

INTERSECT!

A TWICE-MONTHLY NEWS BULLETIN

September 1, 2000

FROM THE

Volume 4 Number 11

WASHINGTON REGIONAL NETWORK FOR LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES AT PRINCE GEORGE'S METRO STATIONS HIGHLIGHTED IN NEW WEBSITE

A new website is available to residents and planners in Prince George's County and beyond who are interested in promoting good quality infill and redevelopment at transit stations. The website reports on the results of a buildable land inventory around two Metrorail station sites in Prince George's County: West Hyattsville and Prince George's Plaza, the location of a regional shopping mall. These and other stations in Prince George's County have had transit overlay zones, or special zoning areas for infill development, for years but have yet to reap the benefits.

The website and the study of development opportunities are the creation of Fang-Yu Huang, a graduate student in the Urban Studies and Planning Program at University of Maryland - College Park. Ms. Huang came to the project with a background in computer science and an interest in affordable housing and land use issues.

For each Metro station area, Ms. Huang covered three topics: existing station area conditions (including land use maps and aerial photography), station area development opportunities, and stakeholder perspectives. The land use maps are particularly helpful, showing in easy-to-read color graphics the various land uses in a 1/4-, 1/2-, and 3/4-mile radius. Many consider a 1/4- to 1/2-mile radius – the distance most people are willing to walk to reach a Metro station - to be the preferred focus for neighborhood planning. Based on the results of this project, local

residents and elected officials now have better and more accessible analytical tools for addressing critical issues in their communities. Ultimately, public forums are urged to reach consensus on ways to attract needed attention and resources so that surrounding communities can capture the full benefit of their local Metro stations.

The study and the website provide a number of steps forward in transit station area planning. First, the study is an example of how to conduct needed inventories of opportunities for redevelopment and improved access to transit around Metrorail stations in the region. Second, the website provides an important tool for developers, decision-makers, and residents to plan for community-enhancing development around these two specific Metro stations. Last, the website promotes understanding of station area planning by making it accessible to a broader audience – neighborhood, regional, and national – through the easy-access medium of the internet. A collaborative planning process involving all stakeholders is the key for making quality communities, and having good-quality information accessible to everyone is an important step in this direction.

This effort by Ms. Huang was carried out with the support of 1,000 Friends of Maryland and is an implementation of earlier research by WRN into promoting inventories of buildable land near Metro stations in the region. The extensive GIS study by the City of Seattle for its light rail stations was used as a general model for Ms. Huang's analysis.

Visit the Prince George's County Buildable Land Inventory website at <http://www.wam.umd.edu/>

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INTERSECT! is a publication of the

WASHINGTON REGIONAL NETWORK

FOR LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

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WRN advocates transportation investments, land use policies, and community designs that enhance existing communities and the environment of the National Capital Region.

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Comments and articles welcome.
Views expressed are not necessarily those of WRN.

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~huangf/METRO/maryland.html. Ms. Huang can be reached for a limited time at fyhuang@ursp.umd.edu. For information on the Seattle planning process, visit <http://www.ci.seattle.wa.us/planning/homesap/htm>.

VIRGINIA FORCED TO ASSESS FULL BELTWAY WIDENING IMPACTS

A coordinated, three-and-a-half year effort of a coalition of civic associations, environmental and taxpayer groups, and concerned citizens in Fairfax County has resulted in a decision by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) to intensify its study of the environmental effects of the proposed beltway widening from eight to twelve lanes in Virginia. One of the most important outcomes of this decision is that VDOT must now perform a thorough analysis of all reasonable alternatives to the 12-lane proposal favored by VDOT.

Attending VDOT public hearings and Chairman Katherine Hanley's citizen advisory meetings, organizing communities, making innumerable phone calls to neighbors, calling or meeting with elected and VDOT officials, writing letters and articles calling for a more thorough study – all contributed to gaining the support of elected officials and to VDOT's decision. The coalition now plans to push for transit alternatives and to promote transit-oriented communities that focus development around station stops. To get involved, contact Paul Hughes at (703) 280-1719 or pshughes@erols.com or visit www.smartergrowth.org.

