

# INTERSECT

NEWSLETTER

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WASHINGTON REGIONAL NETWORK FOR LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

## Regional Plan Unlikely to Improve Air Quality

By Shannon Brown

On May 28, the region's governments released a draft clean air plan for public comment. The Plan is an attempt to bring the area's poor air quality into compliance with federal health-based standards by a 2005 deadline.

According to the Sierra Club and other environmental groups, the new plan fails to address key problems and will do little to improve the region's air quality. Even D.C. Councilmember Phil Mendelson, the chair of the region's official body which produced the plan voted against it, saying it was too weak.

The plan focuses on reducing VOC (volatile organic compounds) emissions from consumer and industrial products while widely ignoring pollution from automobiles. If approved, the plan would implement regulations requiring retailers to offer products such as paints and cleaners that emit fewer pollutants and create incentives to turn in heavy polluting lawn equipment.

Critics assert the plan is unlikely to meet air quality goals as it offers no new strategies on addressing automobile emissions, one of the region's largest sources of air pollution. While cleaner fuels and low-emission vehicles have helped reduce exhaust levels, the increasing number of vehicle miles traveled and the popularity of SUVs have overwhelmed most of these gains. The only enforceable measures in the plan are those that have already been implemented.

In March, a coalition of groups including Earthjustice, Environmental Defense, America Lung Association and WRN proposed a set of transportation measures to help clean up the air and meet federal standards. The coalition of groups recommended the adoption of a wide variety of measures, such as economic incentives for using mass transit or car pools, exclusive lanes for commuter buses, expanded bike paths, and commitments to boost the fuel

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## FORUM ANNOUNCEMENT

### Putting the Bus on the Map

How to get more out of our region's bus system

with:

**Edward Thomas**, Assistant General Manager, Metro  
**Chris Zimmerman**, Arlington County Board and Metro Board member

**Dan Tangherlini**, Director, DC Department of Transportation

**Wednesday, July 16, 2003**

7:00-8:30pm (Refreshments at 6:30pm.)

Martin Luther King Library  
901 G St NW, Room A-5 (Basement Auditorium)

Metrobus is at a crossroads. The bus system can either remain the poor stepsister to Metrorail, or transform into a modern, clean, high-tech foundation of our transportation system. But to do this we need to fix what's wrong with the current system (including better maps & information and safe access to bus stops) as well as expedite major improvements such as signal priority, bus rapid transit, real-time information, and clean fuel buses, to bring out bus system into the 21st century.

Join us for this discussion on the future of Metrobus, sponsored by Sierra Club and Washington Regional Network for Livable Communities.

**DIRECTIONS:** Metrobus Routes: 13A, 32, 34, 35, 36, 42, 54, 66, 68, 70, 80, D6, G8, S2, S4, P6, X2. Metrorail: Gallery Place-Chinatown Station (use Museum exit on 9th Street).

RSVP to WRN: e-mail: [staff@washingtonregion.net](mailto:staff@washingtonregion.net), or tel.: 202-667-5445.

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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.

Cheryl Cort, Editor & WRN Executive Director; Shannon Brown and Stephen Wade, staff writers. Comments and articles welcome.

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efficiency of government vehicle fleets. The District of Columbia previously provided many miles of exclusive bus lanes, but opened them up for general automobile use after Metrorail stations were opened. The group asked that these dedicated bus lanes, and new ones in other jurisdictions be instituted. Reclaimed bus lanes could immediately improve transit service and reduce automobile emissions. The group also asked Metro to commit funding for expansion of bus and railcar fleets as a "transportation control measure" which is used to protect expansions in transit in the case of a lapse in federal transportation funding due to a failure of the plan to meet clean air requirements.

While planners claim that the region's air is getting cleaner, indicators point in the opposite direction. After prompting from a lawsuit, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency downgraded the region's air quality rating from "serious" to "severe" non-attainment for ozone levels, the worst rating in the country, except Los Angeles. Last summer was the most polluted in over a decade, with 9 code red violations. Federal requirements will allow only four ozone violations over the next three years.

The plan is currently under a 30-day public comment period. Public hearings will be held in the region on July 8-9. The Council of Governments is scheduled to adopt the final plan July 23 and will then submit it to the EPA. For more on the plan and hearings, see: [www.mwcog.org/environment/air](http://www.mwcog.org/environment/air)

### **Metro Fare Hike Shifts More Costs to Riders, But Continued Deficits Loom**

By Cheryl Cort

The Metro board decided to place more of the burden of paying for transit service directly on riders by raising \$40.2 million in revenues through fare and parking fee increases, rather than the \$24 million originally proposed to close the gap on the fiscal year (FY) 2004 operating budget shortfall. Added costs from early morning Metrorail openings and \$6 million elevator/escalator program costs will bring net revenues to \$34.2 million.

