

# INTERSECT

NEWSLETTER

January 10, 2003

OF THE

Volume 7 Number 1

WASHINGTON REGIONAL NETWORK FOR LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

## WRN forum announcement:

### Smart Growth After the Elections, with:

#### **Peter Shapiro**

Prince George's County Council & the Transportation Planning Board,

#### **Jay Fiset**

Arlington County Board & Washington Council of Governments, and

#### **Jim Graham**

District of Columbia Council & Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

February 12, 2003

Refreshments: 6:30 pm, Program: 7 pm

Location: TBA

November 2002 elections brought significant change at all levels of government. How will this affect smart growth in the region? How will Metro fare in the new political and economic climate? Will the region's officials find a way to meet air quality standards? How can land use-transportation linkages and affordable housing be advanced? Will contested highway projects like the Inter-County Connector be built? Learn from the region's elected leaders what their hopes and concerns are for the future. RSVP at 202-667-5445 or [staff@washingtonregion.net](mailto:staff@washingtonregion.net)

### **Inner Purple Line Strongly Endorsed in Montgomery and Prince George's**

by Cheryl Cort

As part of the first actions taken by the new Montgomery and Prince George's County Councils, the Inner Purple Line was strongly endorsed as a transportation priority. The vote was 7-2 in Montgomery and unanimous in Prince George's County. The proposed Inner Purple Line is a mostly surface light rail line that would connect downtown Bethesda to Silver Spring, Langley Park, College Park and New Carrollton.

Long-time Inner Purple Line advocate and new Council member George Leventhal (D-At-Large) made an impassioned statement in support of the Purple Line resolution, stressing the critical transit link the Inner Purple Line provides for a variety of county residents and travelers. Leventhal acknowledged the importance of the hiker-biker trail, which will be fully maintained according to Maryland Transit Administration plans.

The alignment of the Purple Line has been a contentious issue for several years as County Executive Doug Duncan has promoted a wholly underground alignment, running outside the Capital Beltway, priced at approximately \$5-6 billion. In contrast, the inner line would cost about \$1.4 billion. Duncan has recently proposed a new alternative alignment to avoid the Columbia Country Club and remove the rail alignment from a shared right-of-way with the hiker-biker trail. This route would also miss downtown Bethesda. According to the Washington Post (1/7/03), Leventhal believes that Duncan's latest, southernmost alignment demonstrates that he is moving closer to the majority Council position in support of the Inner Purple Line.

Montgomery County is putting forth the Inner Purple Line and the Corridor Cities Transitway, a busway or rail line connecting Rockville and Clarksburg, as its two transit projects proposed for federal funding. According to top Maryland Transit Administration planner Henry Kay, the likelihood that both suburban Maryland projects would be funded, amounting to \$2.2 billion, is slim. Most County officials and transit supporters contend that both transit projects should be promoted equally.

While the Prince George's County Council expressed unanimous support for the Inner Purple Line, many county officials place a Metrorail connection between Branch Avenue Metro Station and Alexandria, Virginia across the Woodrow Wilson Bridge, as a top transit project. Given Alexandria's opposition to the connection, this project is unlikely to advance soon.

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**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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Cheryl Cort, Editor and WRN Executive Director. Comments and articles welcome.

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Ultimately, the decision about which transit projects will advance for federal funding is up to Governor-elect Robert Ehrlich. Ehrlich has expressed support for the Outer Purple Line alignment. This spring, the Governor will put forward Maryland's priority transportation projects for the Congressional earmarking process. Limited funds and strong demand make federal funding for transit projects highly competitive.

### **\$4 Billion Dulles Rail Plan Rebuffed by Federal Officials**

by Cheryl Cort

Federal Transit Administrator Jenna Dorn told Virginia Congressional representatives that the \$4 billion Dulles Rail proposal was too expensive, echoing the comments of a number of prominent transit and environmental advocates. According to the Washington Post, Dorn said that the federal government would be willing to fund a \$1 billion rail project to Tyson's Corner, and provide Bus Rapid Transit for the Dulles corridor. Despite the federal warnings, Virginia's Commonwealth Transportation Board voted unanimously to endorse the full Metrorail project to and beyond the Dulles Airport.

Dorn's criticism of the high costs and insufficiently high ridership reinforced a number of local and national transit advocates who have asked the Dulles transit study to provide a fairer assessment of the potential for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) in the corridor.

