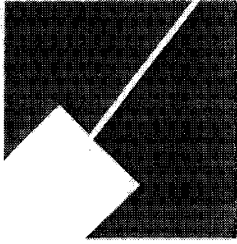


M-NCPPC



MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARK AND PLANNING

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL
PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

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301-495-4500, www.mncppc.org

March 2, 2005

MEMORANDUM- MANDATORY REFERRAL

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: John A. Carter, Chief, Community-Based Planning Division *JAC*

FROM: Glenn R. Kreger, Team Leader, Silver Spring/Takoma Park
Community-Based Planning Division (301/495-4653) *GRK*

Miguel Iraola, ASLA, Community-Based Planning Division *MIR*

- SUBJECT:**
1. Forest Conservation Plan: Silver Spring Transit Center Phase 2, Colesville Road and Wayne Avenue, CBD-2 Zone, Silver Spring Central Business District Sector Plan
 2. Mandatory Referral No. 04106-MC-1: Silver Spring Transit Center Phase 2, Colesville Road and Wayne Avenue, CBD-2 Zone, Silver Spring Central Business District Sector Plan

FILING DATE: January 20, 2005 (complete application)

STAFF RECOMMENDATION #1: Approve Forest Conservation Plan (see Attachment)

STAFF RECOMMENDATION #2: Approve transmittal of the following comments to the Montgomery County Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT) and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)

1. Provide a replacement for Metro Urban Park equivalent in size to the existing park recorded in the land records (0.8116 acres). Obtain Planning Board approval for the delineation and design of the replacement park and finalize a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to address maintenance, security, liability, and programming of the park. The delineation and design of the new park and the MOU must be approved by the Planning Board before the M-NCPPC vacates the existing park.

2. Pull the bus loops back from Colesville Road and provide street activating uses (e.g., retail) along the length of the Colesville Road frontage in accordance with previous guidance from the M-NCPPC (and as provided in previous designs for the Transit Center). If necessary, reduce the amount of publicly owned property that is being reserved for private development in order to reconfigure the bus bays. Alternatively, reconsider the number of bus bays required to provide future transit services given the improved efficiency resulting from the proposed Transit Center and inclusion of Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) technology.
3. Maintain a 30-foot wide building setback along Colesville Road to ensure that the pedestrian/bicycle/streetscaped area is unobstructed by portions of the proposed buildings, including the columns planned to support future development.
4. Modify the new bus entrance on Colesville Road to accommodate two outbound bus movements and one inbound bus movement. Lengthening this driveway may also be desirable to accommodate bus queuing; lengthening the driveway could also facilitate the change described in comment #2, above, by pushing the bus loops further away from Colesville Road. (Modifications due to comments #2, 3 and 4 must be coordinated.)
5. Provide a building facade along Colesville Road that conceals the bus decks. The Transit Center should fit into the urban fabric in the Core, not appear as a two level bus garage.
6. Coordinate with KSI to ensure that the connection between Bonifant Street and Ripley Street recommended in the Sector Plan is feasible in terms of the horizontal and vertical alignments. Dedicate the required right-of-way and construct the new road across the County-owned property south of Bonifant Street (i.e., between the Kiss and Ride and the boundary of the KSI project).
7. Identify a feasible alternative to the proposed jughandle at Colesville Road/Wayne Avenue in order to reduce pedestrian/vehicular conflicts. Resolve this issue in the second Mandatory Referral submission described below.
8. Address any concerns expressed by the SHA regarding this new intersection on Colesville Road or any other issues related to State roads. Coordinate with SHA to extend the median on Colesville Road where buses currently enter the existing jughandles, to close this opening. Provide sight distance calculations to the State Highway Administration (SHA) for the new bus entrance on Colesville Road, as required by SHA.
9. Dedicate the area reserved for future construction of the Bi-County Transitway (BCT) and Metropolitan Branch Trail along the railroad tracks.

10. Submit a second Mandatory Referral at the end of the design development stage (approximately 35 percent of the building contract) to address the items identified below and any significant changes to the November 2004 design. Engage the staff during the development phase prior to submitting the second Mandatory Referral.
 - a. Provide a plan for ensuring pedestrian safety during construction of the project. Coordinate with the Silver Spring Regional Center, the Silver Spring Urban District and the Maryland State Highway Administration.
 - b. Explain how transit operations will be maintained during construction.
 - c. Provide architectural details for all pedestrian and vehicular entrances.
 - d. Provide architectural details for the proposed canopy over the central core.
 - e. Provide architectural elevations for the facade of the Transit Center which faces the new park. Special attention should be given to limiting and screening views of cars and buses from the park area.
 - f. Provide specific details on the public art component. Meet with the Silver Spring Arts Panel regarding the proposed public art.
 - g. Provide the location, size and design for all internal wayfinding signage.
 - h. Revise the design for the shared use path along the Colesville Road frontage. Utilize special paving and signage to indicate a mixed use (i.e., pedestrians and bicycles) area and to encourage bicyclists to walk their bikes until past the Transit Center.
 - i. Provide the design for the future Metropolitan Branch Trail. Demonstrate how the trail traverses the Transit Center site horizontally and vertically and connects to the current DPWT Metropolitan Branch Trail project at grade south of the Transit Center.
 - j. Show a right-of-way dedication for the Bi-County Transitway along the railroad tracks and master plan roadways rights-of-way. Show how the Bi-County Transitway alternative alignment along Wayne Avenue (and the Silver Spring Green Trail) would be accommodated (e.g., the location of platforms, pedestrian connections from the BCT platforms through the Transit Center to Metro), unless the State's BCT study has ruled out this alignment.
 - k. Provide the following on the Landscape, Hardscape and Lighting plans:
 - Streetscape design and details for all public streets, including medians and crosswalks
 - Design of the interim replacement park
 - Design of the ultimate replacement park unless this has already been addressed through regulatory approvals for the joint development
 - Final design for the "jughandle" open space
 - Design details for the fountain, art, lighting, site furnishings, signage, paving, irrigation and other site amenities
 - Locate all proposed wayfinding signs per the Silver Spring CBD Wayfinding master plan
 - Screening for all generators, transformers, and dumpsters in public view
 - l. Provide a demolition plan (including the existing Metro Urban Park), and a staging plan (including the location of construction materials and use of the future replacement park for staging).

