

# INTERSECT

NEWSLETTER

October 25, 2002

OF THE

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WASHINGTON REGIONAL NETWORK FOR LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

## Neighborhood Parking Solutions

A WRN forum with Adam Millard-Ball of Nelson\Nygaard Consulting  
Introduction by D.C. Councilmember Jim Graham

Thursday, November 7, 2002  
at the Sumner School, 1201 17<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, D.C.  
(at L Street, near Farragut North Metro)  
Refreshments: 6:30pm, Program: 7pm

Join Adam Millard-Ball, a San Francisco-based transportation planner with Nelson\Nygaard Consulting to learn about the latest innovative policies to manage parking to promote vibrant, livable communities. To read more about his work see: <http://www.nelsonnygaard.com>.  
RSVP at 202-667-5445 or [staff@washingtonregion.net](mailto:staff@washingtonregion.net).

## Virginia Tax Referendum Which Benefits: Transit or Sprawl?

by Meghan Clarke

On September 12, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Administration (WMATA) announced a revised 10-year, \$12 billion plan for Metrorail and Metrobus. Included in the plan is \$3.3 billion for the Infrastructure Replacement Program (essential maintenance), \$2.9 billion for rail cars and other upgrades to handle projected ridership growth, and the remainder for rail expansion. The Northern Virginia Journal noted that "Infrastructure renewal costs alone would increase from the \$235 million projected for fiscal year 2003 to \$385 million by 2007 in incremental steps. These costs are expected to level off at \$435 million for the balance of the program."

While proponents of the Northern Virginia Sale Tax referendum have used transit as the top selling point, less than 5% of the package is going to these essential Metro needs. The system requires \$6.2 billion to meet essential maintenance needs and ridership growth, over the next ten years. But the sales tax earmarks just \$12.5 million per year, \$250 million over 20 years.

Metrorail cars cost about \$1.8 million each. Roger Diedrich, Land Use Chair, Virginia Chapter of Sierra Club notes, "Even if the \$12.5 million was only spent on rail cars, the sales tax could only provide 7 cars each year. Considering the money also would have to be spent fixing escalators and elevators, Metro riders will continue to face crowded rides each morning."

The Coalition for Smarter Growth opposes the tax referendum because according to executive director Stewart Schwartz, it fails to reflect the principles of a smart growth blueprint that makes the best use of the existing system while providing people with alternatives to motor vehicles. David Snyder, City of Falls Church Councilmember, while a proponent of the referendum, also expressed concern about the tax hike's priorities: "The problem is we don't really know what is going to be built when. And whether those things that are transit and smart growth are going to be built first or if they will be built 15 or 20 years down the road when our problems have been allowed to deteriorate. So in my view the most important thing is no matter how you feel about the referendum, if the additional resources are provided, we have to have a priority process to make sure that projects supporting transit and alternatives to motor vehicles are actually the ones that are built first and there is no guarantee of that now."

Schwartz emphasized that the sales tax will not adequately address the most urgent transit needs facing Metro -- maintaining present infrastructure while dealing with the increasing demands on the Metrorail system. On November 5<sup>th</sup> Northern Virginia voters will have to decide if they trust the promises of government officials who assert that the new tax will help achieve traffic relief and increased investment in transit. Smart growth advocates and environmentalists believe the tax hike will simply throw billions of dollars into expanding capacity, condemning the region to many more years of sprawl development and ever-increasing traffic congestion.

## Residents and Planners Work Together to Plan Better Rhode Island Avenue Metro Station Area

by Cheryl Cort

Walking along the railroad tracks on Saturday morning, August 28<sup>th</sup>, neighbors of the Rhode Island Avenue Metro station pointed out all the popular illegal crossings. While hundreds or more people cross the tracks just north of the Metro station, only adventurous children cross to the south, according to tour participants. This site visit was part of a community-visioning workshop convened by WRN. The workshop was designed to help residents adjacent to the Rhode Island Avenue Metro Station provide input on the planned Metropolitan Branch Trail along the railroad tracks, the housing and retail development plans for the

*(Continued on page 2)*

## WASHINGTON REGIONAL NETWORK FOR LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

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

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*(Continued from page 1)*

Metro station, and identify improvements for the pedestrian environment along Rhode Island Avenue.

