

INTERSECT!

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VOLUNTEER WEBMASTER SOUGHT

WRN is seeking a volunteer to set up WRN's website. If interested, please contact Deborah Katz at (202) 667-5445.

MAKING THE MOST OF METRO

by Cheryl Cort, President, Washington Regional Network for Livable Communities & Manager, Urban & Regional Projects, Chesapeake Bay Foundation

Traffic congestion, pollution, loss of farms and forests, decline of the Chesapeake Bay, high taxes, and sprawl are related to each other and to the choices we make about how and where growth occurs. And we doom ourselves to more of the same if we continue to scatter ourselves across the landscape.

Accommodating new residents and businesses in neighborhoods with existing streets, good transit, schools, and nearby stores will address these ills more effectively than continuing our current development patterns. Yet two recent transit-oriented development proposals demonstrate that we are a long way from a consensus on how to successfully guide growth in the region.

In one case, neighbors of a proposed 26-unit condominium development 200 feet from the Tenleytown Metrorail station in northwest DC fear this will undermine their community and ruin a remnant stream segment. In Takoma Park on the DC-Maryland border, a proposal to build 90-120 townhouses and a small park on a parking lot and grassy area at the Metro station was greeted with vigorous opposition by many in the community.

Residents are right to be suspicious of development, which is often poorly planned and heavy-handed. However, the new households and businesses won't disappear. They will simply locate somewhere else, most likely in a place where people have to drive more and use transit less, requiring higher tax subsidies for roads, transit and other public services. The new development will also generate greater impacts on the environment with more automobile emissions and stormwater runoff from increased concrete.

While neighborhood groups identify better shopping, less traffic, greater pedestrian and bicycle safety as priorities, they frequently oppose development that will help create the very kind of environment they say they seek. Concerns about traffic and loss of open space shouldn't be addressed by limiting development around Metro stations to low-density single family houses and acres of parking lots.

Better, up-to-date land use planning within a one-quarter to half-mile radius around Metrorail stations should be instituted. Much better public outreach by local governments and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (Metro) should be undertaken to work with communities to create visions for lively station areas that make surrounding neighborhoods safer, more desirable places to live and walk.

Station area planning needs to ensure civic spaces and neighborhood parks provide appropriate community focus. These redeveloped areas need to greatly increase investment in pedestrian and bicycle facilities to make alternative travel modes more convenient and safe. Such planning should also identify traffic calming measures, and craft careful design guidelines

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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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for buildings to ensure that they improve the pedestrian environment and provide a smooth transition between a greater mix of activities at Metrorail stations and the surrounding neighborhood. Developers also need to be involved so development guidelines are realistic and make it easier for developers to do the right thing.

Low- and middle-income neighborhoods around Metrorail stations particularly stand to benefit from quality transit-oriented development. While the presence of a Metro station can contribute to gentrification (displacement of lower income residents and businesses), stations by themselves do not necessarily generate any particular kind of development. Many stations are unsafe to use after dark due to crime encouraged by large parking lots, sparse pedestrian activity and physical isolation from surrounding neighborhoods and streets.

WRN has crafted a new initiative focused on working with stakeholders to help create community-enhancing development near Metrorail stations. Environmentalists must lead the way to more sustainable communities by promoting opportunities for people to live in walkable, transit-oriented neighborhoods.

WRN'S MAY 8TH SEMINAR ON SMARTER GROWTH AND THE PROPOSED 25-YEAR REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN

BY PAUL HUGHES

Over 60 members of the metropolitan Washington smart growth community assembled in the Cannon House Office Building on May 8th to hear local elected officials and alternative transportation experts comment on the potential of the proposed 25-year regional transportation plan (known as the constrained long range plan or CLRP) to promote smarter growth in the region.

Chris Zimmerman, member of the Arlington County Board, set the stage by describing the substantial shortfall in funding to meet the transportation projects slated for 2010, let alone those through 2025. He also indicated that the Transportation Planning Board (TPB) has already cut all but a few transit projects out of those planned for 2010.

In addition to the funding shortfall, Mr. Zimmerman noted the need to more effectively coordinate land use and transportation planning. He pointed to some progress in this area by the Northern Virginia Transportation Coordinating Council (TCC). In its 2020 Plan, the TCC agreed to language that places priority on projects that meet smarter growth criteria for a mix of jobs, housing and services along defined transportation/transit corridors, for reduced vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per capita, and encouragement of development in locations served by existing infrastructure.

Phil Mendelson, member of the District of Columbia Council, expressed his view that "public transit is the key to growth and revitalization" and that current road plans often fail to take into consideration the reality of induced demand. Mr. Mendelson cited the need to "get people out of their cars" while noting that there is a \$500 million shortfall in meeting the \$6.5 billion required to meet the needs of the current Metro system. He noted that because the region is already in non-attainment for the one-hour EPA ozone air quality standard, there is little likelihood that it would be able to meet the new, more stringent, eight-hour standard. He expressed the belief that the CLRP would become very constrained based on the air standard nonattainment and the lack of funds.

Next, Peter Shapiro, member of the Prince George's County Council, explained that he thought that "Prince George's County will be the real battleground for smart growth issues" because a substantial part (one-third) of the county remains underdeveloped. Mr. Shapiro said that regional cooperation is critical and that "vision" without money means even the best plans won't be implemented. He challenged the audience to develop a very simple message for regional grassroots organizing on smarter growth issues.

Transportation expert Michael Replogle of Environmental Defense recommended a variety of ways to reduce demand for automobile travel, which would need to come in incremental steps: regional adoption of a commuter transit benefit similar to Maryland's employer tax credit of up to \$30 per month for an employee's transit or vanpool use; reaching common ground among jurisdictions on the

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provision of affordable housing for income diversity and a healthy social fabric; intensive transportation control measures (TCMs); site development requirements to maximize transit opportunities on newly developed sites; and infill development that environmentalists and developers can agree upon and which could enable the region to claim pollution reduction credits with EPA.