Despite future increased revenues from higher fares and fees, Metro faces a budget shortfall of \$6.5 million to close out FY 2003, and for FY 2005, an operating deficit could grow to \$67 million, and in FY 2006 \$119 million, if member governments do not increase subsidy payments. The deficits are attributed to ridership growth at lower rates, while costs continue to increase.

While the Metro board plans to raise fares across the board on rail and bus riders by 10 cents, parking fees will increase by 75 cents where current fees are \$2.25, and monthly

reserved parking will be increased to a maximum of \$95 per month. WRN led a coalition of environmental, anti-poverty, housing, and smart growth organizations to oppose a fare hike, and instead proposed closing the budget gap by increasing daily parking fees by \$2 rather than \$1 as proposed, and proportionate increases to monthly and reserved parking. While WRN was unsuccessful in staving off a fare increase, its \$2 parking fee proposal was adopted by Metro board chairman Jim Graham (D.C. Council, Ward 1). This position helped support a compromise of a 75 cent increase, a major shift from Maryland's initial position opposing any parking fee increases.

As part of the changes, Metro will extend Metrorail operating hours - opening at 7 am, an hour earlier on weekends and closing an hour later, 3 am on Friday and Saturday nights. The \$1.8 million cost for 3 am Metrorail closings on Friday and Saturday nights will be paid separately by the District of Columbia. Once SmarTrip card readers are installed on all Metrobuses, Metro will balance discounted transfers between rail and bus, charging 40 cents in each direction.

The 10 cents fare hike on bus and rail fares amounts to a 9 percent increase. The daily parking fee increase of 75 cents equals a 33 percent increase, and reserved parking fees will increase by 46 percent. The greater increase on parking than transit fares demonstrates Metro's recognition that parking is underpriced. While parking fees run a slight deficit in operating costs, capital rehabilitation costs are significantly subsidized. According to Metro staff reports, existing parking facilities cost the system nearly \$11 million per year. This cost will grow as more parking garages replace surface lots.

Metro reported that 73 percent of public comments on the fare hike proposals supported parking fee increases, and 60 percent endorsed WRN's \$2 parking fee increase proposal. For more details on the fare and fee changes, see: [http://www.wmata.com/about/MET\\_NEWS/PressReleaseDetail.cfm?ReleaseID=84](http://www.wmata.com/about/MET_NEWS/PressReleaseDetail.cfm?ReleaseID=84)

### **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 following organizational donors and individuals for their support for WRN's efforts to promote livable communities for the Washington region: Diane Iniguez, Richard E. Hoye, and Mary Nagelhout.

## **Form-Based Codes: Arlington Employs New Rules to Revitalize Columbia Pike**

by Stephen Wade

On February 26, the Arlington County Board approved the Columbia Pike form-based code, a decision that has local and national implications. The approval makes Arlington County one of the few local jurisdictions to adopt this innovative approach to community design and one of the first jurisdictions in the nation to apply form-based codes to revitalize existing, older corridors. It is one of the largest applications in the country.

The Columbia Pike form-based code is designed to create pedestrian-oriented development that will foster a vital "Main Street" through a lively mix of shop fronts, sidewalk cafes, and other commercial uses at street level, overlooked by street trees and upper story residences and offices. The design for Columbia Pike includes several new plazas and civic squares. The parking plan includes a focus on centralized, shared parking that will create a "park once; then walk" environment. Virtually all Columbia Pike buildings will have a maximum height of six stories, tapering down into the surrounding neighborhoods.

Form-based codes work on the basic principle that design is more important than use. According to Mary Madden of the Congress for the New Urbanism, with a clear form-based code, business owners and residents can easily foresee the design possibilities for future development. Form-based codes achieve this by focusing on the community's design vision. Basic rules specify a range of acceptable building types and welcome mixed-use development. Form-based codes highlight a range of heights, sitings, elements, and uses for the diverse needs of different types of housing and shop fronts.