After a brief “virtual tour” powerpoint presentation by WRN that used photographs of the area to highlight some of the good and bad aspects, workshop participants – area residents and volunteer planners and designers – broke into two groups. One group focused on the Metropolitan Branch Trail and another looked at Rhode Island Avenue and the Metro parking lot to review site plans for development proposed by Mid-City Urban, a private development company. Each group then spent the next hour walking around their study areas and discussing potential improvements. When they returned to the workshop space, the groups looked at aerial photos, maps, and site plans and continued to discuss and refine their proposals for improving the area.

Edgewood neighborhood residents identified the stretch between 4<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Streets, NE along Rhode Island Avenue as a dirty, unpleasant walk, alongside speeding cars. According to the maps provided by the D.C. Office of Planning, this section of Rhode Island Avenue appears to have more curb cuts and driveways than continuous sidewalks. Long-time neighborhood residents complained of too many automobile-oriented businesses along Rhode Island Avenue that make their walks to the Metro station hazardous.

The sidewalks in the underpass to the Metro station were thought to be too narrow, and lacked the buffering of parked cars during rush hour. Participants noted that parts of the sidewalk have improved in recent years, and that next to the underpass, a stone wall had been built to replace a gravel lot, making the area feel better defined for pedestrians. Closing up unused curb cuts, re-timing traffic signals to allow pedestrians to reach the other side of the street, and creating corner bulb-outs to slow speeding cars around turns were identified as helpful measures that could improve the pedestrian environment. Edgewood Terrace resident Veronica Jackson suggested that art around the overpass might make the passageway not seem so gloomy. WRN is working with participants to follow up on their recommendations with D. C. Department of Transportation.

While Rhode Island Avenue remains an important walking route for residents, many visitors and residents take a shortcut across the railroad tracks to cross between the Metro station and the west side of the tracks. Walking the rail right of way and future Metropolitan Branch Trail with D.C. trail planner, Chris Holben, a number of residents said that some of their children use the rail crossing shortcut. On the walk and subsequent mapping session, residents suggested optimal access points to the planned trail, stairs connecting Edgewood Terrace to the Rhode Island Avenue Shopping Center, and the best location and configuration for a pedestrian bridge that could connect the trail directly to the Metro station. According to rough estimates by Holben, if a direct pedestrian route were available, the walk between Edgewood Terrace and the Metro station could be cut from 20 to about 6 minutes.

After visiting the Rhode Island Avenue Metro station parking lot, participants pored over site plans and suggested ways to make the development more pedestrian-oriented. Working with workshop participants, volunteer landscape architects and planners and planners from the D.C. Office of Planning provided several design revisions to the development proposal. These proposals were given to the President of Mid-City Urban, Vicki Davis, who expressed genuine interest in the design recommendations.

While funding for pedestrian access improvements remains uncertain, the D.C. government and Metro are moving ahead with plans to replace all existing parking at the Metro station at a cost of approximately \$4 million. Over 50 percent of cars parked in the lot are from Maryland. The D.C. government is considering using Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to finance the construction of the commuter parking. Neither Metro nor the City has evaluated whether \$4 million spent on commuter parking is the most cost-effective way to increase access to the station and boost ridership. The parking garage will clearly not benefit the residents of Edgewood Terrace and nearby blocks, where approximately 58 percent of households do not own a single car. WRN continues to work with nearby residents to ask WMATA and the City to put a higher priority on safe and convenient pedestrian access to the station, rather than subsidized parking for out of state drivers.

The August 28 workshop follows up WRN’s August 8 community forum that provided general information on transit-oriented development, a presentation by the Metro site developer, and the D.C. government’s plans for a trail and pedestrian bridge to give residents the opportunity to learn about upcoming changes in their community.

Look for the results of the Workshop on WRN website soon.

## **Metro in Your Neighborhood Now Online**

WRN’s PowerPoint presentation to help communities envision how Metro stations can be turned into great places for the neighborhood is now online: [http://www.washingtonregion.net/miyn\\_files/frame.htm](http://www.washingtonregion.net/miyn_files/frame.htm)

## **Support *Intersect*, Join WRN**

This newsletter is a free service. Please help WRN continue to report on these issues important to livable communities; join WRN and support *Intersect*. WRN welcomes all donations but a basic membership is \$35 for individuals and \$200 for organizations. Contribution forms are available on our website: <http://www.washingtonregion.net/html/contributionform.html>.

