

4. ADDITIONAL ITEMS FOR FURTHER STUDY

This section of the staff memo identifies recommendations relating to next study steps.

Historic Preservation

The Historic Preservation Section supporting memo is included in Appendix C. In addition to the Falkland Apartments, coordination will be required regarding:

- Potential impacts to the Columbia Country Club. The Country Club has been determined to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. While staff is not concerned about removal of the non-historic portion of the country club golf course for the Purple Line project, we are concerned that removal of this parcel might negatively impact the remaining historic portion of the course, due to adjustments that will have to be made to the historic setting due to this undertaking. Staff would want to work closely with MTA and the property owner to ameliorate any potential adverse effect.
- Potential historic impacts on the Montgomery Blair High School site, which has been determined to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Station Area Planning

The Planning Department's Draft FY 2010 Work Program includes an element for Purple Line Corridor Land Use Master Plan. The staff would like to emphasize the importance of this planning effort in the context of the information in the AA/DEIS, the analysis of the alternatives in this staff memo, and both the concern and support expressed in the community and within the MPAG. There is apprehension in some sectors of the community that neighborhoods, small businesses, and workforce housing may experience negative impacts in some areas along the Purple Line alignment as well as potentially not being able to take advantage of the benefits that accrue with surface public transit. A proactive planning effort at addressing these important issues would be welcomed by many in the community.

The work would look at a range of issues including the benefits that could accrue to Fenton Village from surface public transit. Work has been ongoing in the neighborhood building densities and heights and the proposed study would benefit from this work.

One area of focus in the station planning effort (and the FEIS) should be a continuing review of the walk access to all stations. The staff has previously noted some of the potential issues in the vicinity of the Takoma/Langley Transit Center. In Silver Spring, the 16th Street station and the Lyttonsville stations in particular should be reviewed for issues related to walk access. The staff has in the past noted that there should be a traffic signal at Merrimac Drive on University Boulevard and we continue to include this as a recommendation to be considered in subsequent studies.

Station Area Urban Design

Urban Design Guidelines for the Station Areas are expected to accompany the Purple Line Corridor Land Use Master Plan. Many of the issues associated with the Purple Line concern urban design.

They concern not just the stations themselves, but the relationship of the stations to their neighborhoods. Especially where a station is anticipated to contribute to the economic development of an area, such as in Long Branch, urban design guidelines for those areas are important.

Funding Transit

Staff recommends that the selection of mode and alignment should precede the establishment of a funding plan. The staff has acknowledged throughout the analysis the current cost effectiveness threshold established by the FTA for determining if a project will be competitive for federal funding support. The FTA New Start program may be modified with the upcoming reauthorization of the federal funding statutes for transportation projects. Complicating matters is the current economic recession and the resulting impact on state and local governments. The challenges in developing a credible funding plan for the Purple Line and the Corridor Cities Transitway are significant and the time is relatively short.

Similarly, the AA/DEIS does not specifically address funding the Purple Line – indicating that the state will select the preferred alternative for the three active New Start projects and then determine the most feasible approach to funding and phasing. The AA/DEIS does contain a very good description of the trade-offs involved in the decision of the selection of a preferred alternative and in reaching a decision on phasing and funding.

Staff recommends funding the region's transit service include the following tenets:

- We must first take care of Metrorail as virtually everything we do now and in the future is in some way dependent upon Metrorail.
- We cannot ignore the maintenance and system preservation needs of our existing regional (Metrobus) and local (Ride-On) bus systems.
- The staff supports the vision of an evolving network of enhanced Bus Rapid Transit routes and we think it deserves further study – coordinated with WMATA, DOT, SHA, and the Planning Department. We do not think Bus Rapid Transit is the preferred mode for the Purple Line, however.
- The County should establish a transit infrastructure financing committee to identify more sustainable dedicated funding from both the public and the private sectors. Local option taxes and value capture financing mechanisms for new projects in particular are examples of approaches that may offer potential.

The Purple Line Functional Plan

Once an LPA is selected by MTA, the staff will finalize and forward to the Planning Board a draft of the Purple Line Functional Plan. This plan will formally establish the mode and alignment between Bethesda and the County boundary in the Takoma/Langley Crossroads area.

Our MPAG will continue to assist us in this effort. The staff would like the Planning Board to know that the MPAG has played a significant role in shaping this analysis of the AA/DEIS. They were unable to arrive at a consensus with respect to mode or alignment and many members will not agree with all of the analysis in this memo. It is important, however, for the staff to acknowledge that almost every issue examined in this memo has been either initiated by, or reviewed by, the MPAG. The staff (all divisions) would like to thank them for their expertise, time, and energy. We look forward to continue to work with them.

Additional Studies

The Vision staff memo includes a recommendation that the FEIS address additional transit options for the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda and the Federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) site at White Oak. The Department's position is that it is important to continue to examine the potential for expanded transit service and access to and from both of these locations these studies are beyond the Purpose and Need of the EIS process.

Development Review

The staff and the MTA Purple Line Project Team continue to coordinate on development applications that could impact any potential Purple Line alignment. We will continue this approach until a LPA is selected, using the publication of the AA/DEIS and the Functional Plan effort to reserve rights-of-way if necessary. Once the alternative is selected, we will focus on that alignment and any applicable design options that may still be under consideration.