- m. Identify a location and size for the Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) equipment room and the proposed bike station, subject to future funding. Identify locations for bike racks and lockers on all levels of the facility.
 - n. Widen the space between the bus loop and the building/service core for the private development (preferably to at least 15') to accommodate transit patrons more comfortably.
 - o. Demonstrate how the horizontal and vertical alignments for the new road between Bonifant Street and Ripley Street have been coordinated with the approved plans for the KSI development on Ripley Street.
 - p. Design the selected alternative to the proposed jughandle at Colesville Road/Wayne Avenue. Design the jughandle if no alternative is determined to be feasible.
 - q. Show dedications for all master plan roadway rights-of-way, including:
 - Colesville Road (60 feet from centerline)
 - Wayne Avenue (120 feet total ROW)
 - Ramsey Avenue (35 feet from centerline)
 - 35 feet from the existing centerline along Bonifant Street
 - 70 feet for the connection between Bonifant Street and Ripley Street up to the limit of the KSI project
 - r. Document approval from the State Highway Administration (SHA) for all improvements to Colesville Road including curb cuts, new driveways and traffic signal installations.
 - s. Provide the engineering details to demonstrate how the grade differences have been resolved between the street and sidewalk level along Colesville Road and the new bus entrance and crosswalks at the new Colesville Road intersection.
 - t. Provide a detailed plan for mechanical ventilation, including the proposed locations for air intakes and exhausts.
 - u. Delineate the long and short term parking spaces, the Kiss and Ride spaces and the taxi spaces on the parking tabulation.
 - v. Provide site plan level drawings for the replacement park per item J, above. Plan for technical review of the park design at the second Mandatory Referral and reserve time in the project schedule for the park permit process (which takes several months at a minimum).
 - w. Address any encroachment on the northwest corner of the Lusk Building property at Bonifant Street/Ramsey Avenue.
 - x. Provide a letter to document approval of the Stormwater Concept Plan.
 - y. Provide for modifications to the existing Metrorail station that will open the western entrance to the station (i.e., the NOAA side).
11. Abandon a portion of Bonifant Street.
12. Provide a Preliminary Plan to prevent any structure from crossing lot lines.

PROJECT LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

Location

The proposed Silver Spring Transit Center will be located on the site of the existing Silver Spring Metro Station. The site is bounded by the railroad tracks on the west, Colesville Road on the north, Ramsey Avenue on the east, and a County-owned property to the south that was originally acquired for the tail tracks for the proposed Georgetown Branch light rail line (Attachment 1, Vicinity Map). Surrounding land uses are primarily office uses, including Discovery, NOAA and Silver Spring Metro Plaza (Attachment 2, aerial). Light industrial uses characterize the adjoining Ripley District, although a high-rise residential development was recently approved on Ripley Street.

Although the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) owns most of the property underlying the proposed Transit Center, Montgomery County has filed the Mandatory Referral application for the Transit Center as the authorized agency representative for WMATA. (The County will contribute portions of existing County rights-of-way to the proposed public and private developments, as noted below.) The area included within the Mandatory Referral application is approximately 216,905 square feet at ground level, with additional areas included within the Mandatory Referral application on upper and lower levels of the facility (Attachment 3, Mandatory Referral Area).

Facilities that are **included** within the scope of the Mandatory Referral include:

- 1) Metro Urban Park. The implementation of the proposed Transit Center project displaces the existing park and necessitates its replacement elsewhere on this publicly owned property. (Note: The agreement between WMATA and the M-NCPCC that created the existing park stated that the park layout could be reconfigured on site if *needed to accommodate a future air rights development on the Metro station site*.) The applicants plan to implement the interim park design described below, but they expect the final park design to be implemented as part of an Optional Method development over the Transit Center. If this occurs, the final park improvements may be proposed as part of the developer's public amenity package.
- 2) The adjoining streets—all of which have entrances to the Transit Center and are therefore a part of this Mandatory Referral—and a modification to the bus jughandle between Colesville Road and Wayne Avenue that will accommodate buses and other vehicles traveling east on Colesville Road. (In this report, Colesville Road is considered to run east and west.) Only conceptual designs have been provided for these streets.
- 3) Right-of-way for a future Bi-County Transitway (BCT) and Metropolitan Branch Trail (MBT) along the tracks, with one likely to be constructed over the other.
- 4) The existing cul-de-sac at the western end of Bonifant Street, which will be abandoned as a public street right-of-way and incorporated into the top deck of the transit facility.