WRN thanks Flexcar for its support of WRN’s programs advocating for livable communities in the Washington DC Region.

## Parking Solutions are Found in Managing Demand as Well as Supply

Opinion by Cheryl Cort

Sometimes it seems that housing for cars is more important than housing for people, affordable housing activists in San Francisco and other places have observed. At a D.C. Council committee hearing on parking policy for the District on October 2, this also appeared to be the case.

Some on the Council discussed how parking is a great problem for all residents. While many D.C. residents own cars, many do not. According to the 2000 census, 37 percent of all D.C. households do not own a single car. Given that over one-third of D.C. residents are not car owners, fair parking solutions need to represent the interests of non-car owners as well as car owners.

Councilmember Jim Graham observed that the issue of parking was part of a larger question. He recommended reexamining the role of the automobile in a vibrant city, and suggested better use of transit as a big part of the solution. Graham also asked about innovative use of parking meters in residential neighborhoods experiencing commercial spillover parking, allowing residents with permits to park for free, while charging visitors.

Subsidizing parking, or hiding its costs, causes excessive demand, disadvantages those who do not drive, and increases pollution and traffic. Because of all these negative effects, it is imperative that D.C. better manage demand and supply, and create pricing strategies for on and off street parking that account for all of these concerns. Through better pricing and enhanced alternatives to driving and car ownership, we can benefit everyone. More parking can be available for those who really want it, and more non-driving options can be available to those who depend on walking and transit, or prefer not to drive.

Requiring higher amounts of off street parking to be built for new or renovated housing adds to already high housing prices. By driving up the cost of housing with too much parking (a parking space can cost upwards of \$30,000), we close off families' choices for saving money. We need to manage this scarce and costly resource, fairly allocate it, and invest in alternative transportation options.

Here are some of the many ways the City could solve parking problems while saving money and fairly addressing the needs of all D.C. residents:

- Under zoning regulations, we could reduce parking required for new development and require developers to subsidize car-sharing, such as ZipCar and FlexCar, transit passes, convenient bicycle storage, and pedestrian improvements.
- Residential parking permits could be managed through graduated fees based on the number of permits per household and length of the vehicle. We could allow non-car owning households to sell their permits to car-owning neighbors.
- Enable tenants and homeowners to rent or purchase parking separately from the housing itself – so they can choose to save money on car ownership.
- Use meters or other pricing measures more extensively to

control parking demand and turnover – especially around Metro stations and business districts that claim to have insufficient amounts of parking.

- “Smart meters” that cost more the longer you park.
- Require all office buildings to have “transportation demand management plans” that quantify reductions in auto trips. Employers should offer transit subsidies, parking cash out, and should pay an “air pollution” fee for each parking space offered for free to workers. Office buildings should include showers for bicyclists, and secure bicycle parking. D.C. should learn from Arlington County’s successful transportation demand management programs.
- Restaurants and clubs can create taxi fare programs, shared valet parking and shared parking facilities with existing day-time parking facilities. Often, plenty of parking exists but is unavailable to customers at the right time. It is far cheaper to make existing resources available than to build more parking.
- And yes, effective enforcement is important to the success of many of the solutions mentioned above.

By better managing demand and supporting neighborhood and environmentally-friendly alternatives, we can improve mobility and give **everyone** better choices. Overemphasizing increased parking supply only gives us more traffic and air pollution, and leaves us right where we started – with not enough parking for drivers and fewer housing opportunities in walkable, transit-accessible neighborhoods.

For more information about parking policy and innovative solutions, see:

*Parking Policies for Smart Growth*, by Adam Millard-Ball, Nelson Nygaard Consulting. [http://www.nelsonnygaard.com/articles/cur\\_article\\_parking.htm](http://www.nelsonnygaard.com/articles/cur_article_parking.htm)

*Parking Solutions: A Comprehensive Menu of Solutions to Parking Problems*. TDM Encyclopedia, Victoria Transport Policy Institute. <http://www.vtpi.org/tdm/tdm72.htm>

“Roughly Right or Precisely Wrong” by Donald Shoup, *ACCESS* No. 20 Spring 2002. UCLA professor shows that unwarranted trust the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) manuals can lead to bad transportation, parking and land-use policies. <http://www.uctc.net/access/access.html>.