WATERFRONT PRISON SITE DEFEATED - AGAIN

On the other side of the region in southeast D.C., residents of Anacostia and others are celebrating a decision by the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) to withdraw its appeal to the D.C. Zoning Commission of its unanimous decision opposing a prison at Oxon Cove. Oxon Cove is a piece of riverfront open space, which the community wants for parkland. The coalition of groups who opposed the prison location will continue to work to reclaim and restore the Oxon Cove site for the residents of Ward 8 and the District, so that they may permanently access the river and the wildlife at this site. For more

information, contact Eugene Dewitt Kinlow of the Ward 8 Coalition at (202) 736-0288.

UPDATE ON BELTWAY TRANSIT ALTERNATIVE STUDIES

Virginia is actually on the way to a comprehensive study of transit alternatives for the beltway corridor, thanks in great part to the efforts of Delegate David Albo (R-Springfield). The Virginia General Assembly has charged the Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) with studying the feasibility of constructing rail from the existing mass transit rail facilities at Springfield to those at or near Tysons Corner. The study will also examine extending rail beyond Tysons Corner into Maryland.

Phase 1 of the Virginia study involved examining four technologies: heavy rail (e.g., Metrorail), light rail transit (LRT), mono-beam technology (e.g., Futrex's System 21), and bus rapid transit (BRT). These technologies were studied in combination with different alignments within the defined study area. Issues such as anticipated ridership, potential revenues, environmental impacts, costs versus benefits, and effects on land use were also examined. The project is being closely coordinated with work performed in previous and on-going studies affecting the Capital beltway corridor in Virginia and Maryland. DRPT is working with Maryland and the Virginia Department of Transportation to assure that rail receives a fair and thorough analysis through this study process.

On August 14th, the Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) in charge of the study recommended that five technology-alignment combinations be proposed to the public for advancement into the second and final round of evaluation. The five recommended alternatives include 2 heavy rail, 2 light rail and 1 monorail. The heavy rail alternatives were modified by the PAC to include heavy rail on an aerial structure rather than underground on portions of route. The alternatives and evaluation results will be presented to the public at information meetings scheduled for September 6th and 7th (see Intersect calendar).

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Across the river in Maryland, the Montgomery County Council was briefed last month on the progress in the beltway corridor study. Since 1994 five state and federal agencies have been studying ways to head off bleak predictions of complete beltway gridlock by 2020. The transit options include three heavy rail (like Metro) and three light rail (like trams) that roughly zigzag around the beltway corridor. At the Council meeting, the head planners for the study likened it to the initial planning for the Metro system. Council members were generally supportive of a rail alternative, with some expressing support for a link to Tysons Corner, and another supporting a transit route connecting inner rather than outer suburban communities.

In Prince George's County, Councilmember Peter Shapiro (D - District 2), who sits on several county transportation committees, expressed his support, "I want light rail, it meets the revitalization needs of the inner beltway communities. It certainly is the sense of the Council to support mass transit at this point."

In both Maryland and Virginia, recommendations must compete with existing regional priorities and scarce financial resources, which is why the region's smarter growth community is demanding that financial resources be shifted from expensive new highway projects to alternatives such as rail and bus transit and bike and pedestrian connections.

For more information on the Virginia study, call 1-877-955-0495, email info@beltwayrail.org, or visit www.beltwayrail.org (where a discussion group is forming). For the Maryland study, call (800) 548-5026.

REGION'S FIRST HYBRID-ELECTRIC TRANSIT BUS

The first hybrid-electric transit bus in the region began operations earlier this summer. The bus seats 22 passengers and will serve the East Falls Church Metro station in Falls Church, Virginia. The bus is the keystone in a 3-year pilot program sponsored jointly by the City of Falls Church, Northern Virginia Transportation Commission, Virginia Power, and WMATA.

In addition to providing better access to transit and increasing ridership, the program will allow local authorities to gain experience in operating and maintaining alternative fuel transit vehicles. Smaller vehicles and the hybrid-electric technology combine to create significant efficiencies in terms of fuel and serving customers in lower-density residential areas. It is also worth noting that Georgetown University has been testing fuel cell transit buses for the past several years. Fuel cells run on hydrogen and produce water as waste.