- 5) Portions of the Transit Center that will be constructed above ground between Colesville Road and Bonifant Street (e.g., the upper decks of the facility) and below ground south of Bonifant Street (e.g., portions of the two bus decks and ancillary facilities).

Areas that have been **excluded** from the scope of this Mandatory Referral include:

- 1) The area within the proposed vehicular jughandles between Colesville Road and Wayne Avenue. (Note: Discovery Communications did a schematic design for a public amenity on this site as part of their regulatory approval process.)
- 2) The publicly owned property south of Bonifant Street (known as the “Ripley Triangle”) which was originally acquired for transit purposes. A future connection between Bonifant Street and Ripley Street will traverse this area. The Mandatory Referral applicants have indicated that they will dedicate the right-of-way for this master planned roadway but do not plan to construct it as part of the Transit Center project. The first and second levels of the bus facility and an emergency generator for the Transit Center will project into this area below grade, i.e., as subterranean structures. Development on this site at grade is not contemplated as part of the Transit Center project. The applicants have indicated a desire to have this public property (and various other areas within the WMATA site) counted toward the public use space requirement for the future application for joint development.
- 3) Extensive publicly owned property on each level of the Transit Center that is being reserved for private development pursuant to an agreement between the applicant(s) and a developer. The reservation of these areas for private development has significant impacts on the design of the public facility submitted for this Mandatory Referral review and vice versa. Areas reserved for private development are not available to provide bus bays or other transit uses. (The applicants are also expecting the proposed private development to implement the ultimate design for relocated Metro Urban Park; they propose to implement only an interim park design as part of the public facility.) At the same time, the design of the public facility also has major ramifications for any private joint development. At its most basic level, the public facility creates column spacing that impacts the feasibility and cost of the proposed private development.

Although the public and private developments on this site have been divided up by the applicant in order to separate the review processes, the public Transit Center facility and the proposed private development are very much intertwined. The public interest for the Transit Center and joint development is for a well-integrated project despite the separate review processes. Decisions made by the applicants as part of the Transit Center project could affect the feasibility and timing of the private development. These include the decisions to pass along some significant cost items to the private developer (e.g., the implementation of the final park design and the construction of the connection between Bonifant Street and Ripley Street).

Background

In FY94 Senator Paul Sarbanes secured \$1.5 million in Federal funds to begin planning and design for an intermodal transit facility at the Silver Spring Metro Station. \$7.6 million was then allocated by the State of Maryland in 1996 for additional planning and design.

The first phase of this project, relocation of the MARC station from Georgia Avenue to the Transit Station area, was reviewed by the Planning Board on March 28, 1996. The Planning Board supported Phase 1, but expressed serious reservations about the plans for Phase 2. Chairman Hussmann's April 2, 1996 letter to the Maryland Department of Transportation stated that the scheme for Phase 2 was unacceptable. The letter requested that an interdisciplinary team of experts be created to plan a state-of-the-art intermodal transit center that would be highly urban and take the possibility of joint development into account. Mr. Hussmann also noted that "improving the appearance and safety of pedestrian access to and on site is critical to the success of the project." Furthermore, he indicated that "all proposed transitways and bikeways connecting to the Transit Center must be taken into consideration in the final design."

Over the next several years, the applicants and the staff engaged in a series of meetings intended to develop a design for an intermodal transit station that would accommodate the desired functional program for the station as well as a variety of urban design objectives. A tiered concept evolved as the best way to accomplish these objectives. In June 1999, the staff provided guidance concerning the project in a letter to the Montgomery County DPWT, which was acting as the project manager on behalf of WMATA, the County and State:

"The Planning staff believes that the transportation component of this project shares prominence with the facility's contribution to the overall urban environment. As a **downtown transit center**, the facility must serve transit needs AND encourage downtown revitalization, the primary objective of the recently revised Sector Plan. A downtown-oriented facility should offer regional multi-modal transportation options, an activated retail edge, a strong building edge that strengthens the urban fabric, nearby parking and a compatible community scale, to a large group of potential users who live, work, shop and seek entertainment in the downtown." (June 2, 1999 letter from Glenn Kreger to DPWT).

The letter to DPWT stressed that "all sides of the Transit Center are important...The architectural massing should create edges that reinforce the urban fabric." Particular emphasis was placed on the need to design an appropriate building edge along Colesville Road, the side that is (and will continue to be) the major pedestrian link from the Metro station to downtown Silver Spring:

"Elevation Along Colesville Road - This is the most prominent street facade. It needs to provide a strong, built edge which reflects urban architectural forms, not a bus garage. The inclusion of a retail component in this project was specifically intended to activate this edge. The walk from the station to the center of downtown (Georgia Avenue and Colesville Road) is an uphill walk, and is

perceived to be long due to the lack of interest along the way. [Note: Discovery's frontage along Colesville Road does little to improve this situation even with a significant mural on the garage wall.] Our goal is to create a sidewalk frontage from the Metro Station to Wayne Avenue that is a pedestrian-friendly promenade activated with retail and other interesting features" (June 2, 1999 letter from Glenn Kreger to DPWT).

