

# INTERSECT

NEWSLETTER

July 21, 2006

OF THE

Volume 10 Number 3

WASHINGTON REGIONAL NETWORK FOR LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

## FORUM ANNOUNCEMENT

### **Making the Bus Fly: Delivering Great New Bus Service Tomorrow**

with  
**Michelle Pourciau**  
D.C. Department of Transportation

**Michael Madden**  
Maryland Transit Administration

**James Hamre**  
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority  
& formerly with Arlington County

**Wednesday, July 26, 2006**

6:00 pm Refreshments; 6:30 pm Program  
National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC)  
401 9th Street, NW - North Lobby, Suite 500\*

Rapid bus service is coming to the region, offering a new level of performance. Unlike multi-billion Metrorail projects requiring years of planning, new high-performing bus service can be put in place within a year or two -- for a fraction of the cost. This bus service can provide a critical gap between conventional bus service with broad coverage and high capacity but costly rail service. What kind of service counts as "rapid"? Come learn about distinctive new rapid bus service on Georgia Avenue in D.C., University Boulevard in Prince George's and Montgomery Counties, Maryland, and also learn from the experience of the Pike Ride in Arlington, Virginia.

RSVP (attendance only): WRN, e-mail: [staff@washingtonregion.net](mailto:staff@washingtonregion.net), or call 202-244-1105. This event is free of charge. [www.washingtonregion.net](http://www.washingtonregion.net)  
\*NCPC is located on 9th St between E & D St; Metro Stations: Gallery Place, Metro Center, Archives, Federal Triangle. Doors close at 7 pm; and bring photo ID.

### **Friendship Heights Mixed Use Building Proposal Lauded for Smart Growth, Environmental Benefits**

By Cheryl Cort

Joining increasingly active neighborhood residents and smart growth supporters, the D.C. Sierra Club endorsed a proposed housing and retail building at 5220 Wisconsin Avenue, 300 feet south of the Friendship Heights Metro station. The seven and five story building proposed by Akridge would replace a used car lot with locally-serving street level retail and 55 – 70 housing units above. This is the second recognition for the project – the first was from the Smart Growth Alliance, which gives its stamp of approval to projects it determines to fit smart growth objectives of mixed use, mixed income development that take advantage of transit and reduce driving and environmental impacts.

*(Mixed Use Continued on page 2)*

### **Federal Metro Funding Bill Advances to U.S. Senate**

On July 17, the U.S. House of Representatives narrowly passed a bill proposed by Congressman Tom Davis, III (R-VA) to provide \$1.5 billion in federal matching funds to the Washington Metro system over 10 years. The bill now moves to the Senate where its fate is uncertain, according to the Washington Post. The funding would provide support to rehabilitate the aging system and purchase more railcars and buses to meet rising ridership demand.

While the District of Columbia has committed a portion of its sales tax to meeting its portion of the funding obligation required by the Davis bill, Maryland and Virginia have not committed their shares.

Ironically, to pay for Metro's funding needs, Davis identified anticipated revenues from an off-shore oil drilling scheme. The fate of the off-shore drilling expansion – and its potential revenues -- is unclear, but strongly opposed by environmental groups.

**WASHINGTON REGIONAL NETWORK**

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WRN advocates transportation investments, land use policies, and neighborhood designs that enhance existing communities and the environment of the Washington D.C. region.

Intersect staff: Cheryl Cort, editor; Alexa Mills, Stephen Wade, contributing writers.

*(Mixed Use continued from page 1)*

“Too often local governments accept poorly planned development, and the traffic that goes with it, because they believe they have no other choice,” said Chris Carney, a Sierra Club organizer. “By speaking up for a good proposal, we hope D.C. area residents will look at this project and demand better ones in their own neighborhoods.”

While some community activists have criticized the project, many residents have welcomed it. Also welcoming it are Sierra Club members who recognize that the residential building with ground floor retail will mean more walking, bicycling and travel by transit.

“This kind of development takes advantage of Metro while offering neighborhood-oriented retail in walking distance for the community,” said Tom Quinn, a Sierra Club member and Friendship Heights resident. “Even better news is that, under the proposal, redevelopment of the site will actually improve the environmental footprint of this lot.”

The building will meet national green building standards by incorporating a number of environmentally-friendly construction and design features including a rooftop that holds and filters rainwater and recycling or reuse of at least 50 percent of construction materials. The building will also offer bicycle parking for residents and retail workers, and provide a shower and changing room for employees to encourage bicycling to work.

