

INTERSECT

NEWSLETTER

February 17, 2004

OF THE

Volume 8 Number 1

WASHINGTON REGIONAL NETWORK FOR LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

FORUM ANNOUNCEMENT

Good Neighbors: New Development in Older Neighborhoods

with

Roger Lewis, architect, professor, *Washington Post* columnist
John Torti, architect and President, Torti Gallas and Partners
Toby Millman, Vice President of Project Development,
Eakin/Youngentob Associates

Tuesday March 9, 2004

National Capital Planning Commission
401 9th Street NW, North Lobby, Suite 500*
6:00pm, refreshments; 6:30pm, program

Neighbors often cite out-of-character buildings and traffic congestion when objecting to new development. Leading developers and designers show how they have addressed residents' concerns and made new development fit in and enhance existing communities.

RSVP: WRN, 202-667-5445, or e-mail staff@washingtonregion.net.

*Between E & D St; Metro Stations: Gallery Place, Metro Center, Archives, Federal Triangle. Bring Photo ID.

SPECIAL EVENT

Chris Zimmerman Honored with Livable Communities Leadership Award

Reception: Monday, February 23

5:30 - 7 p.m.

Mimi's American Bistro, 2200 P St., NW
(2 blocks west of Dupont Circle Metro)

Suggested donation: \$75/person/ \$125 couple; reception with appetizers and beverages

WRN will honor Christopher Zimmerman, a member of the Arlington County Board, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, and the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board with its Livable Communities Leadership Award 2004. Zimmerman is being honored for his outstanding leadership in helping to create more livable communities for the Washington region.

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Special thanks to Metropolis Development, CIG International, Russell Katz, David W. Briggs and Mimi's American Bistro.

Metro Fare Hikes and Service Cuts Loom as Maryland Weakens Support

By Cheryl Cort

Faced with another operating deficit, Metro is considering a set of fare increases and service cuts that will be widely felt among the region's transit riders, and the region as a whole. While budgets are tight among all three member jurisdictions, Maryland is alone in offering a lower increase in public support for the region's transit agency.

At the February 12 Metro Budget Committee meeting, Virginia and D.C. Metro board members reiterated their commitment to fund the transit agency at an increased level of 4.5 percent to help make up the budget shortfall that would leave a \$28.8 million gap. Maryland, however, is pushing for a lower subsidy increase, which will generate a larger deficit of \$36.3 million to be made up with fare increases and service cuts.

One option the Metro staff proposed was to increase fares with a market approach that would only increase fares on users most willing to accept higher charges, losing the least amount of ridership and revenue. Staff recommended focusing on peak period rail commuters, and proposed to raise peak boarding charges between 15-30 cents. For off peak rail trips, staff proposed only a 5-cent increase and also only a 5-cent hike for all bus trips. Most Metro board members voiced disagreement with maintaining a low increase for bus riders and asked for staff to present a higher bus fare proposal. Arlington County board member Chris Zimmerman argued against raising bus fares at the same level as Metrorail noting that the quality of service and amenities is much lower for

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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; Christopher Forinash, Lyn Stoesen, Janet W. Brown, Elizabeth Cox; contributing writers.

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bus service, and that the bus serves a less affluent ridership. A number of service cuts were considered and rejected by the board, including closing four stations on the weekends (Cheverly, Capital Heights, Forest Glen and Federal Center), and several station entrances that attract few riders on the weekend. Next week the Metro board will decide on the final package of service cuts and fare increases for public hearings.

D.C. and Virginia board members view the \$28.8 million deficit as much more manageable amount than the \$36.3 million that Maryland's position is pushing the deficit towards. The difference in the shortfall will be made up in higher fare increases and deeper cuts in service.

Design Matters Forum Series Addresses Livability

WRN's spring forum series, "Design Matters: Building Livability" will look at design, planning, and transportation engineering solutions that create livable neighborhoods. Despite renewed interest in urban locations, many design and marketing strategies remain automobile-oriented and suburban. Transit-Oriented Development is much more than building close to Metro stations. WRN's series will explore what it takes to create a sense of place and community.

The five-session will open on March 9 with a discussion of the challenges facing infill development – how to fit in and whether just fitting in is enough (see article this issue). Subsequent sessions will address new approaches to zoning, retail development, streets, and traffic. Our purpose is to inform activists, decision-makers, and business leaders about state-of-the-art practices for accommodating regional growth and creating diverse, livable communities.