The current system for planning land uses is fundamentally about separating different uses. According to proponents, like Bruce Katz of the Brookings Institution, healthy neighborhoods, towns, and cities work by integrating different aspects of daily life. Traditional zoning practices are delaying and discouraging the current surge of mixed-use developments in the nation's cities. Form-based codes are particularly relevant to central cities experiencing infill development that must fit in the context of existing neighborhoods, though they are also applicable to the suburbs.

According to leading practitioner Geoffery Ferrell, form-based codes can also be used as a successful tool to allay residents' doubts about new development and concern that increased density will overwhelm streets and neighborhoods. Developers also benefit from greater certainty about what the community wants. Specific form-

based codes highlight a quality street environment that makes places alive and vital. Design, not use, enable people to live, work, and shop in one area. This vision is one that residents embrace, and form-based codes translates the vision into rules for building.

The adoption of the Columbia Pike form-based code provides a new opportunity for residents and planners to realize their vision for a revitalized pedestrian-oriented, people-friendly main street in an emerging part of Arlington County.

For more see information: <http://www.co.arlington.va.us/forums/columbia/current/>

## **Maryland Shifts Priorities Away From Transit, Towards Road Building**

By Cheryl Cort

Following through on the only apparent transportation priority from his campaign, Maryland Governor Robert Ehrlich won expedited federal review of the proposed Inter-County Connector (ICC) and requested \$800 million in construction funding. The ICC is a proposed highway arc that would link Interstate 95 in Prince George's County and I-270 in Montgomery County.

Despite Ehrlich's enthusiasm for the new highway, the Prince George's County Council expressed its unanimous disapproval in a 9-0 vote opposing the new road on June 10. Citing study results that showed that the expansion of I-270 in the 1980s shifted jobs away from Prince George's, Council Chairman Peter Shapiro called the ICC the "Prince George's Bypass." County Executive Jack Johnson remains on the fence -- "not opposing" the ICC.

While Ehrlich works to kick-start the over \$1 billion ICC and pledged \$400,000 to study a new Potomac River crossing and freeway, the top transit project for the Washington inner suburbs, the Purple Line, received vague support from his administration. New changes to the transit proposal are considered to be jeopardizing its competitiveness for federal funding. Until recently, the Purple Line was a planned light rail line between Bethesda and New Carrollton.

In March, Maryland, along with other states, submitted a funding request to be considered for this year's reauthorization of the 6-year federal transportation law. The new Maryland administration requested \$15 million each in planning funds for three new transit projects: the Purple Line (re-named the "Bi-County Transitway"); the Corridor Cities Transitway, a transit line that would run up the I-270 corridor to Clarksburg; and the Baltimore Rail plan. The

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State plans to request a to-be-determined amount of construction funds at a later date.

The outgoing Glendening administration was in the process of completing a Final Environmental Impact Study (FEIS) for the first segment of the Inner Purple Line and hiker/biker trail, along the Georgetown Branch rail right-of-way between Bethesda and Silver Spring. Despite the advanced stage of Inner Purple Line planning, the Ehrlich administration has decided to study a variety of new alignments and modes, adding back in an assessment of Bus Rapid Transit. Many observers believe the new studies hurt chances for federal funding, and have suggested that the new alternative alignments and modes amount to a delaying tactic.

While the Purple Line's fate is increasingly less certain, existing transit service also faces cutbacks. The governor has convened a task force to examine how to fund more highway building and pay for mass transit operating costs. Maryland has recently indicated it plans to cut bus routes, and reduce MARC commuter rail services, along with fare increases. The state also has not showed how it will make up a \$3 million shortfall in funds owed to the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (Metro) for next year's budget. These actions have transit supporters worried that existing transit operations may suffer severe losses while the new administration allocates more resources to new highways.

## HOUSING NEWS

### **D.C. Council Fully Funds Housing Trust Fund**

On May 6, despite difficult fiscal times, the D.C. Council voted to fully fund the city's Housing Production Trust Fund at \$21.5 million in FY 2004, an increase of \$9.5 million from Mayor Williams' proposal. Many Council members stated that they hoped that in the future, the Trust Fund would be funded through the dedicated revenue established by the Housing Act of 2002, so that a yearly budget battle can be avoided.

