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**Next Meetings**

- **January 10** - **Annual Meeting with Election of Officers* and “Transit Is Much Safer Than You Think”** Speaker: Todd Litman, Executive Director, Victoria Transport Policy Institute
- **February 14** - **“Anatomy of Montgomery County’s Housing Shortage”** Speaker: Jeannette Chapman, George Mason University Center for Regional Analysis
- **March 14** - Program to be announced.

ACT’s monthly meetings are normally held on the second Tuesday of each month, at the Silver Spring Civic Center, One Veterans Place. Meetings begin at 7:30pm.

The Silver Spring Civic Center faces the Fenton Street and Ellsworth Avenue. It is an eight-minute walk north from the Silver Spring Metro Station. Many bus routes can take you to and from the meeting. Ride-On #15 and #19 stop at the corner of Wayne Ave. & Fenton St.; Metrobus routes Z6 and Z8 and Ride-On routes #9 and #12 stop along Colesville Road; Ride-On #16, #17, and #20 pass by on Fenton St. If coming by car, plentiful evening parking is available at the Wayne Avenue garage and is (despite ACT’s advocacy against subsidies for drivers) free after 7:00pm.

ACT Staff: Cindy Snow & Kathy Jentz
admin@actfortransit.org / 240-308-1209
President’s Letter

A glimmer of light is showing a possible early way out of the legal limbo for the Purple Line, as we wait for Judge Leon’s response to the Department of Justice request that he reconsider his August decision. Although advocates would have, of course, preferred that he simply reverse that decision and allow construction to proceed, we at least now have a possible way forward. In late November, Judge Leon modified his original decision and allowed the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to determine whether a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) is necessary. The FTA promptly responded on December 18.

Not surprisingly, the transit professionals who had approved the Purple Line didn’t think any further analysis was necessary. Furthermore, the FTA said that even in the unlikely scenario that the Purple Line had no riders from WMATA, the projected 2040 ridership of 50,000 would still be “one of the most robust light-rail systems funded by the FTA in recent years.” Now that the FTA has answered Judge Leon’s question regarding an SEIS, the next step is up to him. Our hope is that he will follow the one of the possible paths laid out in his November ruling and allow construction to begin. In the meantime, we have continued our work for better transit and sustainable land use.

METRO

Our regional conversation about how to return WMATA to a state of good working order continues. ACT held a “Late Night Metro Ride” on September 30 to call attention to proposed last night metrorail service cuts. Late night metro rail service is critical for employees at restaurants, bars, and hospitals (really anyone who doesn’t work a standard 9 to 5 shift.) The service cuts would also require Nationals fans attending games at the ballpark to leave long before the game ends to avoid being stranded.

Hours before ACT’s “Late Night Ride” took place, Nats star Max Scherzer called on WMATA to make an exception in service cuts to allow Washington baseball fans to see all of the Nats playoff games. That night our event was featured on the local 11:00PM news on FOX, NBC, and ABC. Elected officials from both the Montgomery County Council and the Maryland House of Delegates joined us. This fall, ACT also co-sponsored two forums on WMATA’s future: Metro in the Public Eye and Metro Money.

We look forward to continuing to work with our allies and elected officials in 2017 to fight for WMATA's future.

MARC

On the state level, we are proud to report that ACT is a founder and member of the new Maryland Transit Opportunities Coalition (MTOC). MTOC brings together transit activists from all over the state to press for the Baltimore Red Line, all-day MARC train service throughout Maryland and light rail to Southern Maryland. To see all the possible connections this transit network would create, check out the map at MTOC’s website: transitformd.org and page 5 of this issue.

Vision Zero

Our push for safer streets for people traveling on foot and by bicycle has helped produce legislation that will allow for lower speed limits in residential and urban areas. Currently, the default speed limit on county roads without a posted speed limit is 30 mph, regardless of whether that is appropriate. Furthermore, current state law can prevent the county from lowering the speed limit below 25mph; this means that the speed limit for cul de sacs in residential areas must be at least 25mph. Two bills, introduced by Delegates Moon and Korman, will grant the county the power to lower the speed limit when appropriate.

As always, if you have questions about what ACT is doing or if you would like to volunteer, please email us at admin@actfortransit.org. We would love to hear from you.