Following the "Good Neighbors" program in March, WRN will host "Way Beyond Zoning: Form-based Codes shape Livable Streets" with Geoffrey Ferrell and Tim Lynch, April 13; "Real Streets: New Approaches to Transportation" with Dan Burden, May 18; "Smart Growth Recognition Awards: Business and Environmentalists Agree on Smart Growth Projects"; and "Mallternatives: Transit-Oriented Retail". See more at: www.washingtonregion.net

D.C. Housing Advocates Launch "Friend of the Fund" Campaign to Secure Promised Money for Affordable Housing

The D.C. Affordable Housing Alliance launched a "Friend of the Fund" campaign to get D.C. Council and Mayor Williams to make good on their promise of dedicated revenues for the Housing Production Trust Fund. The Affordable Housing Alliance, a broad coalition of housing activists including WRN, launched the campaign to demonstrate wide

public support for reliable funding for affordable housing. The Alliance believes that the city will continue to cut its investment in the Trust Fund, as it has attempted or succeeded to do every previous year, unless strong community support is expressed. Under the 2002 Housing Act, the Housing Production Trust Fund was to receive 15 percent of the transfer and recordation taxes collected from real estate transactions. Each year, the Mayor has cut or proposed to cut the amount of funding due to the trust fund. Last year, D.C. Council acted to restore the full amount of 21.5 million over the Mayor's effort to reduce funding by half. The first year that the Trust Fund was funded, it was supposed to receive \$22 million, but the Mayor and Council reduced the appropriate to \$5 million. To learn more about "Friend of the Fund" see: <http://www.cnhed.org>

Eric Price Explains D.C. Mayor's Affordable Housing Policies

By Cheryl Cort & Janet W. Brown

Eric Price, the top adviser on economic development to D.C. Mayor Anthony Williams, said at a WRN forum that bringing private development to the city makes it possible to fund affordable housing and other services to the public.

Price, speaking to a standing-room only crowd at the Jan. 14 forum on affordable housing policies, also said that mixed-income housing is the only way to appropriately provide affordable housing for low- and moderate-income residents; that corridors along good public transportation routes must receive more intensive development in order to pay for improvements in less affluent parts of the city; and that he is skeptical about the contribution that inclusionary zoning, commercial linkage and rent control make to the city's supply of affordable housing.

According to Price, when the Mayor invited him to join his administration to create a housing program, he found an array of scattered initiatives that failed to yield results. Price also found that no private developers were building affordable housing. When Price took over, he created one housing project pipeline out of many that contained thousands of languishing project, and pushed to close project deals within the first year. Since 1999, the Williams Administration has financed over 11,000 units of affordable housing, including the rehabilitation of existing units and the production of new units, as well as generated additional federal funding.

According to Price, D.C. is disadvantaged from gaining as much from federal funding because it is not a state. Price said that more federal money can

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be gained by creating a regional housing authority, where D.C. can obtain an increased share of federal funding by counting the region's population base. D.C. has 10,000 public housing units, and 10,000 subsidized units amounting to 10 percent of the city's housing stock, according to Price. This makes up almost half of the region's federally assisted housing.

Price explained that an early Administration effort to leverage city resources to create affordable housing emerged with the sale for \$100 million of the Pennsylvania Avenue property for the Newseum. Another \$25 million was put into the Housing Production Trust Fund as part of the deal. The Trust Fund was created in 1989 but never funded, he noted.

Price said that the city made the inclusion of affordable housing routine for disposition of public land by requiring affordable housing. Redevelopment initiatives by the city or its land agency, National Capital Revitalization Corporation (NCRC), such as multiple parcels in Columbia Heights, the Southwest Waterfront Plan, and the Wax Museum site at 5th and K streets, NW, all require 20 percent affordable housing for moderate and low income families.

Price stated unequivocally that he is convinced that mixed-income housing is the only way to appropriately provide affordable housing for needy residents. He cited innovations in the city's many HOPE VI projects which attract federal funding by replacing "severely distressed" public housing with mixed income housing. Price said that the commercial development as a part of the Arthur Capper HOPE VI project enabled the city to replace all the public units along with creating market rate units. "Economic development helps the affordability," he said. When questioned about HOPE VI in general, Price solemnly acknowledged that "loss of public housing units is a problem." He indicated that the city is advancing a new HOPE VI deal on a parcel that has been vacant for many years.