On June 17, 1999, the applicants briefed the Planning Board on the status of the design of the Transit Center. The Planning Board expressed concerns about the design of the project and the need to replace Metro Urban Park. The applicant was requested to address these concerns and return to the Planning Board for two Mandatory Referral reviews at subsequent stages of the design process.

The first such review occurred on January 6, 2000, when the Planning Board reviewed the applicant's design for a stand-alone Transit Center. The Planning Board provided substantial guidance to the applicant and requested a second Mandatory Referral at a more advanced stage of design to address a number of issues, including the layout of commercial space, public art, signage and pedestrian safety during construction of the project. Chairman Hussmann's letter to DPWT noted the following:

"We understand that there currently is no physical ability to support an air rights development over the proposed Transit Center and that the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) will complete its feasibility review for joint development on this property in June [2000]. It has taken a considerable effort to develop this design and achieve a consensus with all of the stakeholders; it would be unfortunate to have to begin the process all over again if a joint development decision is made. We also appreciate your efforts in resolving the park mitigation issue as quickly as possible" (January 14, 2000 letter from Chairman Hussmann to DPWT Director Al Genetti).

WMATA had been considering the feasibility of joint development at the Silver Spring Metro Station since the mid-1980's. The staff did some conceptual designs of joint development in 1990 and 1992 to encourage this consideration. WMATA decided to solicit joint development proposals for the Silver Spring Transit Center in 2000. In reviewing the draft joint development solicitation, the Department of Park and Planning advised WMATA that "the M-NCPPC will review any joint development proposal as part of our regulatory process including Project Plan, Preliminary Plan and Site Plan Review as outlined in the zoning ordinance. Please be advised that the Planning Board has the final review and approval regarding projects such as this." (January 31, 2000 letter from Charles Loehr to WMATA)

In December 2001 the applicants (Montgomery County DPWT and WMATA) and their joint development partner, Foulger Pratt, co-signed a letter to Director of Park and Planning Charles Loehr which stated that "the Silver Spring Transit Center/Joint Development Project as currently envisioned, is a single development unit. There simply is no better way to view the Project.... The Development Team is prepared to file and process the Project pursuant to a single optional method of development application and project plan."

Over the next three years, the project team and their consultants worked to develop an overall joint development plan for the Transit Center site. Members of the staff participated in many of these discussions. We provided guidance regarding the need to activate the Colesville Road edge of the project and our preference for removing the jughandles on Colesville Road (while still providing for left turns from Colesville Road). The staff provided technical expertise concerning Zoning Ordinance requirements and the regulatory process. We also initiated and secured Planning Board support and County Council approval of two Zoning Text Amendments: 1) ZTA 01-11 approved in 2002 allows hotels by right in the CBD zones rather than requiring special exceptions; and 2) Zoning Text Amendment 04-01 approved in April 2004 which facilitates joint development over the transit facility by allowing additional building height.

During this period, Montgomery County requested that the Planning Board agree to a reconfiguration of the Metro Urban Park on site, rather than the financial compensation that had been offered previously and accepted in concept by the Planning Board in December 1999 (with the amount to be determined). Charles Loehr advised DPWT in writing that "the M-NCPPC will not accept the remnants remaining from an Optional Method project as replacement parkland. The citizens of Silver Spring deserve to have useful parkland as compensation, particularly given the lack of parkland in the core of the CBD" (April 16, 2002 letter from Charles Loehr to DPWT Director Genetti). The vision for a high quality replacement park would be reiterated by the Planning Board in a March 19, 2004 letter from Planning Board Chairman Berlage to DPWT Director Genetti which stressed that the relocated park "will serve as one of the most visible public open spaces in the Silver Spring Central Business District." The Planning Board prescribed the key features that should be provided in the replacement park and the need to include in the project design team a nationally recognized landscape architect with extensive experience and expertise in designing urban open spaces.

In November 2004, the applicants decided to separate the public transit center facility and the private development component for regulatory purposes. Mandatory Referral and Project Plan applications were filed for the public and private components of the project, respectively. After additional materials were submitted in January 2005, the Mandatory Referral application for the public facility was determined to be sufficiently complete for this review to begin.

Zoning

The subject property is zoned CBD-2 (Attachment 4). The surrounding area is zoned CBD-2 and CBD-3.

Publicly owned or operated uses are permitted within the CBD-2 Zone. As noted above, recent Zoning Text Amendments initiated by the Department of Park and Planning have modified the CBD-2 Zone to permit hotels by right and allow up to 200' in maximum building height for properties (like the subject property) that are located within 800' feet of a Metro station.