Sincerely,
Ronit Aviva Dancis
Purple Line Groundbreaking Still on Hold
By Quon Kwan

The Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) said on December 18th that groundbreaking for the Purple Line will not take place until the project’s federal Record of Decision is reinstated by U.S. District Court Judge Richard Leon who revoked it earlier in August. The judge revoked the project’s federal approval after finding that the MTA and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) failed to study the effect, if any, of Metro’s recent maintenance issues and ridership decline would have on the project. Purple Line ridership is forecasted to exceed 74,000 on a weekday by 2040, according to MTA’s 2014 estimates.

Judge Leon asked the agencies to determine whether they believe a new supplemental environmental impact statement is needed due to Metro’s problems and to issue a report to him detailing why they do not believe a new one is needed, if that’s the case. On December 18th, both the FTA and MTA replied dismissing concerns that Metro’s safety issues and decline in ridership would significantly negatively affect the Purple Line ridership. The agencies agreed if no Metro riders used the Purple Line, the light rail line would still have about 50,000 weekday riders by 2040 and said a new Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement is not needed. See https://www.scribd.com/document/334632619/Notice-of-Ridership-Documents#from_embed.

In his Nov. 22 order, Judge Leon said the plaintiffs (two Chevy Chase residents and Friends of the Capital Crescent Trail) have 14 days to file their opposition to the motion. At that point, the FTA, MTA, and others will have seven days to reply to the opposition. After the reply is filed, Judge Leon would issue a new ruling. Due to the month-long filing deadlines, coupled with the winter holidays, it is unlikely the Record of Decision would be reinstated until late January at the earliest. Further delay could cost $13 million per month and an extended delay could cost $400 million.

69% of Transit $$ Ballot Measures Passed in Nov ’16
By Quon Kwan


The number of November 8 ballot measures (49), as well as their collective total amount (nearly $200 billion), were the largest in history. Since 2000, the average success rate of transit measures is 71%.

Furthermore, 77 total transit measures appeared on ballots throughout 2016, the highest number on record. This follows a growing trend in the number of measures annually, indicating local cities and counties increasingly see the need for local investment in public transportation and recognizing that ballot initiatives can be a powerful way to meet that need.

The biggest win was the incredible passage of Measure M by over 70% of the voters in the country’s car capital — Los Angeles, CA. It increases the sales tax by ½ % to raise $120 billion over 40 years for transit, including a new rail line between Los Angeles and southeast communities, a new rail tunnel connecting San Fernando Valley and Westwood in addition to completing the subway underneath Wilshire Blvd. from La Cienega Blvd. to Westwood.

Most significantly for our own Purple Line, Prince George’s County, MD, voters approved borrowing money to pay for the county’s $120 million portion of the Purple Line light rail project.

The second largest transit measure in the U.S. passed in Seattle, WA. It would hike taxes to raise $54 billion over 25 years for Sound Transit to expand its light rail system and add bus rapid transit corridors.
Voters in Santa Clara County, CA passed Measure B raising their sales tax by half a cent to transportation improvements, including bringing San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) to downtown San Jose, raising more than $6 billion over the next three decades. Measure B was garnering 71% support with an estimated 44% of the ballots counted.

In Fairfax County, VA, voters passed a $120 million bond measure, a portion of which would finance safety and system maintenance projects, new rail cars and power upgrades for running eight car trains, additional buses for operating Priority Corridor Networks, and rail station improvements.

In Arlington County, VA, voters passed a $58.8 million bond measure to partly finance the cost of various capital projects for Metrorail and other transit, pedestrian, road and transportation projects.

On a personal note, it seems that in the face of both President-elect Donald Trump’s emphasis to bolster infrastructure and Republican platform to delete transit funding, the best bet is to pass local measures supporting transit funding.

As a link in this state-wide rail network, the Baltimore Light Rail Red Line project would be revived. The plan would be to construct the Red and Purple lines, fund the planning and development of a $25 million Southern Maryland Light Rail line and increase the frequency of the Maryland Area Rail Commuter (MARC) commuter trains.

Governor Hogan withdrew state funding for the Baltimore Red Line, the long-anticipated east-west rail line between Woodlawn and Bayview. Governor Hogan called the $2.9 billion Red Line a “wasteful boondoggle.” At the same time, the Governor conditionally approved a slimmed-down Purple Line project that reduced much of the state’s contribution, leaving Prince George’s and Montgomery counties to pay more of the cost.

Ben Ross, chair of the new coalition, said its members had been working separately to promote local transit projects for years — but now want to work together on a statewide approach. “We developed a plan,” said Ross, the former president of the Action Committee for Transit in Montgomery County. At the same cost as the widening of I-270 and D.C. Beltway, we could build a transit network all across Maryland from Elkton to Frederick, from Waldorf all the way to Towson.” “Our basic strategy is to make the public understand what the possibilities are here,” he said. “Over the next 10 to 20 years there will be several governors. I think it’s more a matter of what the public wants than who is in office. ..”