When questioned, Price said that the greatest challenge facing D.C. is the expiration of Section 8 contracts that provide low-income residents with housing through federal subsidies paid to landlords. He said that the market is pressuring gentrifying neighborhood where many Section 8 properties exist. He said that the city has made an effort to renew contracts to keep these units affordable. He cited a large building in Columbia Heights, which maintained the

affordable units with \$40 million in city subsidies. He expressed concern that this was a huge sum, suggesting that such expenditures limit the amount of aid the city can provide to other housing needs.

Price was repeatedly questioned about the loophole in the tenants right of first refusal which allows landlords to sell a rental property over two years in order to avoid tenants right to purchase. He appeared unfamiliar with the number of properties thus transferred in the past two years and with the DCRA's facilitation of that process. He did however, acknowledge that this was a problem.

Matching Land Use Patterns and Transit Investments: A Primer for the Washington Region

By Christopher Forinash, WRN Board member & transportation analyst

A livable community includes a range of job and housing choices for its residents, along with recreational, educational, commercial and other services. In a livable community, these activities are arranged so that residents can reach many of them within their neighborhood or the nearby larger community, by an easy walk or bike ride. A livable region consists of many such communities, connected by high-quality transit service as well as streets and bike routes. A livable region supports healthy citizens, a healthy economy, and a healthy environment.

In the Washington region today, we are poised to increase our commitment to livable communities and the high-quality transportation network to connect them. By pursuing smart growth policies, most jurisdictions (to some degree) have begun to heed the call of their citizens to provide more choices of high-quality places to live. More and more residents, business owners, developers and public officials recognize that mixed-use, compact, walkable communities represent a fiscally conservative and sustainable strategy that accommodates current and future lifestyle demands.

Several significant expansions of transit service have been proposed in the region. The breadth and variety of vehicle types, rights-of-way, and stations is enough to confuse even transit professionals. Add in the variety of community types they are intended to serve and parts of the region where they're proposed, and our ability to keep track of "what's happening where" fails. We hear about light rail, urban rail, heavy rail, Metrorail, commuter rail, Metrobus, commuter bus, community bus, bus rapid transit, intermodal transfer facilities, and more. How do we make sense of it all? What can we support as advocates for livable communities in a smart growth region?

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Transit and urban form: In the beginning there was the strong-downtown city. When downtown Washington was the single job center of the region, supported by pedestrian-scale neighborhoods and streetcar suburbs, the solutions seemed easy. If your trip is too far, you take the streetcar. As our region's jobs and housing decentralized, that simple model fell apart. We adopted development forms that, far from being supportable by any transit service, were hostile to any travel not involving a personal vehicle. In general, development that is single-use and low-density spreads out our activities so much that no transit can efficiently serve us. To add to the challenge, such areas (despite their low density) have not in many places been successfully retrofitted with mixed uses and higher densities. Arlington's Rosslyn-Ballston corridor provides one model of how to accomplish that transition successfully. Tysons Corner provides another model of how to develop densely, but the resulting congestion shows that with little residential use and no pedestrian orientation, density results in inefficient and unloved "communities".

What type of land use patterns can transit most efficiently serve? The specific answer depends on the type of transit, but in general, transit-friendly communities are characterized by a set of factors. First, they are at least relatively dense and compact. This results in many potential transit riders being within a reasonable walk, bicycle or shuttle-bus distance of the transit service. Second, they include a mix of uses, so that stations receive a balance of trips over the course of the day and in all directions of travel. Third, they create a high-quality pedestrian environment. Generous sidewalks, interesting streetscape and activities, good lighting, street trees and parks form a safe and attractive way to get to and from transit and other daily activities.

Metrorail / urban rail / heavy rail: Our Metrorail system serves well areas already developed with high densities, mixed uses, and pedestrian-friendly design. Examples include many downtown Washington stations, such as Dupont Circle. In cases such as Arlington's, such service is warranted where strong smart growth plans have been developed. In other regions lacking strong, center-focused and mixed-use development, or lacking a network of integrated transit services, heavy rail provides fewer benefits – see Atlanta and Baltimore for examples.

Heavy rail is the most expensive to construct of the transit investments. While the amount of expensive right-of-way required is limited, since much of the way is either in tunnel or on bridge, those grade-separated tracks are quite expensive. Because of the cost and operational characteristics of heavy rail, stations generally should not be spaced less than 3/4-1 mile apart. This distant station-spacing gener-

ally best supports nodes of highest-intensity, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented development, rather than continuous corridors or fabrics of development.