Proposed Land Uses

The proposed project is a multilevel intermodal transit facility that will incorporate the following elements:

- 36-38 bus bays for WMATA and Ride-On buses (compared to 27 existing bus bays); approximately 2 of the bus bays will be available for intercity buses
- An intercity bus terminal with ticketing facilities
- A ticketing office for MARC trains
- A transit media store
- Space for WMATA police, rest rooms and a lounge for bus drivers between runs
- Relocated taxi spaces (unknown number of spaces)
- A relocated Kiss-and-Ride (unknown number of spaces)
- A new intersection on Colesville Road to provide bus access to the lower bus deck (subject to approval by the State Highway Administration)
- Pedestrian crosswalks providing access to the site, including at the new crossing of Colesville Road, and crosswalks within the bus loops
- New sidewalks along the edges of the site with streetscaping per the approved Silver Spring streetscape guidelines
- Bike trails and storage facilities, including:
 - An interim, at-grade segment of the Metropolitan Branch Trail from approximately Bonifant Street into the Transit Center, but not crossing Colesville Road;
 - A designated on-street bikeway on Bonifant Street connecting with the interim Metropolitan Branch Trail; and
 - A designated bike link along the Colesville Road frontage of the Transit Center which will require bicyclists to dismount and walk their bikes along the edge of the facility

Bicycle facilities that are *not* included in the current Transit Center project include the proposed bike station and the missing link in the existing Silver Spring Green Trail along Wayne Avenue between Second Avenue and Discovery, across the “jughandle” area. (The latter may be provided as part of the pending private development.)

- Space to accommodate a permanent Capital Crescent/Metropolitan Branch Trail and a future Bi-County Transitway along the tracks, with one to be located over the other
- A relocated Metro Urban Park

The transit facility has been redesigned to accommodate a private joint development that will be the subject of a separate Project Plan and Site Plan. Implementation of the final design for the replacement park may be undertaken by the private developer. Several publicly owned areas have been excluded from the Mandatory Referral application in order to reserve them for joint development (either the structures or required public use space). These include the frontage along Colesville Road (over the first and second levels of the bus terminal), along Wayne Avenue and Ramsey Avenue; the jughandle area on Colesville Road within the proposed vehicular jughandle; and the County-owned property south of Bonifant Street known as the “Ripley Triangle”(Attachment 5).

Although the applicant has excluded the Ripley Triangle from this Mandatory Referral application, there are several structures underneath this property that have been included in the Mandatory Referral. The two bus decks will extend underneath the Ripley Triangle. An emergency generator for the Transit Center in a 25' by 15' enclosure is also proposed to be located underneath the Ripley Triangle with an exhaust vent at grade. The exhaust vent would be located in the general area of the proposed connection between Bonifant Street and Ripley Street. In this location, the exhaust could negatively impact pedestrians walking along the future street, the character of the Ripley Triangle area as a future public open space and even the KSI project (which proposes to construct a pedestrian trail across the Ripley Triangle in their Project Plan). Even though the emergency generator will probably only be tested weekly, the proposed location of this equipment is problematic.

Design of the Structure

The proposed Transit Center will be a three-tiered facility with access off of Colesville Road to the first level (i.e., the 305' level); access off Ramsey Avenue to the second level (i.e., the 330' level); and access off of Bonifant Street to the third level (i.e., the 350' level). Attachments 6, 7 and 8 illustrate these levels in plan view. The transportation facilities on these three levels are organized around a central core containing vertical circulation elements (i.e., escalators, stairs and elevators) linking the three levels. This core and the open ends of the bus decks will provide significant natural ventilation for the transit facility. A canopy over the central core is proposed as part of the Transit Center project, although the applicant asserts that "it is premature to define with specificity what the canopy will look like." Only a schematic "canopy roof plan" has been provided by the applicant.

The first and second levels of the Transit Center will contain the bus loops for the WMATA, County and intercity buses. The top deck of the Transit Center will contain the Kiss and Ride, taxi stand, access to the MARC bridge and entrances (both vehicular drop-offs and loading) for the proposed private development adjoining the transit facility. Each level contains pedestrian and passenger waiting areas around the edge of the central core and along the periphery of the bus loops/Kiss and Ride/taxi areas; these are described in the application as on-site amenity areas even though they are largely functional in nature. Although this feature is apparently not yet funded, the proposed project calls for an Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) that would provide current information regarding transit services and operations. The current design does not identify a specific location for an ITS equipment room; the location and size for this feature should be described in more advanced designs for the facility.

Building elevations provided by the applicant (see Attachments) illustrate the general appearance of the Transit Center from Colesville Road, Wayne Avenue and Ramsey Avenue. The portion of the transit facility along Colesville Road will consist of a two-level bus terminal open to the street. Although this will facilitate ventilation, this design is inconsistent with previous guidance provided to the applicant(s) over many years regarding a desirable building edge along Colesville Road. At a minimum, the facility should be designed to conceal the bus decks. (Note: The application contains no information about the building materials for the Transit Center.)

If the pending joint development is approved through the Optional Method of Development, extensive private parking and office space may be located on top of the bus facility along Colesville Road. The current design for the Transit Center leaves only a very small area for future private development to provide street-level frontage along Colesville Road. (Even the main entrance/drop-off and the loading dock for the office building would be located on the top deck of the Transit Center rather than on Colesville Road.) The retail development along Colesville Road called for in previous designs for the Transit Center has been essentially deleted in order to maximize the area available for bus loops without impacting the desired pedestrian area along the street.

Although the staff has asked the applicants to reconsider this aspect of the design, this work will not be accomplished prior to the Planning Board's Mandatory Referral review of the Transit Center. The staff has also asked the applicant to modify the Transit Center design to provide a 30' clear building setback along Colesville Road. This dimension is needed to accommodate the pedestrian and bicycle areas and streetscaping required along this frontage and create the boulevard envisioned in the Sector Plan.