Allen Muchnick, WRN Board member and avid bicyclist, concluded the speaker remarks by noting the 33% population growth projected for the region by 2020 and that 64% of the jobs are expected to be within a 10 mile radius of the District, 80% within a 20 mile radius. With Metrorail experiencing substantial excess capacity on the reverse commute, Mr. Muchnick pointed out that the five low-density Metro stations in Fairfax County have plenty of room to create walkable communities with mixed residential, commercial, and residential uses. He suggested that in finalizing the CLRP, regional planners model alternative land use, transportation, and air quality (LUTRAQ) scenarios, increase funding for bicycle and pedestrian projects particularly surrounding Metrorail stations, give higher priority to mixed-use development at Metro stations, and plan for circumferential rail, starting with the Woodrow Wilson Bridge.

The forum ended with a lively question and answer session in which the panelists, particularly the elected officials, spoke about the obstacles they face in convincing their colleagues on the TPB that transit-oriented development makes more economic, financial, social, and environmental sense than continuing on the road-building path they have been following. With the funding difficulties delaying approval of the CLRP until this fall, they said, there appears to be a window of opportunity for smart growth advocates to bring their alternative solutions before the public and the TPB members.

WRN wishes to thank the event co-sponsors: Coalition For Smarter Growth, 1000 Friends of Maryland, Action Committee For Transit, Allied Civic Group, Arlingtonians For a Clean Environment, Audubon Naturalist Society, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Coalition For a Sensible Bridge, Fairfax Coalition For Smarter Growth, Friends of the Earth, League of Women Voters of the National Capital Area, Piedmont

Environmental Council, Sierra Club Restore the Core Campaign, and the Washington Area Bicyclist Association.

Editor's Note: The public comment period on the draft CLRP ends June 16th. The highway and transit project list can be found at www.mwcog.org/trans/clrplist.htm. The plan needs to be changed to delete outer beltways and include more transit-oriented development and transit serving inner beltway communities. Please send comments to Hon. Kathy Porter, Chair, Transportation Planning Board, 777 North Capitol Street, NE, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20002-4239 or email cogdtp@mwcog.org.

BALTIMORE IN 16 MINUTES?

The Maryland Mass Transit Administration (MTA) has been engaged in a study of using magnetic levitation (maglev) rail technology to connect Union Station in Washington, DC to Camden Yards in Baltimore. Maglev trains are able to attain a speed of 240 mph. Travel time on maglev between the two terminals is projected to be 16 minutes. At the present time, it takes 55 minutes by automobile and 50 minutes by MARC commuter rail.

The feasibility study is targeted for completion by June 2000. For more information, contact Suhair Alkhatib, Office of Planning and Programming, MTA, (410) 767-3751, salkhatib@mdot.state.md.us.

MAGLEV: BOON OR BOONDOGGLE

So far, the cost of maglev between Baltimore and Washington totals \$1.65 billion to which must be added the costs of central control, right of way acquisition, and a fee to use the German-developed technology. The Federal Railroad Administration plans a cost of only \$1.4 billion.

Is maglev cost-effective compared to conventional train? Not really. If the wavy track between Washington and Baltimore is straightened out and the tunnel into Baltimore is enlarged, Amtrak trains running at 150 mph may be able to cut the current travel time to 19 minutes (with one stop at BWI). This travel time is only 4 minutes more than that for maglev. The cost to straighten out the track and

UPCOMING

Saturday, June 10, 2000, 9:30 am - 2 pm - D.C. Housing Forum, sponsored by the Adams Morgan Advisory Neighborhood Commission 1C. Topics include: tenants rights, new home buyers programs, other housing policies, split rate tax, developing a comprehensive affordable housing policy. Presentations by Washington Regional Network, DC Legal Aid Society, Harrison Institute for Public Policy, others. King Emmanuel Church, 1725 Kalorama Road (at the intersection of Ontario & Kalorama). Contact: Eleanor Nelson, ANC IC Commissioner, (202) 387-0796.

Wed, June 28, 6:30 pm Refreshments, 7 pm Program – WRN Forum: Metrorail Station Area Development, with Alvin McNeal, Manager, WMATA Property Planning & Development and Ray Feldmann, Director of Media Relations for WMATA. Building walkable communities with a mix of jobs, housing, services, recreation, and amenities near transit is a major solution to congestion, pollution, sprawl, and high taxes. The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) is currently offering for sale numerous parcels at Metrorail stations. Come learn about the process by which WMATA develops these parcels and how surrounding communities can get involved. 1777 Church Street, NW (between P, Q, 17th, & 18th) Dupont Circle Metro, Q Street exit. RSVP (attendance only) to Deborah Katz at (202) 667-5445 or debkatz@megsinet.net.

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) Meetings, 777 N. Capitol St, NE (Union Station metro). For more info call (202) 962-3311.

June 15 Citizens Advisory Committee to the TPB - 6 – 7:30 Meeting, 7:30 – 9 Public Forum on Constrained Long Range Plan (see related article above). Sumner School, M & 17th Streets, NW (Farragut North metro).

June 21, TPB (noon) - another opportunity to comment on CLRP (see article above).

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enlarge the tunnel would certainly be less than the cost of maglev. Also, consider the cost of energy. The energy in moving a mass is proportional to the mass times the square of the velocity. Going 250 mph instead of 150 mph requires 2.8 times as much energy. Is the time saving of 4 minutes worth 2.8 times the energy expenditure?

Fran Walters is a professional engineer and member of the Action Committee for Transit.

WRN Contribution Form

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