In a letter submitted for the record by Michael Replogle, Transportation Director of Environmental Defense, Replogle asked that the draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), "be revised to include BRT options that parallel the existing Metrorail options, enabling a fair comparison of the two modes." Replogle suggested that BRT could provide greater transit capacity than Metrorail in the Dulles Corridor, citing existing BRT systems that carry three or four as many passengers per hour as the proposed Metrorail extension. BRT also offers more flexibility than Metrorail, stated Replogle, enabling BRT to provide express service to the airport, and operate on both separate rights-of-way and around office parks, malls, and neighborhoods. The potential to have BRT operating in as little as two years, for a fraction of the cost, warrants reconsideration of a BRT system, according to Replogle.

Speaking on behalf of Breakthrough Technologies Institute, a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting BRT as a transit investment option, William Vincent expressed great concern that the analysis conducted for the Dulles Transit study provides an unfair and biased analysis in favor of Metrorail.

Vincent provided specific comments about how he believes the DEIS failed to provide adequate analysis of BRT as a comparable alternative to Metrorail. Vincent asserts that the DEIS is blatantly biased and that the BRT alternative was designed to provide a lower level of service than the Metrorail alternative. Among the discrepancies Vincent cites are: 10-13 stations were evaluated for Metrorail, and 1-5 stations for BRT (plus a few low capacity "stops"); multiple stations are provided in the Metrorail alternative for Tyson's Corner and none for the BRT alternative; dedicated right-of-way is provided for Metrorail, virtually no dedicated right-of-way is provided for the BRT alternative, requiring operations almost exclusively in mixed traffic.

For Vincent's full comments, see: <http://www.gobrt.org/Dullescomments.doc>

### **Arlington Misses on Affordable Housing in the Virginia Square Metro Plan**

Opinion by Charlie Rinker

*[Editor's note: the following is an excerpt from a message to Arlington County housing advocates by Charlie Rinker, president of The Arlington New Directions Coalition, (<http://www.arlingtonnewdirections.org>).]*

## **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 The Naomi & Nehemiah Cohen Foundation, Linda Parke Gallagher, Ron Eichner and New Legacy Partners, Lee Epstein, William Mosley, Robert W. Corbett, Joanne Droppers, Lucy Iliff, A.R. Giancola, Jeff S. Lee and Lee & Lui Associates, Neal Fitzpatrick and Audubon Naturalist Society, John Bailey, Michael Replogle and Environmental Defense, Byrne Kelly, Donald Barclay, Christine A. Matthews, James W. Clarke, Walter Rybeck, Michael Smith and LCOR Incorporated, Patricia Nicoson and Dulles Corridor Rail Association, Stephen Cerny, Janet and Norman Brown, Gerald Allan Schwinn, Michael K. Gewirz and Potomac Investment Properties, Bruce Adams, David Levy, Ralph and Margaret Johanson, Freya Grand, Carol Weisner, Marilyn W. Hoskins, Ann J. Ambler, The Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Mary Vogel, Deborah Katz, Dr. Alice Rivlin, Rev. Edward and Louise White, Julia Graham Lear, Kathleen Courrier, Linda S. Katz.

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Whenever you see [Arlington County Board members] Chris Zimmerman and Charles Monroe -- be sure to express your appreciation to them for their motion concerning affordable housing in the adopted revised Virginia Square Sector Plan which was taken up at the County Board meeting on Dec. 7. Their motion failed by a vote of 3 to 2, with Barbara Favola, Paul Ferguson and Jay Fisette voting it down.

The Virginia Square Sector Plan Revision is the first sector plan revision to come before the Board, and will be the first of many sector plans to be revisited and revised by the community, County staff and County Board over the next few years. The citizens of Virginia Square worked very hard over an approximately 2-year period to recommend revisions to the Virginia Square Plan. The revised plan recommended increasing the density in most of the undeveloped parts of the Sector from 3.24 FAR (floor area ratio) to 4.0 FAR. (Floor area ratio is the ratio of floor area permitted on a specific parcel of land to the area of the parcel.) The community also recommended that 10 percent of the residential units (ownership or rental) developed in the Sector be set aside for affordable housing -- as a part of the base zoning. The County staff and County Manager recommendation that came to the County Board was for 5 percent of the residential units to be set aside for affordable housing.

After much discussion and debate, Zimmerman made a motion to increase the percentage set aside or expectation for affordable housing from 5 percent to 7 percent and Monroe seconded the motion. The County Manager weighed in by saying that the increased base density in the revised Plan from 3.24 to 4.0 FAR was probably worth about 6.5 percent of the developed units in increased "land cost" benefit to a developer (i.e., that giving additional density was like giving additional land to the developer to build on). Zimmerman and Monroe argued the need for affordable housing and that Arlington was such a hot real estate market that developers would continue to bring development proposals and do what was needed to develop here. Nevertheless, the 7 percent was voted down; and then all Board members supported the 5 percent.