The green area in the left side of the Colesville Road elevation represents the relocation of Metro Urban Park. The County proposes to implement the park relocation in two phases with the ultimate design to be implemented as part of the private joint development on top of private parking.

A driveway from Ramsey Avenue will provide access to the second bus deck (i.e., the 330' level). Space may exist along this driveway to accommodate the bike station called for in the Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan. The bike station has not been included in this project due to budget concerns. The intercity bus terminal will also be located at this level along the Ramsey Avenue frontage.

At the 350' level, the existing cul-de-sac at the end of Bonifant Street will be abandoned to create room for the facilities on the top deck of the Transit Center. A MARC ticketing office is also proposed on this level. The applicant has agreed to explore alternative locations for this facility elsewhere within the Transit Center in order to remove it as a potential obstruction for pedestrian movement and possibly the Metropolitan Branch Trail. There will also be a connection from the top deck of the Transit Center to the MARC bridge over the tracks constructed during Phase 1 of this project.

Various air intakes and exhausts, stormwater facilities and two oil/water separators are located within the proposed Transit Center. Some of the proposed locations are problematic. Additional detail should be provided as part of a future review.

Project Phasing

The applicants and the staff hope that the public Transit Center facility and the private joint development will be constructed concurrently to maximize efficiency and minimize disruption. The applicants are preparing a plan for ensuring that transit operations continue during construction with minimal inconvenience for patrons. Pedestrian access to the Metrorail and MARC stations will be maintained during construction.

Although the Transit Center will not be constructed in phases, construction of the joint development could be delayed by market conditions or other factors. If this occurs, the applicants plan to construct an interim at-grade replacement park, as discussed later in this report. A permanent sidewalk with streetscape would be constructed along the Colesville Road frontage of the Transit Center, but only temporary sidewalks would be constructed along Wayne Avenue and Ramsey Avenue. The Mandatory Referral application also addresses the possibility that portions of the joint development could proceed at the same time as the Transit Center, while other portions are delayed.

Implementation of the Bi-County Transitway (BCT) and Metropolitan Branch Trail await final decisions regarding the BCT alignment. Space has been reserved for both along the tracks. The proposed project does not preclude a BCT alignment along Wayne Avenue, although this would have impacts on the joint development and the park.

Community Outreach

The applicant for the Transit Center project conducted a public meeting on November 4, 2004 to explain both the proposed public facility and associated private development. Meetings were also conducted with the Silver Spring Urban District Advisory Board, Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board, Transportation Management District Advisory Board and Greater Silver Spring Chamber of Commerce. A public hearing was also conducted on January 12, 2005 regarding the Environmental Assessment for the proposed Transit Center pursuant to Federal Transit Administration requirements.

On January 18, 2005, a letter was sent by the Community-Based Planning Division to more than fifty civic groups and interested individuals notifying them of the Mandatory Referral for the proposed Silver Spring Transit Center. No public comments were received prior to the completion of this staff report except for a letter from the Silver Spring Urban District Advisory Board endorsing the project (Attachment 16).

PROJECT ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Finding #1: The proposed project is consistent with some of the guidance in the February 2000 Silver Spring Central Business District Sector Plan and inconsistent with other guidance in the Plan.

The February 2000 *Approved and Adopted Silver Spring Central Business District Sector Plan* seeks to promote Silver Spring as a “transit oriented downtown.” Maximizing the investment in Silver Spring’s transit infrastructure is an important part of this goal. The Sector Plan notes that accessible transit is essential in managing travel demand and promoting land use patterns consistent with Smart Growth. It specifically recommends that regional and local transportation services be combined at the Transit Center, creating an inter-modal public transportation hub. According to the Sector Plan, “the Silver Spring Transit Center will serve as the focus for public transportation services in the CBD, linking regional rail, local rail, local bus, intercity bus, taxi, pedestrian and bicycle options” (p. 99).

At this time, the plans for the Transit Center cannot be specific regarding how related projects like the Bi-County Transitway and Metropolitan Branch Trail will be implemented. The Transit Center plans call for right-of-way to be dedicated along the railroad tracks for these facilities. The Transit Center plans do not preclude the potential alignments for the regional rail and bike facilities, including the alternative alignment along Wayne Avenue. The staff therefore finds that the proposed Transit Facility is consistent with the relevant master plan guidance promoting transit facilities in Silver Spring.

Another key theme in the Sector Plan is promoting Silver Spring as a “pedestrian-friendly downtown.” The Plan “encourages the development of active streets and sidewalks, busy with people walking to shop, commute, or for pleasure. . . In Silver Spring, direct pedestrian connections to an expanded and redesigned Transit Center will improve the pedestrian environment and contribute to economic revitalization” (p. 24).

The Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan recognizes that Georgia Avenue and Colesville Road are the two main thoroughfares within the CBD and recommends that they be considered as urban boulevards. Urban boulevards are intended to be landscaped with rows of trees, tree lined medians, and wide, specially paved sidewalks and crosswalks to create a pedestrian friendly environment. With regard to Colesville Road, the Sector Plan specifically recommends that the Transit Center be designed as a landmark building that will create a presence on Colesville Road, including street-level retail. “Including street-level convenience retail and a landscaped park will make transit a more convenient and attractive option for the CBD’s residents, employees and visitors, and will make the Transit Center a community crossroads and landmark” (p. 81).