### **Fairfax County Overcomes Builder Opposition on Expanded Affordable Housing Requirement**

Despite stiff resistance from the building industry, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors unanimously supported expansion of the county's Affordable Dwelling Unit ordinance (ADU) to include mid-rise multifamily buildings on May 19. The proposed amendment requires 6.25 percent ADUs in exchange for a 17 percent density

bonus. To address builder's parking cost concerns, a reduced number of ADUs will be allowed where large amounts of structured parking are provided. WRN testified in favor of the amendment and recommended a number of alternatives to alleviate the building industry's concerns regarding parking costs. WRN suggested that Fairfax County examine parking demand for different user groups in need of affordable housing, given that low income owners, renters in general, and senior households all typically own fewer cars. Also, WRN recommended that Fairfax County follow Arlington County's model of asking developers to prepare and implement Transportation Management Plans, for both residential and commercial projects as a way to provide attractive alternatives to car ownership and reduce vehicle trips.

### **Montgomery Council Considers Low Priced Housing Requirement for Large Lots**

On June 17, the Montgomery County Council held a public hearing on the Planning Commission's Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) 03-09 proposal to extend Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit (MPDU) requirements and density bonuses to large lot zones that are zoned for sewer. Environmental and smart growth groups opposed ZTA 03-09, citing that the MPDU requirement may be used to justify extension of sewer and water into environmentally sensitive areas without adding many affordable units. The Sierra Club also suggested that the hidden transportation costs for households in areas far from transit and stores can offset much of the savings from subsidized units in inaccessible locations.

WRN opposed expansion of housing in large lot zones citing the need to correct the MPDU Program's increasing failure to produce affordable units near transit. Developers have taken advantage of the program's buy-out provision because of the high costs of development near transit. The buy-out fees, however, are substantially lower than the resources needed to provide off-site units. Housing advocates have called for the County to create more stringent buy-out provisions and find new ways to ensure that more MPDUs are built on site in urban areas.

Non-profit housing groups at the hearing cited the paramount need for an even distribution of affordable housing throughout the County as their reason for supporting the ZTA. The Montgomery County Council is divided on the issue and will take the Planning Commission's proposal to a work session.

## Congress Targets Funds for Safe Walking and Bicycling

Last week marked a landmark in the campaign for a dedicated federal program for Safe Routes to School, when U.S. Representative Oberstar announced the Pedestrian and Cyclist Equity Act of 2003 (PACE), with \$250 million proposed annual funding for creating more bikable and walkable communities. The bill's supporters cited that the need for sidewalks and ensuring safe conditions for cycling should be a routine part of any transportation project and that PACE will help gain equal treatment for the safety of children and all people using America's roadways.

"We want to get kids back into the habit of bicycling and walking for fun and transportation," said Oberstar. "With this bill we can change the lifestyle habits for an entire generation." Nearly 70 percent of today's parents bicycled and walked to school, while only 18 percent of their children do today, according to recent survey by the Surface Transportation Policy Project. Experts point to the lack of physical activity as one of the reasons that over one-third of American children are overweight or obese.

The PACE initiative will likely be folded into the reauthorization of the transportation funding bill which Congress will address this session. In addition to funding Safe Routes to School initiatives, PACE proposes spending \$25 million a year on active living grants, and \$25 million a year for each of 3 demonstration projects. Grants available through PACE would also help communities encourage more physical activity through the design of their transportation systems, dedicating \$25 million per year for grants for Active Living projects targeted at increasing physical activity through changes in transportation and community design. In addition, \$25 million per year would fund non-motorized transportation demonstration projects in three communities.

For more information visit: <http://www.americabikes.org/>

## London's Congestion Pricing a Big Success

By Shannon Brown

On February 17, London, England implemented a radical pricing scheme aimed at reducing congestion in the eight square-mile area of downtown. A £5 (\$8) a day fee was instituted, charging any driver who enters this congestion hot-spot during weekdays (though some exemptions apply). Many skeptics claimed the plan would be a disaster; causing traffic jams on periphery roads and overburden transit.

Instead, the program was launched with relative ease. Predicted massive traffic jams and overloaded rail and bus

lines never materialized. According to "London Congestion Report: Implications for Other Cities" by Todd Litman of the Victoria Transport Policy Institute, in the three months that the program has operated, central London has seen a larger than expected drop in congestion, with a 20 percent overall decline. Traffic speeds in the city have risen, up from an average of 9.5 mph to 20 mph. Bus delays caused by congestion are also down by one-half, according to the report.

The congestion fee program was designed to reduce congestion and raise revenues for transit improvements. While the program has been successful at reducing congestion, it has been less so in raising revenues. According to Litman, because drivers are more responsive to pricing than anticipated, fewer people are driving in central London resulting in less revenues from fees. Revenue raised through the program is to be funneled towards improving the city's bus and underground subway systems. Since revenues are growing more slowly than anticipated, cost-recovery for the initial start up expenses will also be slow, meaning transit may not see revenues for another couple of years.