The County Board missed a great opportunity to send a powerful message to developers in Virginia Square and across the County about its expectations about affordable housing. The community folks who worked on the revised Plan and the County passed an excellent revised Virginia Square Sector Plan. It was the first time any percentage of affordable housing was written into the base zoning as an expectation of developers. Nevertheless, we missed an excellent opportunity to encourage really "smart growth"

and growth that is even more in line with the County's adopted goals of diversity and a caring community. We as a community will hopefully revisit this issue in other sector plan revisions.

### **Transit Subsidies and Parking Ratios: the Federal Government's Role in Influencing Regional Commuting Mode Choices**

by David Levy, National Capital Planning Commission and WRN Board

As the central planning agency for the federal government, the National Capital Planning Commission provides overall planning guidance for federal lands and buildings in the National Capital Region. Through its planning policies, the Commission seeks to protect and enhance the historical, cultural and natural resources of the Nation's Capital by providing for the efficient operation of the federal government; preserving important historic features while permitting new development; enhancing the quality of the environment; and among other things -- promoting adequate transportation infrastructure.

At the forefront of policy discussion today are regional transportation issues. The federal government's decisions on this key subject range from how to locate federal agencies near Metrorail; designing for transit-oriented development (TOD) on federal campuses; and determining the number of parking spaces to provide for federal employees.

As the region's largest employer, the federal government takes its leadership role in the National Capital Region very seriously, acknowledging the region's significant challenges of overcoming air pollution and traffic congestion. Recognizing the direct relationship between available parking spaces and traffic congestion, the federal government is unique in the region in applying prescribed maximum parking limits -- also known as capping the number of parking spaces that a federal agency is allowed to provide. Regional jurisdictions, similar to most jurisdictions nationwide, apply prescribed minimums -- that is requiring that a minimum number of spaces be built into a project.

The net result is that the federal government provides fewer parking spaces per employee than most local private sector firms or local governments in the region. But the federal government still has to get its employees to work efficiently, and so it offers incentives for those who are willing to take alternative modes of transportation to work. Notable among these incentives is a subsidy of up to \$100 per month per federal employee (tax-free). These transit subsidies can be used for rail or bus transit as well as

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participation in vanpools. The transit subsidy is a win-win situation, as it helps the employee pay for transportation, while allowing the federal government to alleviate some of the pressure of providing employee parking spaces. Approximately 140,000 federal employees in the DC region participated in the transit subsidy program last year and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority recently reported that more than 40 percent of rush hour commuters on Metrorail during this time period were federal employees. This is quite an accomplishment given that federal employees comprise only 13 percent of the total regional commuting population.

As for parking spaces, the federal government provides only one parking space for every five employees in the central business district of Washington, DC; and even in the outer suburbs, where parking is generally free and plentiful; parking is not provided for every federal employee. Additionally, these policies are currently under revision to reflect factors such as improvements to the Metrorail system since the last comprehensive plan update; more accurate accounting of federal workplace locations, and a higher percentage of participants receiving transit subsidies.

### **Takoma Transportation 101 Finds Common Ground**

by Cheryl Cort

Transportation consultant Jeff Tumlin helped Takoma community members, accustomed to sharp disagreement, find common ground at a forum sponsored by Plan Takoma, the Takoma D.C. neighborhood association. The event entitled "Transportation 101," was convened this fall to assist the community in assessing transportation issues at the beginning of a D.C. Department of Transportation Takoma Transportation Study.

Tumlin, with Nelson\Nygaard Consulting, began with some of his own observations and identified a few points of general agreement. He observed that the current configuration of the Metro station is a "hole in the heart of the community" and the current open space functions as "drive by" space – it's nice to look at but nobody is really served by it. He walked through key issues of concern to the community: traffic congestion, affordable housing shortages, and the desire for better public spaces.

Tumlin explained that affordable housing generates less traffic and parking demand, and more transit trips than other types of residential development. Thus affordable housing has lower impacts than other forms. He showed that 1:1 parking requirements reduce the amount of housing possible on a site by 20 percent, and increase the cost or rent per unit by 20 percent. He suggested allowing

developers reasonable reductions in parking and requiring that parking rent be separate from housing rent.