In outlying parts of our region, stations are spaced much further apart, and to avoid land costs the lines and stations use freeway or existing railroad land. With much of the pedestrian access area wasted on freeway, parking lots, or rail yards, the amount of development that can be accommodated is significantly hampered.

What kinds of Metrorail extensions make the most sense? Given the above, Metrorail additions could include infill stations, further circulation within core (although this parallel capacity could also use other technologies like light rail), connections between radials (though other technologies apply here too), double-tracking and other capacity increases, and some modest extensions to areas planned for intensive smart growth (transit-oriented) development.

Light rail / streetcar / trolley: These types of rail transit travel mostly at-grade (not in tunnels or on bridges), and in some instances travel within the street sharing right-of-way with vehicles. Light rail generally refers to the generation of trains (including Baltimore and San Diego) operating mostly in dedicated rights-of-way, while streetcars and trolleys use smaller rail vehicles generally using the same streets as vehicles. With the resulting lower cost, at-grade environment, and also lower travel speeds, these types of transit fit well with closer station spacing. As a result, they work well in a corridor or fabric of mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods and communities.

Commuter rail (and bus): Commuter rail lines can be thought of as the "freeways" of transit service. These ser-

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: Andy Fellows, Jennifer VanDriesen, Jim Sebastian, Marilyn Klein, Harry Sanders, Allen Greenberg, David Schwartzman, Carol Weisner, William Gallagher, David Freed, Harriet Tregoning, Piedmont Environmental Council, Allen Muchnick, Steve Jones, Kathryn Stratos, Kathleen Courier, Marilyn Hoskins, David Carlson, Dulles Corridor Rail Association, Gerald Allan Schwinn, Tim Torma and Jon Morgan.

vices are almost always oriented toward commuter traffic only (as the name implies). Combined with the radial nature of the lines, the resulting communities may be transit-oriented but the transit service is not rich enough for residents or workers to orient their other activities around it. Think of the classic old suburban towns, many of which grew up around a rail station. Commuter rail can help to anchor towns with some transit-orientation, but is best suited for towns and other livable communities disconnected from the rest of the region by distance or geographical barriers. In many cases, commuter rail can have the same sprawl-inducing effects as freeways, especially when the rail stations are surrounded by seas of commuter parking.

Bus Rapid Transit: The term Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) generally represents a range of improved bus services, ranging from express buses operating in general traffic, to rail-like system with stations, exclusive rights-of-way, and enhanced vehicles. At the former, lowest cost extreme, BRT is essentially the same as regular bus or express or commuter bus. At the latter extreme, the costs of BRT are similar to those of rail, and the impacts on communities are as well. Two significant differences between BRT and rail remain. First, the buses are able to leave the dedicated travelway and continue as feeder service through neighborhoods and to other destinations. This reduces the need to transfer and can provide better service. Second, BRT can provide a way to improve transit service in the shorter term, building market share and proving the need for further investment. In other words, BRT can serve as a bridge between current low-quality development and transit service and future smart growth and improved transit. That said, BRT should not be viewed solely as a transition. Well-designed and developed BRT serves as the anchor to the livable city of Curitiba, Brazil, and many US cities are moving toward implementing this improved type of transit.

Communities must establish a vision and plan for their future land use before fixing on a particular type of transit to implement. Smart growth land use patterns and transit investments are much more mutually supportive than sprawl and transit. Appropriate transit depends on the compactness, mix of uses, and pedestrian friendliness of a neighborhood, and its proximity to similar development. Mismatching transit and communities, usually by planning a costly rail line without supporting walkable land uses, wastes resources and poorly serves transit riders. In a diverse region like Washington, many different types of transit service will be required to ensure the mobility, choice and economic vitality for all residents and businesses. Future parts of this series will explore specific corridors and subregions within the Washington region, and discuss which transit investments fit where.

Virginia Conservation Network Weighs In on Gas Tax Legislation

By Lyn Stoesen

The Virginia Conservation Network (VCN), in coalition with six other organizations, has asked the Virginia House of Delegates to consider the underlying causes of the state's transportation challenges before approving legislation to increase the state gasoline tax to meet transportation funding shortfalls.

"Sprawl is causing the amount of driving to increase faster than the rate of our population growth. At the same time, increasing evidence indicates that new and wider highways generate significant new traffic without providing long-term congestion relief since they cause development to spread out and the amount of driving to increase," VCN Executive Director David J. Kovacs wrote in a letter to Virginia House Finance Committee Chair Harry J. Parrish (R-Manassas).