Hybrid gasoline-electric vehicles have both a gas- and an electric-powered motor. The electric motor assists the gas motor with such activities as accelerating and decelerating. A hybrid car motor is capable of achieving fuel efficiencies of 60+ mpg in the city and 80+ mpg on the highway. In the Honda Insight and the Toyota Prius, the electric motor is "charge sustaining," meaning it doesn't require recharging from an external power source but instead captures energy directly from the gas motor or from braking and accelerating.

ACCOUNTING ADVICE SOUGHT; WEBMASTER WANTED

WRN is seeking a qualified volunteer who can advise on non-profit accounting, Quickbooks, and financial management matters. WRN is also seeking a volunteer webmaster for a few hours per month. If you or someone you know are interested, please contact Deborah Katz at (202) 667-5445 or debkatz@megsinet.net.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Wed & Thurs, Sept 6-7, 7 – 9 pm - Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation information meetings on the Capital Beltway Rail Feasibility Study (see related article in this issue of Intersect). Sept 6 – Falls Church/Tysons. Sept 7 – Annandale/Springfield. The two meetings are identical in format. For more info call (877) 955-0495, email info@beltwayrail.org, or visit www.beltwayrail.org.

Thurs, Sept 7, 12 – 1:30 pm – "A New Day for the Anacostia River?" brown bag lunch hosted by the DC

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Environmental Network with Toni Griffin, Director for Revitalization Planning, DC Office of Planning and Ted Graham, Director, Water Resources Program, Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. Through the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative, the city has the relevant District and federal agencies poised to take responsibility for cleaning up the Anacostia and restoring its waterfront. How do we ensure that the community is actively engaged in the Anacostia's future and that these programs succeed? 1025 Vermont Avenue, NW, 3rd floor (McPherson Square metro). Contact: Anna El-Eini, (202) 783-7400 x. 183 or email eleini@foe.org.

Tues, Sept. 12, 7:30 pm – Town Meeting: Possible Alternatives To a 12-Lane Beltway. Sponsored by the Fairfax Coalition for Smarter Growth. Annandale, VA. Contact: Paul Hughes, (703) 280-1719, email pshughes@erols.com or visit www.smartergrowth.org.

Friday, Sept 15, 11:30 – 1:30 – WMATA Clean Commute and Technology Concert. Displays, live entertainment. Freedom Plaza, 13th & Pennsylvania Avenue, NW. For exhibit opportunities contact David Higgins, (202) 962-1320.

Friday, Sept 15, 8:30 – 4:30 – “Washington DC Regional Transportation Challenges and Solutions,” conference hosted by the Washington DC section of the Institute of Transportation Engineers. Hear from regional, state, and local agencies on some of the major projects and programs planned for the region as well as state-of-the-art alternative approaches being used to fight congestion in the area, including travel demand management and transit-oriented development. \$30/person includes breakfast and lunch. Virginia Tech Graduate Center, Falls Church, VA. To register contact Soumya Dey, (703) 813-3242 or Soumya.dey@transcore.com. no later than 12 noon on Sept. 13th.

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) Meetings, 777 N. Capitol St, NE (Union Station metro). For more info call (202) 962-3311 or visit <http://www.mwcog.org/trans/cmtes.html>.

Sept 8, TPB Tech Cmte (9 am)

Sept 14, Citizens Advisory Committee to the TPB (6 pm) – Public comment on 25-year transportation plan from residents of Anacostia. Anacostia Professional Building, community room (basement), 2041 M.L. King Ave., SE, (Anacostia Metro station).

Sept 20, TPB (noon). Important opportunity to ask local elected officials for transit alternatives and integrated land use and transportation planning in the region’s long-range transportation plan.

WRN Contribution Form

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- ___ Sustainer \$120 (includes WRN mug & a copy of WRN's vision *A New Approach*, \$12 value)

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 - Intersect sent to up to 15 individuals by email or local fax*
 - Recognition in Intersect 4x/year
 - Constant recognition on WRN's website with link (starting 2/99; email 200 word description & your web address to debkatz@megsnet.net)

Please attach separate sheet for additional persons:

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