to the larger transit network), demographics, parking costs, and congestion. They looked at two data sets: one consisted of 55 fixed-guideway projects, primarily heavy rail and light rail with smaller numbers of commuter rail and bus rapid transit. These projects were either entirely new (i.e., starter lines) or

expansions of existing systems. The second data set was data from 244 areas across the US with transit service; of the 244, 18 have fixed-guideway transit.

The authors then tested how the average daily ridership on a project was affected by 140 measured factors to determine the factors consistently associated with highest ridership. They found four factors were the most critical for ridership:

1. jobs within ½ mile (mi.) of station
2. population within ½ mi. of station
3. combination of jobs and population within ½ mi. of station plus parking cost
4. percent of project alignment at grade (i.e., neither above nor below ground)

These four factors are even more important than walk scores or location in a central business district. Like *Urban Rail in America*, the authors found population around stations is highly predictive of a transit project's success. Unlike *Urban Rail in America*, the authors found jobs around stations (see more below) also being highly predictive of a transit project's success.

Next, the authors used the measure of passenger-miles-traveled (PMT) to obtain the net benefit of a fixed-guideway project to the overall transit system as a whole. To do this, the authors tested how PMT is related to the same 140 measured factors using the second data set. They found the following seven fixed-guideway project-related factors to have the greatest statistical significance in impact on PMT of overall transit systems:

1. metropolitan area population
2. job density within ½ mi. of station
3. population density within ½ mi. of station
4. high-wage jobs within ½ mi. of station
5. average congestion (daily vehicle-miles traveled per freeway lane-mile)
6. "leisure industry" jobs (i.e., jobs in dining, retail, and entertainment) within ½ mi. of station. This reflects the positive influence of fixed-guideway transit in serving mixed-use environments (as opposed to single-use environments).
7. interaction of jobs, population, and road congestion.

One of three new discoveries of the TCRP 167 authors is the impact of jobs around stations, which *Urban Rail in America* did not touch at all. The other two new discoveries are the impact of leisure industry jobs on ridership, and this industry's high lure of discretionary riders (riders using transit for non-work activities). On the other hand, they found unexpectedly, that low-wage jobs and population near stations both lower system-wide PMT if not counterbalanced by road congestion and/or a variety of other job types.

The authors also found that in half of the fixed-guideway projects studied, overall transit system PMT decreased relative to the same system without the fixed-guideway project. When bus routes are converted to feed new fixed-guideway transit, transfers are required. Riders resist transfers unless high road congestion exists. Now that *Making Effective Fixed-Guideway Investments: Indicators of Success* replaces *Urban Rail in America*, it is the new canon for defining the corridor-level thresholds of ridership necessary to support rail transit.



Photo by Kathy Jentz

Dan Reed staffing ACT table at the Takoma Park Folk Festival

ACT In Action - ACT volunteers have been busy getting out into the community educating residents about the Purple Line, Bus Rapid Transit, pedestrian safety and other transit issues. In September we participated in the Gaithersburg Labor Day Parade and had a booth at the Takoma Park Folk Festival. October will bring us to the Takoma Park Street Festival (Oct. 5) and the Fenton Street Market in Silver Spring (Oct. 18). See page 7 for our plans for November.

Thank you to all our volunteers for your time and efforts supporting ACT and promoting transit.

50th Anniversary of the Urban Mass Transportation Act

Quon Kwan

On January 15, 2014 at the 93rd Annual Meeting of the Transportation Research Board in Washington, DC, the topic of discussion at Session 802 was "50 Years of the Urban Mass Transportation Act – A Dialogue with Former Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Urban Mass Transit Administration (UMTA) Administrators." Nine of the total 11 former UMTA or FTA Administrators participated in the dialogue. Back in 1962, President Kennedy bemoaned that public transit was a chaotic patchwork, out of date with declining ridership and accelerating financial problems. People questioned, "Would public transit be relevant in the future?"

The answer is clear from today's booming ridership, rebirth of streetcars, and new rail starts in cities where they are least expected, e.g., Dallas, TX and Los Angeles, CA. What was responsible for the turnaround? It started with the passage of the Urban Mass Transportation Act (UMT Act) in 1964 under President Johnson. The UMT Act did not pass without controversy (212 out of 341 votes in the House and only 52 out of 93 votes in the Senate). The UMT Act started providing \$375 million in capital assistance grants. Now FTA provides over \$11 billion in grants for public transit. The management of Federal grants for public transit has been well run except for a single FTA employee who embezzled grant funds.