The Sector Plan recommends a number of design objectives for the Transit Center:

“Design and build the Transit Center to:

- Integrate access to all modes of mass transit—Metrorail, MARC, buses, and a future transit line to Bethesda—in one facility on Colesville Road
- Improve pedestrian safety and aesthetics in and around the Center with wide, tree-lined paths and specially paved crosswalks
- *Include a street-front retail component facing a tree-lined Colesville Road promenade for the convenience of transit riders and other CBD users*
- Meet revitalization goals by incorporating a relocated park, pedestrian and bike connections, *and street-fronting retail* in a landmark building
- Include direct connections to the Silver Triangle [Discovery] site and to the Capital Crescent/Metropolitan Branch Trail
- Consolidate curb cuts at the triangular corner of Colesville Road and Wayne Avenue
- Minimize conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians, *ensuring pedestrians equal or greater prominence in the design*, and minimize conflicts between buses and vehicles on the Transit Center and Silver Triangle sites” (p. 81, emphasis added).

Many of these objectives are accomplished by the current plans for the Transit Center. It is a matter of judgment as to whether the structure will be the landmark, transit gateway to Silver Spring envisioned by the Sector Plan. The edge of the facility along Colesville Road is not the type of facility envisioned by the Sector Plan. Previous plans for the Transit Center showed a true building along Colesville Road with street activating retail at ground level (Attachment 10). The current plans show a two level open bus terminal along most of the Colesville Road frontage, with no retail.

Colesville Road is and will continue to be a major pedestrian route between the entrance to the Metro station and Georgia Avenue. The pedestrian experience along the edge of the Transit Center will be dominated by the noise and exhaust from buses rather than visually interesting shops and display windows. The staff therefore finds that the proposed Transit Center is inconsistent with the Sector Plan vision for Colesville Road. We recommend that the bus loops in the first level of the Transit Center be shortened or pulled back from Colesville Road to create sufficient room for the inclusion of street activating uses (e.g., retail) along the street. As noted in our June 1999 letter to DPWT (see above), the Transit Center should reflect a building edge along Colesville Road that fits into the urban fabric, not a bus garage.

Finding #2: The proposed project is consistent with the intent and standards of the CBD-2 Zone.

One of the intents of the CBD zones is “to promote the effective use of transit facilities in the central business district and pedestrian access thereto.” (Section 59-C-6.212) The proposed Silver Spring Transit Center is clearly consistent with this goal, although pedestrian access to and from the facility would be improved if the jughandles—and the resulting vehicular/pedestrian conflicts—are removed. A specific goal of the CBD-2 Zone is to “provide an incentive for the development of residential uses to meet the needs of those employed within the central business districts and those who will be able to use the district transit facilities to travel to and from places of employment.” (Section 59-C-6.213) Such development may occur if future development over the Transit Center is approved and constructed.

The tabulation below describes the consistency of the proposed Transit Center with the development standards in the CBD-2 Zone.

Description	Optional Method Required/ Permitted	Standard Method Required/ Permitted	Provided
Gross Site Area:	22,000		4.98 ac 216,905 sf
Dedications: BCT dedication Public Street ROW			22,120 sf 16,293 sf
Net Tract Area:			178,492 sf
Minimum Lot Area:	22,000 sf	N/A	216,905 sf
Maximum Building Coverage:	N/A	75 %	N/A %
Minimum Public Use Space: (Percent of Net Lot Area)	35,698 sf 20 %	17,849 sf 10 %	66,486 sf 37.25 %
Maximum Density of Development: Gross Floor Area Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	1,084,525 sf 5.0 FAR	650,715 sf 3.0 FAR	8,511 sf 0.04 FAR
Maximum Building Height:	200 ft *	60 ft	76 ft **
Parking Spaces Required: WMATA Station*** Total Spaces=	54		54

* Permitted for projects with residential uses within 800' of Metro

** Structure height measured from 305' elevation (at Colesville Road) to 381' (top of canopy)

*** Parking requirements are per WMATA

Finding #3: The proposed project is compatible with existing and proposed adjacent uses in terms of the nature and size, shape, scale, height and arrangement and design of structures. The relationship between the Transit Center structure and Colesville Road needs to be adjusted.

The proposed Transit Center facility is compatible with the existing and planned uses in the vicinity. The first-build proposal provides an opportunity to intensify and consolidate transit services in an appropriate location. The proposal will provide space to accommodate and further intensify development on-site in the future.

The height of the proposed facility along Colesville Road is approximately 50 feet. The heights of the surrounding buildings include the Lusk Building (+/- 60'), buildings along Ramsey Avenue (+/- 20-30'), Discovery Communications (+/- 140'), Silver Spring Metro Plaza, (+/- 125-200'), Silver Spring Metro Center (+/-120-200') and the Silver Spring Centre (+/- 170'). The height of the proposed facility is lower than most of the surrounding buildings and compatible in terms of height.

The placement of the structure is parallel to the existing Metrorail tracks but not parallel to Colesville Road. The existing buildings along Colesville Road have established a strong "street wall" and together with the sidewalk, have created a defined space or public realm. The proposed Transit Center structure has a skewed face not consistent with other buildings placed along Colesville Road. The columns supporting the 330' and 350' levels encroach into the sidewalk creating obstructions and limits the way other elements such as tree panels and the shared use path are organized within the public realm.