Kovacs noted VCN's position that 50 percent of any new funding should go to transit, pedestrian and bicycle transportation. He also elaborated on four actions the organization advocates for to improve transportation in Virginia: tie state transportation funding to measurable performance criteria including reduction in mileage driven per person; partner with local governments to adopt smarter growth laws and policies; use resources more efficiently by spending first on repairing the existing transportation system; and shift funding to public transit, freight rail, walking, and bicycling.

Federal Court Rules in Favor of Environmentalists on D.C. Area Smog Lawsuit

By Lyn Stoesen

A federal appeals court on Feb. 3 ruled that the Environmental Protection Agency violated the Clean Air Act when it approved regional smog control plans that allowed extensions beyond a 1999 deadline to meet established standards.

A lawsuit filed by Earthjustice on behalf of the Sierra Club challenged the EPA's "conditional" approval of Washington, D.C.-area plan that allowed for meeting the standards in the future on the grounds that it was illegally ignoring the Clean Air Act deadlines. It was the third federal court victory for the Sierra Club on the ozone issue in the Washington area.

"This is a big victory for everyone who breathes the air in this community," said Earthjustice attorney David Baron, according to a news release. "Just by being outside, Washington area residents are exposed to ozone at levels that can cause serious health problems, especially for children, senior citizens, and asthmatics."

According to Earthjustice, in 2003 the EPA "conditionally" approved regional air pollution plans that a federal Court had ruled inadequate in 2002. "The plans were completely missing a variety of anti-smog measures required by the Clean Air Act, including stronger pollution limits for factories, annual emissions cuts, and steps to offset growth in car and truck exhaust."

UPCOMING EVENTS

February 2004, **Eight Neighborhood Summits Planned to Present DC's Long-Range Vision to Citizens.** See http://planning.dc.gov/planning/cwp/view.asp?a=1283&q=594758&planningNav_GID or call Jill Diskan at (202) 442-8708.

Thursday, February 19, 12:30-1:30pm. **Building the 21st Century: Sustainable Design and Energy-Efficient Building Techniques for Existing Housing.** William Asdal, president of Asdal and Company Builders. Free. National Building Museum, 401 F Street NW.

Monday, February 23, 5:30-7 pm. **WRN Livable Communities Leadership Award reception for honoree Chris Zimmerman.** Suggested donation: \$75, at Mimi's Bistro 2200 P Street.

Wednesday, February 25, 1:00-4:00 p.m. **Green Roofs and Community Greens.** Guest speakers Katrin Scholz-Barth, and Kate Herrod, Director of Community Greens of Arlington, VA. Lee Memorial Recreation Center, 1108 Jefferson St, Alexandria, Virginia. RSVP Brian LeCouteur: blecouteur@mwkog.org, or Glenn_Eugster@nps.gov or call COG (202) 962-3393 or NPS (202) 619-7492.

March 3-5, 2004. **2004 National Bike Summit.** Join bicycle advocates, industry leaders, transportation professionals, key legislators and government officials for the National Bike Summit convened by the League of American Bicyclists in Washington, D.C. See: <http://www.bikeleague.org/events/natlsummitmarch2004.htm>

Tuesday, March 9, 6pm. **Good Neighbors: New Development in Older Neighborhoods.** WRN forum with Roger Lewis, John Torti, Toby Millman. 401 9th Street, NW, North Lobby, Suite 500. Metro Center, Archives.

Monday, March 15, 5pm. **Smart Growth Recognition Program Application due.** The SGA is currently accepting private sector smart growth project proposals that are currently or soon will be under review by local government regulatory agencies. See <http://washington.uli.org/sga> or contact John Bailey, sga@uli.org, 202-624-7003.

Tuesday, April 13. 6pm. **Way Beyond Zoning: Form-Based Codes Shape Livable Streets.** Geoffrey Ferrell, leading form-based codes planner; and Tim Lynch, Columbia Pike Revitalization, will discuss how form-based codes differ from conventional zoning and how it can be applied throughout the region. A WRN forum. 401 9th Street, NW, North Lobby, Suite 500.

May 6-8. **National Congress of Pedestrian Advocates 2004** "Walking: Everybody's Business -- Revitalizing people and places." Advocates, practitioners, and public officials gather to continue efforts to make America walkable and get Americans walking. The Hilton, Silver Spring, Maryland. For more see: <http://americawalks.org>

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