For more information visit: <http://www.vtpi.org/london.pdf>

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Wednesday, June 25, 12:30-1:30pm. **Paving Our Way to Water Shortages.** While experts discuss the link between water shortages, erratic weather conditions and population growth, there is also evidence that the way we grow -- development patterns -- can exacerbate problems with both water quality and quantity. John Bailey (Associate Director of Smart Growth America), Deron Lovaas (Deputy Director of the Smart-Growth and Transportation Program at Natural Resources Defense Council), and Betsy Otto (Senior Director of the Watersheds Program at American Rivers), will discuss how sprawl can make water supply problems worse in many communities. National Building Museum, 401 F Street N.W, Washington D.C. (Judiciary Square Metro). The Smart Growth Speaker Series is free. For more information visit: [www.smartgrowth.org/audio/default.asp](http://www.smartgrowth.org/audio/default.asp)

Wednesday, June 25, 7:00pm. **Walkarlington Pilot Project - Phase I: Ballston.** The Arlington Pedestrian Advisory Committee invites you to a community forum with Urban Designer Charles Zucker. As part of the greater WALKArlington initiative, the Ballston-area terrain has been examined from a strictly "pedestrian" perspective. The forum will present Zucker's observations and preliminary recommendations and will invite audience input. Arlington

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Central Library – Auditorium. For more information call 703-228-0072, email: JGoldstein@co.arlington.va.us, or visit <http://www.co.arlington.va.us/dpw/planning/ped/walk/walkpress.htm>

Thursday, June 26, 5:00pm. **Hearing on Purple Line Alternatives.** Montgomery County Planning Board will hold a public hearing on the evaluation of a busway from Bethesda to Silver Spring on either the Georgetown Branch right-of-way or a combination of the Georgetown Branch right-of-way and Jones Bridge Road between Jones Mill Road and MD 355. To testify to, call 301-495-4600. Written testimony will be accepted until July 1, fax: 301-495-1320, or e-mail [mcp-chariman@mncppc-mc.org](mailto:mcp-chariman@mncppc-mc.org). For more information on proposed alternatives visit: [http://www.mc-mncppc.org/transportation/jones\\_bridge\\_road/index.shtm](http://www.mc-mncppc.org/transportation/jones_bridge_road/index.shtm)

Thursday, July 3. **The South Capitol Gateway and Corridor Improvement Study (Draft) Public Comments Due.** The report contains proposals designed to transform South Capitol Street, from Maryland across the Anacostia River to The Capitol, into a vibrant, mixed-use grand boulevard that is a fitting gateway to the Nation's Capital, including a new bridge and tunnel and reestablishing the L'Enfant street grid. To submit comments see: <http://www.publicspace.justicesustainability.com/southcapitol/index.shtml>

Tuesday, July 8-9. **Draft Clean Air Plan: Regional Public Hearings.** On May 28, the region's governments released the area's draft clean air plan that attempts to bring the area's poor air quality into compliance with federal health-based standards by a 2005 deadline. Virginia: July 8, 11:00am VDEQ, Northern Virginia Regional Office, 13901 Crown Court, Woodbridge, VA. Maryland: July 8, 2:00pm. Maryland National Capitol Park and Planning Commission, First Floor Auditorium, 8787 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring, Maryland. DC: July 9, 6:00pm. One Judiciary Square, 441 4<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, Washington DC. For more information contact Joan Rohlf, [jrohlf@mwcog.org](mailto:jrohlf@mwcog.org) or 202-962-3358 or visit <http://www.mwcog.org/calendar/>

## JOB LISTINGS

The Washington Regional Network for Livable Communities seeks a self-motivated **Program Assistant** for a part-time position. The Program Assistant will work closely with the Executive Director to provide substantive program and administrative support with the potential to focus on program activities of particular interest. Major qualifications include: commitment to WRN's mission and purpose, excellent organizational skills, self-motivation, knowledge of Windows, the MS Office suite, QuickBooks and Macromedia Dreamweaver, strong writing skills, professional phone manner and familiarity with transit-oriented development, new urbanism, smart growth/growth management concepts; bachelor's degree, and course work in land use or urban planning, or a related field. E-mail a cover letter, resume and two writing samples to: [staff@washingtonregion.net](mailto:staff@washingtonregion.net).

### WRN Contribution Form

#### Individual Contributions

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

#### Organizational Contributions

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

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