*Berkeley Downtown/Southside Transportation Demand Management Study*: multimodal strategies allow increased development on campus and downtown Berkeley without increased traffic congestion. <http://www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/planning/advance/TDM/tdmnoti.htm>

*Residential Parking*, Non-Profit Housing Association of Northern California (NPH) created a set of interactive tools for planners, developers, advocates and public officials to communicate the impact of minimum parking requirements on the affordability and availability of housing. <http://www.nonprohousing.org/actioncenter/toolbox/parking/index.atomic>

**D.C. Housing Trust Fund Slashed to \$5 Million**

by Janet W. Brown

D.C.'s commitment to funding affordable housing slipped again. The D.C. Council's budget deal, passed on October 1, reduces the Housing Production Trust Fund, which promotes construction of affordable housing for low- and moderate-income residents, from \$11.5 million to \$5 million. Earlier this year, the Trust Fund's budget was cut from \$23 million to \$11.5 million. The latest reduction by the Council, leaves the Housing Production Trust Fund with less than one-fourth of its initial funding.

In August, for the first time in many years, the city announced the availability of \$35 million in assistance for affordable housing projects, mostly from the recently revived Housing Production Trust Fund. At the deadline for receipt of proposals in mid-October, the Department of Housing and Community Development, which administers the Fund, received 59 responses requesting over \$86 million in financial assistance. Both the Department and housing activists were encouraged by the developers' response.

The Trust Fund was supposed to be a dedicated funding source, based on a 15 percent allocation of two real estate fee and tax revenue streams. Housing advocates question if cutting the Fund sends a signal that the Mayor and Council are not truly committed to reliable funding levels.

Housing advocates also expressed concern about how much support will be directed to projects, including rental housing, reaching the lowest-income groups, as the new Housing Act of 2002 requires. Housing advocates, who helped focus the Trust Fund and other provisions of the law on meeting the needs of the most needy, hope the intent of the law will be followed. The city's request for proposals, however, and the revised regulations gave no priority and made no concessions to developers who would build projects for very low-income families. City administrators have voiced their preference for building moderate- and middle-income homes, because they can build more units with the funds available.

The District's situation illustrates an area-wide dilemma: while the lowest-income groups are most vulnerable in the current real-estate market, and are found living under the worst conditions and crowding, jurisdictions are challenged to provide significantly larger subsidies to provide housing affordable to very low-income households.

**Comprehensive Sprawl Study Ranks Metropolitan Areas: D.C. region scores badly**

by John Bailey

The Washington metropolitan area gets low scores on a new index measuring metropolitan sprawl, according to a new national study that finds that people who live in more sprawling places drive more, face a greater risk of dying in a traffic crash, and breathe more polluted air. The report, *Measuring Sprawl and Its Impact* released by Smart Growth America, ranks the Washington region as the 28th most sprawling area in the country.

"For the first time we are able to define sprawl objectively so we can see how it measures up," said Don Chen, Executive Director of Smart Growth America. "What this study tells us is that sprawl has a direct and negative impact on our everyday lives."

"This report shows that the high degree of sprawl in the Washington region is hurting our quality of life," said Stewart Schwartz, executive director of Coalition for Smarter Growth. "The only reason we are not in worse shape is that in some areas we did the right thing by focusing, mixed-use walkable development near our Metro stations."

The new index issues five sprawl scores for each metropolitan area and ranks them. This sprawl index looks at residential density, the mix of homes and other land uses, the strength of town centers and the accessibility of the street network, as well as an overall ranking. The Washington region also did poorly in all of the other measures, scoring third highest average commute time in the country with an average time of 32.66 hours. The Washington region ranks in the top 20 for bad air quality due to sprawl and has a fairly high ranking on vehicle miles traveled per capita, which is 22.8 miles.

In addition, the research found sprawl to lack even the one benefit defenders most often attribute to it: lower congestion. People in sprawling areas endure no less traffic-related delay than those in more compact places, but have fewer alternatives in travel routes and modes, the study found.

To read the report and metro fact sheets for all 83 regions studied, visit <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org>

**Smart Growth Development Recognition Program Accepting Applications**

Applications are now being accepted for the Smart Growth Alliance Recognition Program. December 15, 2002 is the due date for Review Period Four.

