



Briefing: Update on the Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan

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Description

Staff will provide the Board an update on our recent work on the Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan in advance of the presentation of the Staff Draft next month. The Planning Board is currently scheduled to review the Staff Draft for publication as the Public Hearing Draft on March 18, 2013.

Summary

The Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan will make recommendations on the following topics:

Major topic

- Identify corridors where dedicated lanes are needed to support:
 - Bus Rapid Transit as defined by all-day frequent service between activity centers
 - Improved service for commuter/express and local buses during peak periods

Other topics:

- Transit station locations on the recommended corridors
- Phasing for implementation of the recommended transit network.
- Addition of a third track to the Brunswick Line to expand MARC service.
- Designation of Bicycle-Pedestrian Priority Areas (BPPAs) to ensure that adequate access is provided in the area around major proposed stations.

We presented our preliminary staff recommendations to the Board on November 8, 2012, which were based on the results of the three transportation modeling runs that used a slightly modified version of the 150-mile BRT network envisioned in MDOT's September 2011 BRT feasibility study report. Those three runs were for the 2040 forecast year with the following conditions:

- No-build
- All two-lane median busway for the entire BRT network
- Mostly two-lane median busway with a limited amount of lane-repurposing (converting existing travel lanes to bus lanes) on four corridors

Since that time, we have received the results of our fourth and final transportation modeling run, which was done for an 87-mile BRT network with a mix of treatments, including a much more extensive test for lane-repurposing.

Overview of Staff Findings and Recommendations

The Staff Draft will include an approximately 78-mile recommended BRT network with a mix of treatments. Some of the corridors have forecast ridership that is fairly independent of other corridors, whereas others depend more on the “network effect” of completing other corridors in the ultimate BRT network.

Corridors that can stand alone

These corridors generally have higher ridership and a higher level of treatment that would be achieved via expanding rights-of-way and/or lane repurposing.

- MD 355 South – very high ridership, connects multiple activity centers
- MD 355 North – very high ridership, extension of Metrorail, connects multiple activity centers
- US 29 – high ridership, extension of Metrorail
- Georgia Ave North – low ridership, extension of Metrorail
- North Bethesda Transitway – moderate ridership but could significantly increase with potential future connection to Tyson’s Corner, Metrorail spur

Corridors that function best as part of a network

These corridors generally have lower ridership and a lower level of treatment that would be achieved via more limited increases in rights-of-way and/or via lane repurposing. They rely upon a network of BRT corridors to be effective.

- New Hampshire Ave
- Georgia Ave South
- Veirs Mill Rd
- Randolph Rd
- University Blvd

We find that MD355 is the best candidate for pursuing a high-quality BRT treatment to serve future planned growth and that US29 is the best candidate for implementing dedicated bus lanes in the near term. Both of these corridors are discussed in the recent Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP) report on BRT demand and service planning that was recently prepared for MCDOT:

[http://www.itdp.org/documents/ITDP - MCDOT Demand and Service Planning Report.pdf](http://www.itdp.org/documents/ITDP_-_MCDOT_Demand_and_Service_Planning_Report.pdf).

ITDP's report's focus is on which corridors are best suited to high-quality "true" BRT with frequent all-day service. The report finds that MD355 is the best candidate for this treatment, but expresses a concern that if future BRT ridership is only double the existing bus ridership, it would be very low compared to other BRT operations nationwide. ITDP did not do any ridership forecasting however, whereas our transportation modeling work has shown that the forecast 2040 ridership on MD355 is far higher and we are confident that we should begin planning for a two-lane median busway for most of this corridor.

The report also states that while US29 does not have a travel pattern or planned land use that would warrant "true" BRT with frequent all-day service between activity centers, dedicated bus lanes are warranted. We concur and the Staff Draft will include dedicated lanes on the US29 corridor, for which planning should also begin shortly.

Schedule

Our current schedule is as follows:

- **now-early mid-March 2013:** Completion of the Staff Draft
- **March 18, 2013:** Planning Board approval to publish Public Hearing Draft
- **late March 2013:** Advertise Public Hearing Draft
- **May 2, 2013:** Public Hearing
- **May-July 2013:** Worksessions
- **late July 2013:** Transmit Planning Board Draft to County Council