So what have been some of the accomplishments during these 50 years? For one, Washington, DC's Metrorail could not have started without former UMTA Administrator Frank Herringer approving the issuance of revenue bonds for constructing Metrorail. Herringer was a financial analyst who refused to approve the bonds because he knew that the bonds could not be re-paid from fares, as required by statute. He relented after being told by a higher-up to approve the bonds or leave UMTA. The bonds were repaid (but not all from fares).

Four former UMTA Administrators lamented over rebuffs at their attempts to use Highway Trust Funds for public transit. President Nixon deserves credit for supporting UMTA (as well as other urban

programs) in challenging the Federal Highway Administration's hegemony over Highway Trust Funds. However, it was not until President Reagan signed the Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1982 that 20% of Highway Trust Funds were set aside into a Mass Transit Account. In spite of this historical turning point for funding transit, Reagan was anti-transit. Under him, federal operating assistance to transit ended. When US Department of Transportation (USDOT) Secretary Elizabeth Dole introduced Alfred DelliBovi as UMTA Administrator to Reagan, he remarked, "*I thought we got rid of that agency.*"

Former MTA Administrator Brian Clymer recounted the magnitude of the impact of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 on public transit; over 90% of the ADA deals with public transit – mandating accessibility to all transit vehicles and stations, calling out stops, seating priorities, signs in Braille, and accommodation for service animals, ramps, and wheelchairs. The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991 was another landmark law. It allowed interstate highway funds to be transferred for transit projects. ISTEA enabled the District of Columbia to divert most of its interstate highway funds to build Metrorail.

At the same time, UMTA struggled to change its name to FTA. The name change is profoundly significant. UMTA wanted the name change to elevate transit to a national priority. Moreover, all the important modal agencies in the USDOT have "federal" in their name. The White House Office of Management and Budget denied the name change, but the Senate Banking Committee, which oversees transit, heard about it, overrode the denial, and enacted the name change in 1991. What is unusual is that all of USDOT (except FTA) is overseen by the Senate Commerce Committee; in fact, USDOT came out of the US Department of Commerce. When the UMT Act established UMTA, it was due to the Senate Banking Committee, which is more pro-transit than the Senate Commerce Committee because its Senators come from states with banking centers in major cities served by transit.

The 'State of Good Repair' was brought up in the dialogue. It did not seem to make sense to start a new rail project when the rest of the system

is crumbling; it is analogous to adding a new room to a deteriorating house. There was no requirement to consider State of Good Repair when funding a new start project until Moving Ahead for Progress for the 21st Century (MAP-21), was enacted in 2012. MAP-21 provides a formula funding grant program for achieving a State of Good Repair. MAP-21 also corrected a major flaw in the 50-year old UMT Act. For whatever reason, it banned the issuance of federal safety regulations for transit. MAP-21 removed the ban and created a new office in FTA to regulate transit safety and fund state safety oversight programs. Sadly, FTA picked a person from aviation, with absolutely no transit experience or expertise, to head that office.

Transit is now flexing its muscle. The cue was FTA Administrator Peter Rogoff's statement, "*transit was on par with highways,*" concerning the emergency relief package for Hurricane Sandy of 2012. Of \$60 billion in the package, \$11 billion went for transit, not just for relief but to make transit more resilient to flooding. When the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) refused to sign a memorandum of understanding for FTA to manage a \$3 billion recovery for New York City Transit, FTA went to the White House and won its case against FEMA, but it all really started 50 years ago with passage of the UMT Act.



Photo by Tracey Johnstone

County Executive Ike Leggett with ACT's Bus Rapid (Rabbit) Transit

ACT to Roll in the Silver Spring Thanksgiving Parade – with our Purple Line float from last year's Thanksgiving Parade, and new from the Gaithersburg Labor Day Parade, our Bus Rapid (Rabbit) Transit float. Come join us in the fun, or come out and cheer us on - Saturday Nov. 22.

Transit Times
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- Sam Zimbabwe (D.C. Planning) said that rather than a "Complete Streets" (CS) approach, D.C. was going for a "complete network" approach --- whereas one street might not be able to handle all CS functions, using adjacent streets for some of the modes would work to produce a good network of modes.
- Jim Hamre (WMATA) said that D.C. will add 100,000 (possibly even 200,000) more people by 2045 and everyone new will not be able to drive. We need more people to use surface transit.
- Nancy Floreen of the Montgomery County Council asked: Why don't we see this as an interjurisdictional system with WMATA playing the lead role? Why not take better advantage of our regional system?
- Berliner noted with MC and DC working together, with WMATA in the middle, "*I cannot believe we cannot make something wonderful, something better for all of us.*"



Editorial Remarks

Your Transit Times editor is Quon Kwan. Cutoff date for receiving materials for the next publication is **December 9**. Send your materials to Quon at: qykwan@gmail.com or call him at: (h) 301-460-7454.

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