Akridge also commits to providing two carsharing vehicles on site and promotion of them to new residents. The project, however, provides more parking than required or is typical of by-right projects at 1.2 spaces per unit, which undermines transit use and increases the likelihood of car ownership. The company appears to be bowing to pressure from some skeptical residents who ask that more parking be built in new buildings so that new residents will not park on the street near their houses. The developer has also committed to bar new residents from obtaining on-street parking permits. Ironically, the skeptics who demand more off-street parking, which will generate more vehicle trips, often cite traffic as their main concern about adding new housing and retail activities to the community. The Sierra Club, Smart Growth Alliance and local supporters see the proximity of the housing and retail to transit as a contribution to reducing the region’s traffic and environmental problems. Supporters cite the pedestrian-oriented design and sidewalk improvements as important ways to encourage walking for more trips and

keeping them local.

See Sierra Club press release: [www.SierraClub.org/metrodc/5220Wisconsin-Release-6-21-06.pdf](http://www.SierraClub.org/metrodc/5220Wisconsin-Release-6-21-06.pdf). View Smart Growth Alliance announcement at: [http://www.sgalliance.org/news/news\\_5\\_8\\_06.html](http://www.sgalliance.org/news/news_5_8_06.html), and Ak-

### **Northern Virginia Moves Forward with Affordable Housing Reforms**

By Stephen Wade

#### *Fairfax Affordable Housing Expectation for High-Rise Development Advances*

With the redevelopment of Tysons Corner on the horizon along with other areas of the county slated for more compact, transit-oriented development, the Department of Housing and Community Development’s high-rise task force is moving towards a standard affordable housing expectation for new urban development. This policy would be analogous to the Affordable Dwelling Unit (ADU) ordinance that applies to low-rise housing development in Fairfax County. The ADU ordinance sets aside 6.5 – 12.5 percent of new units these residential developments affordable to families earning up to 70 percent area median income (AMI).

“This policy is essential for the newly urbanizing areas of Fairfax County like Tysons and Springfield. Having more housing opportunities in these growing communities will diminish commuter traffic and contribute to a better quality of life in Fairfax,” said Stella Koch, who works for the Audubon Naturalist Society and is currently serving on the Tysons Task Force.

The consultant, Economics Research Associates (ERA), is preparing its second iteration of an analysis assessing the economics of providing affordable and workforce housing in high-rise buildings and more urban areas. Crafting a high-rise policy has been particularly challenging for the county because of Virginia legal and legislative constraints, the wide gap between what households can afford to pay and the higher costs of high-rise construction and recent volatility of world prices for steel and concrete.

The county has not decided whether the new policy will be implemented through the comprehensive plan, zoning ordinance, or both. The task force expects to go to the Board of Supervisors with a policy proposal this fall.

*(VA Housing Continued on page 3)*

*(VA Housing Continued from page 2)*

### *Alexandria Launches Affordable Housing Task Force*

Responding to housing advocates, the Alexandria City Council committed to creating a Workforce and Affordable Housing Work Group. At the June 7 work session convened by the Alexandria Council, local experts, representatives of other jurisdictions, city officials, and advocacy groups presented their experience and ideas for how Alexandria can more quickly produce and preserve affordable housing. Following the work session, City Council adopted a resolution creating the task force which will meet for one year and make recommendations to preserve and produce housing to meet the needs of middle and low income residents. The charge of the work group is largely based on the recommendations of Housing Action, a local advocacy group, with assistance from WRN. Advocates' recommendations include numeric goals and targets, the preservation of affordable rental housing, income targeting for the new housing fund, and affordable housing contributions from up zonings.

<http://www.housingaction.net/latest.html>.

### *Arlington Solidifies Affordable Housing Compromise in Statute*

On June 15, Governor Timothy M. Kaine ceremonially signed into law a bill that formalizes an Arlington County initiative to provide affordable housing in the highly desirable urban county. Late last year, the Arlington Affordable Housing Roundtable – comprised of county leaders, housing advocates, members of the business community, and other stakeholders – unanimously approved a compromise plan in which developers partner with Arlington to preserve and create affordable housing in the county.

The compromise requires developments to contribute either units or cash to affordable housing production or preservation in and around the county's two Metro corridors. The rule covers projects over 1.0 floor area ratio (FAR), and developers four options to meet their affordable housing requirement: on-site units at 5 percent of the increased density above 1.0, off-site units nearby at 7.5 percent of increased density above 1.0, off-site units within the county at 10 percent of increased density above 1.0, or a cash contribution. The cash contribution option is graduated, requiring more from higher density projects.