The Smart Growth Alliance is made up of the Urban Land Institute Washington, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Greater Washington Board of Trade, Coalition for Smarter Growth, and the Metropolitan Washington Builders' Council. WRN participates as an alternate juror for the Recognition Program. The SGA created the Smart Growth Recognition Program to encourage the approval of development projects that foster smart growth. By recognizing outstanding project proposals, the SGA hopes to inform regulators, public officials, citizen groups, developers, and others of the advantages these projects bring to a community and region.

Each quarter, the SGA will recognize private sector smart growth project proposals in the Washington area that are currently or soon will be reviewed by local government regulatory agencies. Applications must show that the project meets criteria related to location; density, design, and diversity of uses; transportation, mobility, and accessibility; environmental conservation; and contributions to community assets. For more information see: <http://washington.uli.org/sga>, or contact: [sga@uli.org](mailto:sga@uli.org).

**Election Day is November 5th**

Don't forget to vote on November 5th for candidates and referenda in support of better public transit, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, affordable housing, transit-oriented development, and protection of parks and rural resource lands.

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

Wednesday, October 30, 2002, 5pm to 8pm. **Design Public Hearing Route 50 Traffic**

**Calming.** Design public hearing to review and discuss preliminary plans for the proposed traffic calming of Route 50 from the village of Paris in Fauquier County (Intersection Route 759) to the village of Lenah (Intersection Route 600) in Loudoun and Fauquier counties. Open style forum style meeting. Middleburg Community Center, 300 West Washington Street, Middleburg Virginia. For more details: <http://virginiadot.org/projects/resources/PIM-newDesignRte50Loudon.pdf>

Wednesday, October 30, 2002, 11:30am Meet and Greet; noon Lunch. **Health Effects of Sprawl.** Women's Transportation Seminar monthly program on how our environment directly affects our health. Come and learn what the medical and health community is finding about the relationship between our transportation network and health concerns. The Hotel Washington, 15<sup>th</sup> and Pennsylvania, NW. Cost: \$20 members; \$25 non-members; \$15 students. RSVP: [wtsdcprogram@onebox.com](mailto:wtsdcprogram@onebox.com) Questions: Leigh Smyth, (202) 682-4843.

Thursday, November 7, 6:30pm. **Neighborhood Parking Solutions: A WRN Forum** with Adam Millard-Ball of Nelson\Nygaard Consulting. The Sumner School, 1201 17<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, D.C. (Dupont Circle Metro). RSVP to WRN at: 202-667-5445, [staff@washingtonregion.net](mailto:staff@washingtonregion.net).

Tuesday, November 12, 2002, 7:30pm to 9pm. **Regional Forum on Pedestrian Safety for Fairfax County.** Pedestrian activists and county and state official will come together to discuss ways to improve pedestrian safety on roads like Route 1. Knights of Columbus Hall, 8592 Richmond Highway (Route 1) Alexandria, Virginia. For more information contact John Swanson at TPB staff at 202-962-3295 or [jswanson@mwkog.org](mailto:jswanson@mwkog.org).

Monday, November 18, 2002, 12:30pm-1:30pm. **2002 National Award for Smarth Growth Achievement.** The awards will recognize state, regional and local governments that promote and achieve smart growth. National Building Museum, 401 F Street N.W, Washington D.C. (Judiciary Square Metro). The event is sponsored by U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and is free. To register, please send an e-mail including your name and affiliation and the number of people in your party to: [smartgrowth.awards@epa.gov](mailto:smartgrowth.awards@epa.gov).

Wednesday, December 4, 2002, 8:30am to 4pm. **Charrettes 101: Best Practices and Lessons Learned**, hosted by The National Charrette Institute. Learn the theory of facilitating transformative community change, what a Charrette is and when it can be used, the tools and techniques for planning and running a Charrette, and lessons learned from other Charrettes. Charles Sumner School, Washington DC. Cost: \$295 professionals, \$175 non-profits. RSVP through NCI's website: <http://www.charretteinstitute.org/>. Questions: [info@charretteinstitute.org](mailto:info@charretteinstitute.org)

**Webpage volunteer needed:**

WRN is seeking volunteer assistance to help revamp our webpage.

**WRN Contribution Form**

Individual Contributions

- \$15 limited income
- \$35 basic individual
- \$80 supporter
- \$120 sustainer

Organizational Contributions

- \$60 small
- \$200 basic
- \$500 sustaining

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Please add \$20 per person for Intersect to be faxed long distance or mailed—to cover costs.

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