On the question of how much parking is the right amount, he suggested better managing parking before adding supply. He recommended prioritizing parking based upon the value to the community, giving preference to loading, short-term shoppers, and local residents. He recommended using more meters rather than time limits, and using the revenues for community benefits.

Tumlin identified traffic movements around the Metro station as a bottleneck in the heart of the community that affects business, bus movement, and quality life. He suggested moving the bottleneck outside the heart of the downtown where it will do the least damage.

Tumlin discussed the importance of great town greens and what their characteristics are: they invite people with activities, feel safe day and night, are surrounded by windows, are the right size for the right use, and are flexible. Bigger is not necessarily better, Tumlin said. He urged community members to make sure that they get the right size, shape, design details and surrounding uses.

For great bus/rail intermodal centers, the same principles for great open spaces apply. He suggested that the key to a great bus center is to maximize curb space within view of the Metro station entrance. He sketched a concept plan for bus parking that used the full curb lengths around a town green, and divided the parcel into three smaller blocks. Some blocks could be used for on-street parking until needed for expansion of bus facilities. He warned against "wasteful bus intermodal facilities," and recommended turning buses around the block.

In conclusion, he recommended a community-based planning process for a detailed development plan for the Metro parcel and suggested setting up a design studio in a vacant storefront and the creation of different images so community members can better perceive what different development scenarios would look and feel like.

The audience was elated with the amount of agreement Tumlin was able to find among neighbors who have often had contentious disagreements. One participant said, "he proved that with some inventive ideas it is possible to knit together ideas favored by the two sides of our Metro site dispute."

For Tumlin's presentation and more information on the Takoma Transportation Study, see: <http://takoma.home.att.net/index.html>

## Friendship Heights Metro Residential Project Endorsed by WRN

Citing good street-oriented design, appropriate scale, and a sufficient number of housing units added to a commercial district within 300 feet of the Friendship Heights Metro station, WRN Executive Director Cheryl Cort testified Dec. 12 in support of the 5401 Western Ave. Project. While most nearby neighborhood groups have opposed the 100-unit condominium project at the site of the Washington Clinic due to concern about its height, proximity to the adjacent residences, and potential traffic impacts, several residents came forward to testify in favor of the project and form a new group in support of smart growth projects.

The proposal, under review by the D.C. Zoning Commission, would also offer 5 percent below market rate housing units, affordable to homebuyers earning 80 percent of the area median income. While Cort noted this amount of modestly affordable housing was a positive step, Cort asked D.C. Office of Planning to require more in the future. The inclusion of 5 percent below market rate units, however, marks the first time the D.C. Office of Planning has pushed a private developer to provide such a benefit.

The project also provides a day care center and adds open space by reducing the amount of imperviousness on site. The project also received a Washington Smart Growth Alliance Recognition award. WRN is a member of the Smart Growth Alliance. For more on the project see: <http://washington.uli.org/sga/recognitionoct.doc>

## Mean Streets 2002 Documents Walking Dangers

A new report from the Surface Transportation Policy Project (STPP), *Mean Streets 2002*, shows that in sprawling regions around the country walking can be hazardous to your health. In 2001, 4,955 people died while walking down the street in the United States, up from the toll of 4,843 in 2000. This is the first increase in deaths since 1995. An estimated 78,000 pedestrians were injured in traffic crashes during each of those two years. While only about 5 percent of all trips are made on foot, about 12 percent of all traffic deaths are pedestrians, making walking one of the most dangerous modes of travel. Children, the elderly and African-Americans appear to be at greater risk of injury or death from automobiles.

STPP developed a Pedestrian Danger Index to find which communities are the most dangerous to people walking. The Washington-Baltimore area ranked 33rd in a comparison of 49 other large metro areas around the country. To read the report and learn more about pedestrian spending in D.C., Virginia and Maryland, visit <http://www.transact.org>.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Monday, January 13, 6-9pm.

**Public Meeting on Updating the DC Transportation Plan.** The District Department of Transportation (DDOT) announces the first in a series of public meetings on updating the District Transportation Plan, the vision for 2025 for the safe and efficient movement of people and good to enhance the quality of life for residents, business and visitors in the District. Community Room, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Reeves Center, 2000 14<sup>th</sup> St. NW. For more information or to register contact DDOT at [ddot-transportation.plan@dc.gov](mailto:ddot-transportation.plan@dc.gov) or (202) 671-0533.