<http://www.arlingtonva.us/Departments/Communications/5515.aspx>

### **D.C. Inclusionary Zoning Policy Set; Mapped Areas Proposed**

By Stephen Wade

On May 18, the D.C. Zoning Commission settled on the final details for an inclusionary zoning policy for the city -- requiring that new private residential developments set aside some units affordable to moderate and low income households. At a July 10 meeting, the Zoning Commission agreed to schedule October hearings on where inclusionary zoning would apply, based on a map proposed by D.C. Office of Planning.

Many of the Campaign for Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning's recommendations were incorporated into the Zoning Commission's decision on the details of the policy including: 99-year affordability control periods for homeownership and rental units, allowing leasing of condos owned by D.C. Housing Authority or non-profits as part of a 25 percent first right to purchase set aside subject to condo rules, and the ability to build inclusionary units with the same number of bedrooms, but smaller square footage, thereby creating more units. How inclusionary zoning applies to Planned Unit Developments will be decided in the mapping phase. The Area Median Income (AMI) target for high-rise developments remained at 80 percent despite Campaign efforts to bring it on par with low-rise buildings which splits income targeting between 80 percent and 50 percent AMI.

At the July 10 Zoning Commission hearing, the D.C. Office of Planning proposed a map to the Commission that showed where inclusionary zoning could apply throughout the city. To achieve the Office of Planning's stated goals of equity, simplicity, and effectiveness, inclusionary zoning would apply to basically all parts of the city except a number of zoning categories that are either low density residential or high density zones that cannot offer additional density. These areas include: single family home neighborhoods, the Downtown Development District, centrally-located Transferable Development Rights (TDR) Receiving Zones, a special high rise housing zone that cannot accommodate added density (R-5-E), and a few smaller zones.

Zoning Commission chair Carol Mitten expressed concern about achieving the bonus density in historic districts. She also indicated concern that some residents will complain that their neighborhoods are not suited to allow more housing. Ellen McCarthy, director of the D.C. Office of Planning, said that they have not had a problem

*(Zoning Continued on page 5)*

## **Traffic Engineers Rethink Road Designs for Walkable Communities**

By Cheryl Cort

How arterial roads could and should interact with their surroundings to create more pedestrian and community-friendly places is the subject of a long-awaited new draft publication, "Context Sensitive Solutions in Designing Major Urban Thoroughfares for Walkable Communities." The report was produced by the country's chief association of transportation professionals, the Institute for Transportation Engineers (ITE), in partnership with the Congress for the New Urbanism.

New urbanists, smart growth advocates, alternative transportation activists and a growing number of public and private transportation professionals are working to reform transportation decision-making to better consider how major road and intersection designs affect communities, walkers and bicyclists. The conventional approach of transportation agencies has been to concern themselves primarily with traffic policy, according to the Project for Public Spaces. They deal exclusively with streets and roads, treating them simply as conduits for motor vehicle traffic. Context sensitive solutions makes a fundamental shift in thinking about both the place of motor vehicle traffic on our landscape and the role of traffic engineers in making public policy. It rejects the assumption that traffic flow is more important than its surroundings -- that, like the rain, it is a natural phenomenon that must be accommodated. Traffic flow is a means to various ends -- such as improved social, employment, business, cultural, and recreational opportunities -- not an end in itself. Context sensitive solutions contends that it is these issues that should drive transportation decisions, and not the other way around.

This guidance from ITE proposes a set of standards and approaches that can be accepted industry-wide. Until now, designing arterial roadways to better respond to the surrounding community and a variety of users has required special efforts by activists and governments. Arlington County made the special effort and commissioned a leading transportation firm to assist it with redefining how to manage its arterial roads in a way that balances the demands of vehicles with pedestrians and bicyclists. Other local jurisdictions have considered adopting new approaches to standard arterial road designs, but have not yet acted to make these standards routine practice.

The publication sets out to help create successful urban thoroughfare design by understanding both context and

thoroughfare design. The book explains the features of the built environment that create and shape the urban context, then presents a new framework for context sensitive solutions in walkable communities. The framework introduces and defines four context zones that describe places varying in intensity from walkable suburbs to the most urban downtowns; introduces a new classification system that uses both functional class (such as arterial, collector and local designations) and thoroughfare type (such as boulevard, avenue and street) to describe the role of a thoroughfare in the circulation network and its design character; and describes features of thoroughfare types and context zones that result in compatibility.