The coalition asked the Governor to resume work on the Red Line and reintroduce a decade-old MARC plan for all-day, two-way service to/from Washington, Frederick, and Camden Yards, and between Baltimore and points north (Aberdeen, Elkton and Delaware). Ross said coalition members will attend Maryland Department of Transportation road shows to make their case directly to the public.

The coalition email is TransitforMD@gmail.com. Follow MTOC ON Twitter at @TransitforMD. Visit http://www.transitformd.org.

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**A State-Wide Rail Network Advocated for Maryland**

**By Quon Kwan**

On October 11, 2016, Maryland state-wide transit advocates, the newly formed “Maryland Transit Opportunities Coalition,” made its debut. The coalition is comprised of Action Committee for Transit, the Baltimore Transit Equity Coalition, Prince George’s Advocates for Community-based Transit and Southern Maryland Alliance for Rapid Transit. In the debut, it asked Governor Larry Hogan to redirect $8 billion proposed for widening of I-270 and the Washington Beltway to build a state-wide rail network to run from Delaware to Southern Maryland to West Virginia and connecting Baltimore and Washington Metrorail systems.
Can Chasing After a Bus Inspire A Great Work of Art?

By Quon Kwan

No, I am not talking about graffiti art or art at Metrorail stations, such as the “Penguin Rush Hour,” which was at the Silver Spring metro station; I am talking about a performing art and a masterwork at that.

On May 28th at the Kennedy Center, I watched the last show of the Paul Taylor Dance Co. in the series. In that show, the first work was Taylor’s vintage and best-known masterwork, Esplanade, choreographed in (1975). Paul Taylor, now 85, created this masterwork set to two J. S. Bach violin concertos. It was sublime, exquisite, and so bursting with exuberance that I had to find out more about the basis for the storyline of Esplanade.

Paul Taylor was inspired to choreograph Esplanade by the sight of a girl running to catch a bus, a rather pedestrian or mundane activity. The New Yorker review remarked, “Esplanade confers a mythic dimension on ordinary aspects of daily lives—it’s unfaked folk art.” Who would have thought of turning the sight of someone running to catch a bus into a masterwork of ballet except a keen observer of human movement like Paul Taylor? The Romantic poets in the tradition of English writer, William Wordsworth, gave the charm of novelty to everyday, mundane things. A moment of isolation in Esplanade, is resolved by connection releasing ebullient joy. Although the theme of Esplanade is not about mass transit, Esplanade captures the point that is all about mass transit—connecting people with people.

Editorial Remarks

Your Transit Times editor is Quon Kwan. He welcomes your submissions. Cutoff date for receiving materials for the next publication is February 10. Send your materials to Quon at: qykwan@gmail.com or call him at: (h) 301-460-7454
Join ACT/Renew Your membership for 2017!

A special thanks to the many of you who have already renewed your membership for 2017! We hope the rest of you will renew or join, either in response to our January mailing, or to this notice. Membership dues help us push for better and safer transit, sidewalks, bike facilities, and roads. You can join/renew at a level that’s comfortable for you;

$ 10 – Rider
$ 25 – Activist
$ 50 – Conductor
$100 and above – Engineer

Either mail a check with your contact info to ACT at: Action Committee for Transit, PO Box 7074, Silver Spring, MD 20907. Or bring your dues payment to the next ACT meeting. We are also working to get a new on-line payment system running, and expect to have it operational by the time you get this letter. Thank you all so much in advance! Also check out our website, Facebook page, and Twitter feed for updates:

www.actfortransit.org
www.twitter.com/actfortransit
www.facebook.com/actfortransit

Nominating Committee Report

By Ben Ross

Please come to our January 10 meeting prepared to vote for ACT officers for 2017. You may nominate someone or go with ACT’s Nominating Committee recommendations. They are:

President - Ronit Dancis
Vice President - Jennifer Hosey
Vice President - Ben Shnider
Vice President - Dan Reed
Treasurer - Nick Brand
Secretary - Tracey Johnstone
Board Member - Sean Emerson
Board Member - Tracey Lewis

Ex officio non-voting board members:
Ralph Bennett (Silver Spring) - Purple Line Now
Ben Ross (Bethesda) - meeting programs
Miriam Schoenbaum (Boyds) - Upcounty
Sebastian Smoot (Cloverly) - Northeast county