Monday, January 13 and January 27, 6-9pm. **Citizens Advisory Committee for Loudoun County Bike and Pedestrian Mobility Master Plan Meetings.** A bicycle and pedestrian plan is a priority in pursuing the county's goal of creating a network of bikeways and walkways that connect citizens to parks, schools, jobs, shopping areas, and rural open space without relying on an automobile. Loudoun County Government Center, 1 Harrison Street, SE in Leesburg. For more information see: <http://www.loudoun.gov/compplan/bikeped.htm> or call (703)777-0246.

Monday, January 20, 11am-7pm. **Virginia Citizens' Lobby Day and Legislative Reception.** Sponsored by the Virginia Conservation Network, the event will be held at The John Marshal at 5<sup>th</sup> and Franklin Steets. in Richmond. For more information: Ellen Shepard at 540-362-3538 or [ellenshepard@yahoo.com](mailto:ellenshepard@yahoo.com)

Tuesday, January 21, 12:30 - 1:30pm. **Smart Growth Alliance Recognition Program.** Presented by Robert Harris, Lee Epstein, and Robert Peck at National Building Museum, 401 F Street N. W, Washington D.C. (Judiciary Square Metro). The Smart Growth Alliance (SGA) is a joint effort to research, identify, and encourage land use, development and transportation policy and practice that protects environmental assets and enhance our regional quality of life. The event is free. For more information contact Juanita Smith at [smith.juanita@epa.gov](mailto:smith.juanita@epa.gov).

Thursday, January 23, 1-4pm. **Greening The City.** This forum will be the first of three presentations on how local governments, non-governmental organizations, corporations, schools, and citizens are greening parks, communities, neighborhoods, streets, business, and residences in Washington, DC. Metropolitan Council of Governments, Board Room, 3rd Floor, 777 North Capitol Street, NE. For more information see <http://www.mwcog.org/dep/forestry/index.htm> or RSVP to [glenn\\_eugster@nps.gov](mailto:glenn_eugster@nps.gov) or call COG at (202)962-3393.

Saturday, January 25, 9am-1pm. **"What's Next after the Sales Tax Defeat?"** Learn about initiatives in the Northern Virginia region, discuss priority local issues and connect with local groups working on smart growth issues. Location TBA. For more information contact Nicola Wood, Coalition for Smarter Growth: [nicola@smartgrowth.net](mailto:nicola@smartgrowth.net) or (202) 588-5570.

Saturday, January 25, 9am-12pm. **South Capital Street Gateway Study, Public Workshop #3.** DDOT a third of four public meetings to review and discuss scenarios to improve the South Capitol Street Corridor. Savoy Elementary School, 2400 Shannon Place, SE. For more information contact Hadiah Jordan, (202) 610-0005.

Thursday, February 13, 10am-2:30pm. **Organizing for Success**, first in a series of Green Infrastructure Dialogues to create partnerships for parks, open space, recreation in the D.C. region. Location TBA. Cost \$10 (lunch) and RSVP by January 25. For more information contact Anne Pearson, Alliance for Sustainable Communities at 410-956-1002 or Aplace@toad.net.

### Job Listings

**Redevelopment Organizer:** WRN seeks a full-time **organizer** to promote redevelopment, transit-oriented development, safe routes to transit campaigns and affordable housing policies in the District of Columbia, Prince George's County and throughout the Washington region. For more information see: [www.washingtonregion.net](http://www.washingtonregion.net).

The Surface Transportation Policy Project seeks a full-time **Transportation Policy Research Intern** from January to May 2003 with possible extension. Must have proficiency in MS Excel and MS Access as well as have good layout skills and be detail oriented. Completed undergraduate degree preferred; advanced studies a plus. Send resume with a cover letter and 3 references to Linda Bailey, STPP 1100 17<sup>th</sup> St. NW, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor, Washington DC 20036 or lbailey@transact.org.

**Web page volunteer needed:** WRN is seeking volunteer assistance to help revamp our web page, and train staff to use Dreamweaver.

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**WRN Mission:** Through public education, policy advocacy and targeted organizing, WRN works to promote transportation investments, land use policies, and neighborhood designs that enhance existing communities and protect the environment of the Washington, D.C. region. WRN's goal is to create and sustain a network of diverse, walkable communities linked by quality transit, laced with parks, and surrounded by greenbelts, with the District of Columbia as the hub of the region. WRN helps to deliver smart growth benefits to urban communities, with a focus on social equity.

### WRN Contribution Form

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- \$15 limited income       \$80 supporter  
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#### Organizational Contributions

- \$60 small       \$500 sustaining  
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