Context zones offer a shorthand for describing different parts of cities and towns, emphasizing the characteristics that create walkable communities. This report describes important non-transportation features that define context in urban areas, to assist the practitioner in identifying different context zones and working successfully in them. These features include: land use, site design and building design. These and other components of the urban context influence many thoroughfare design decisions, such as roadside width, need for on-street parking, target speed, frequency and length of pedestrian crossings, access to parking and landscaping.

Supporting the activities of adjacent land uses in addition to providing multimodal safety and mobility means that thoroughfare design often will change as the thoroughfare passes through areas of different character. The change in context and the expression of community values will determine the need for transitions and change in thoroughfare design parameters over the length of a thoroughfare. The report's framework helps practitioners identify how these changes and transitions in thoroughfare design can be accomplished and provides design guidance for the appropriate elements comprising the thoroughfare.

View information about the ITE manual at: [www.ite.org](http://www.ite.org)

Also see Arlington County's Draft Master Transportation Plan Streets Element:

[http://www.co.arlington.va.us/Departments/EnvironmentalServices/dot/planning/mplan/mtp/images/FINAL\\_Streets\\_Element\\_6\\_21\\_06.pdf](http://www.co.arlington.va.us/Departments/EnvironmentalServices/dot/planning/mplan/mtp/images/FINAL_Streets_Element_6_21_06.pdf)

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*(Zoning Continued from page 3)*

achieving bonus density in the 14th Street Historic District and in the Uptown Arts District. Also, she said that the bonus is often achieved through minor changes, like minimum lot widths or percent of lot coverage. For example, in row house neighborhoods, developers could achieve their bonus density by reducing the minimum lot widths from 18 to 15 feet, which is a typical width in older row house neighborhoods around the city.

To better organize the hearings and to separate out the more complicated areas, the Zoning Commission decided to hold two separate rounds of public hearings, one on the mapped areas that are not in historic districts and the other for historic areas. The approximately 40 historic districts represent between one-third and one-half of the areas where inclusionary zoning would apply.

A final rulemaking on the parameters of the program is expected to be published in the D.C. Register within a month. Notice about the Zoning Commission October hearings on mapping will be posted on the D.C. Zoning Commission website: [www.dcoz.dc.gov](http://www.dcoz.dc.gov). For more information about inclusionary zoning and the Campaign, contact WRN or see: <http://www.washingtonregion.net/programs/DCIZ.htm>

### **ICC Threat to Stalled Purple Line, Former MD Metro Board Member Asserts**

By Cheryl Cort

Recently fired Maryland Metro board member Robert J. Smith accused the Maryland Governor Ehrlich administration of intentionally stalling the Purple Line light rail line proposed to connect Bethesda with New Carrollton. In the July 16 Washington Post, Smith wrote that "The Ehrlich administration has been stringing this project out for all it's worth. It is leading a prolonged attempt to obfuscate, alter, study and delay..."

He also warned that all available money and future federal funds are going to the Intercounty Connector (ICC). Smith called transportation needs "grossly underfunded" and pointed much of the blame at the \$3 billion ICC. Referring to the Purple Line, Smith stated "...the ICC commitment has left the state without capital for such projects well beyond the Ehrlich administration, even if it has a second term."

While Smith proposed new revenues to fund the state's transit needs, many environmentalists and transit advocates have called on Maryland to cancel the ICC. They point to evidence that shows that the new highway will not relieve traffic congestion and will absorb most of the

state's transportation resources for years to come, diminishing funds available for the Purple Line, Metro rehabilitation and other transit priorities.

See Smith's article at: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/07/14/AR2006071401134.html>

### **Metro Looks to Improve Pedestrian and Bicycle Access**

The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA or Metro) convened a first of its kind full day workshop with transit agency staff from all disciplines, member government planners, local advocates and national experts to address how Metro can provide better walking and bicycle access to its rail stations and bus stops. About 60 participants spent the day drawing up lists of action items and strategies to improve the walk and bicycle ride to transit.

The group plans to meet again in February to assess progress on reaching goals set out in the July workshop. The workshop was also intended to set the stage for hiring a professional staff person to coordinate pedestrian and bicycle access issues for the agency, according to Washington Area Bicyclist Association executive director Eric Gilliland. Gilliland worked with Metro staff to plan the day-long workshop at Metro's headquarters, and remains optimistic about the change at the transit agency.

"Mr. Tangherlini's promise of a pedestrian/bicycle coordinator is part of a new day at Metro. With better commitment, we can tap the great potential for increased access by removing barriers to walking and bicycling to Metro and the bus," said Gilliland.

The workshop and commitment to a pedestrian/bicycle coordinator appear to be part of a cultural shift at WMATA, agreed Cheryl Cort, WRN, who presented at the workshop.

"New staff and the new interim director Dan Tangherlini appear to be redirecting the agency towards improved customer service and greater attention to how transit serves communities, rather than commuter parking lots and downtown offices," she said.

## **THANKS**

WRN wishes to thank the following friends of WRN for their generous contributions: Christine A. Matthews, Prince Charitable Trusts and Kathryn Stratos.

**D.C. Mayoral Candidates Pledge to Act on Affordable Housing Needs**

By Stephen Wade

On June 28 the five leading candidates for D.C.'s mayor said they would do more to address the city's pressing housing needs. In front of over 200 activists, concerned residents, and community leaders, four of the five candidates (Cropp had to leave just as this question was posed) committed that the men's downtown Franklin Shelter will not be closed unless an equal number of beds are available somewhere else downtown.

"The presence of all five candidates along with a huge community turnout really shows the importance of affordable housing as an issue in this election," said Elinor Hart of the League of Women Voters. "We expect the next mayor to have a comprehensive understanding of the affordable housing challenges facing the city and to be prepared to move forward along with the Affordable Housing Alliance on an ambitious agenda."

The event was sponsored by the D.C. Affordable Housing Alliance (AHA), a broad community coalition of more than 30 organizations and senior citizens, developers, housing activists, smart growth advocates, tenants, residents with disabilities, and homeless families working together for affordable housing in D.C., especially for low-income residents.

In advance of the forum, AHA prepared a housing policy agenda for the next mayor and city council, and convened a candidates' briefing on the ten most important housing issues and AHA's policy recommendations. Issues included in the agenda are: inclusionary zoning, implementing the Homeless No More Plan, reforming the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, the Housing Production Trust Fund and other funding sources, and an affordable housing set aside on public land. View the agenda at: [www.washingtonregion.net](http://www.washingtonregion.net).

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**Sat. July 22 & Sun. July 23, 10:00 am - 4:00 pm:** Farm Tour & Harvest Sale, Montgomery County, MD. Visit 13 of Montgomery County's premier farms, where you can pick your own fruit and flowers, buy fresh vegetables, take a pony ride, listen to barnyard story-telling, take a hay ride, meet farm animals, and buy yarn woven from the Alpaca fleece sheep you will meet. See [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/farmtour](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/farmtour) for details.

**Mon. July 24, 6:30 - 7:30 pm:** Sierra Club's Cool Cities Campaign meeting. This is a nationwide campaign to help residents get their community to sign the Mayors Climate Protection Agreement, take an inventory of their global warming emissions, and create a solutions plan to reduce emissions. At The Reef, 2446 18th Street NW, Washington DC. See: [www.coolcities.us](http://www.coolcities.us).

**Tues. July 25, 6:30 - 8:30 pm:** WMATA Riders' Advisory Council Special Budget Briefing and Q & A Session at Metro headquarters, 600 5th Street NW, Washington D.C. Charles Woodruff, Chief Financial Officer, and Rick Harcum, Budget Director for WMATA will brief the public on the annual budget and offer a substantial question & answer session.

**Wed. July 26, 6:00 - 8:30 pm:** WRN Forum - Making the Bus Fly: Delivering Great New Bus Service Tomorrow at 401 9th Street, NW - North Lobby, Suite 500, National Capital Planning Commission. To RSVP e-mail: [staff@washingtonregion.net](mailto:staff@washingtonregion.net), or call 202-244-1105. Arrive before 7 pm and bring photo identification.

**Sat. July 29:** Bike Tour: Route of the Future Metropolitan Branch Trail. Sierra Club conducts the third in a series of Urban Design & Transportation tours. The tour will look at the route of the proposed bike trail, with stops along the way to look where the path will intersect with neighborhoods and the Red and Green Lines. RSVP for start time to Chris Carney, Sierra Club, 202-237-0754.

**Tues, Aug. 22 at 10 am:** Deadline for Request for Proposal for Tysons Corner Re-Design. Fairfax County, VA., has issued a Request for Proposal for the redesign of the archetypal "edge city" -- Tysons Corner in McLean, Virginia. See: <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpsm/solic.htm>

**DC Environmental Network Mayoral/Council Candidates' Forums in July and August.** For dates and information, contact Chris Weiss at 202-222.0746 or [cweiss@foe.org](mailto:cweiss@foe.org).

**Fair Budget Coalition DC Council Candidates' Forums in July and August.** For dates and information, contact the Fair Budget Coalition at 202-328-5523 or [www.fairbudget.org](http://www.fairbudget.org).

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