The staff recommends maintaining a structure (and future building) setback of 30 feet from the curblineline of Colesville Road to accommodate the main pedestrian flows and the unobstructed (column-free) placement of streetscape elements, shared-use path, and sidewalk. The Transit Center structure should not preclude the future multi-storied buildings from being parallel to Colesville Road and maintaining the established spatial definition on Colesville Road. The proposed Transit Center structure is not compatible with the surrounding uses in terms of the skewed placement of the structure in relation to Colesville Road as well as the structure's setback.

Finding #4: Circulation systems (vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle), landscaping and lighting, open spaces are adequate, safe and efficient, but some significant improvements are desirable. Certain aspects of these items cannot be evaluated based on the information available at this time (e.g., lighting and signage). Given the large and complex nature of the project and the limited information available at this time, a second Mandatory Referral is needed at a more advanced stage of project design.

At this point, significant additional work needs to be done regarding the public streets surrounding the Transit Center. Grade differences need to be resolved, particularly along Colesville Road. Medians and crosswalks need to be designed. Particular attention needs to be given to the proposed new intersection on Colesville Road at the 305' level of the Transit Center. (A signalized intersection is shown on the plans subject

to approval by the State Highway Administration.) The existing cul-de-sac at the western end of Bonifant Street will need to be abandoned. The plans also need to show the future dedications for all public rights-of-way (and the Bi-County Transitway along the tracks, should this alignment be selected).

Numerous operational measures will also be needed. Vehicles leaving the top level of the Transit Center should be discouraged from turning north on Ramsey Avenue. A new traffic signal will be needed at Wayne Avenue/Dixon Avenue to accommodate increased traffic coming from the upper level of the Transit Center and any traffic that will be traveling north on Dixon Avenue after KSI extends the street through Garage 5 to Ripley Street. Dixon Avenue will also need to be re-stripped to provide a different lane configuration.

New Roadway Connecting to the Ripley District

The Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan recommends a new roadway between Bonifant Street and Ripley Street—on property owned by Montgomery County—to provide improved connectivity between the Transit Center and the Ripley District. Existing Ripley Street is going to be improved by KSI along the frontage of their approved project, which adjoins the County-owned property on the east. Potential improvements to the rest of Ripley Street are reflected in DPWT's draft recommendations for the Ripley District, i.e., the build alternative presented to property owners on February 18, 2005.

A connection between Bonifant Street and Ripley Street would provide a southern exit from the Transit Center for buses and other vehicles. It is also a potential alignment for the Bi-County Transitway. The applicant asserts that they do not need this connection for the Transit Center to work in terms of circulation. The traffic study submitted to staff indicates a future queuing problem on Wayne Avenue at Georgia Avenue that may be alleviated if the southern access to the Transit Center (i.e., the connection from Bonifant Street to Ripley Street, with Ripley continuing east to Georgia Avenue) is implemented. In addition to dedicating the right-of-way, Montgomery County should program this connection so that it is constructed along with the Transit Center.

Bus Loops

The length of the bus loops impacts the ability of the project to provide street-activating uses along Colesville Road. It also results in a relatively short driveway for buses entering the lowest level from Colesville Road, which could result in operational problems. The bus loops should be reconfigured to address these issues as well as to address potential circulation conflicts within the Transit Center.

Parking for the Transit Center

The existing Silver Spring Metro Station includes 59 parking spaces located on-site: 3 for handicapped patrons; 5 labeled for driver attended waiting only; 39 metered; 4 reserved for flexcar use; 5 reserved for WMATA supervisors; and 3 motorcycle spaces. There are also 8 taxi spaces and 1 space for the MARC ticket agent in the Bonifant Street cul-de-sac that is to be abandoned as part of the Transit Center project.

The top deck of the Transit Center has been designated for the new taxi stand and Kiss and Ride. WMATA plans to replace the existing on-site parking spaces one for one, with the exception of the parking spaces currently provided for WMATA staff. The current plans depict only 50 spaces rather than the 54 spaces that would be needed after deducting the staff parking from the existing program. (Additional on-street parking may be possible after the applicants have developed detailed designs for the streets adjoining the Transit Center, including the master planned connection between Bonifant Street and Ripley Street after it is programmed and designed.) The applicants should delineate the spaces for the taxi stand and the Kiss and Ride as part of the second Mandatory Referral.

Pedestrian Paths within the Facility

The applicant has agreed to use pavement color and texture to emphasize pedestrian crosswalks within the Transit Center. The applicant has also agreed to assess the staff's concern that the space between the bus loop and the building/service core is too narrow to accommodate transit patrons comfortably and will encourage them to cross to the island in the middle of the bus bays, a less desirable path from operational and safety standpoints. This issue will be addressed at a second Mandatory Referral when the design for the project is more advanced.

Pedestrian Links

The Mandatory Referral submission proposes scored, colored concrete crosswalks at the proposed new intersection on Colesville Road. The crosswalk on the eastern side of the intersection should be eliminated and the median designed so as to eliminate conflicts between pedestrians and buses turning left from westbound Colesville Road into the Transit Center. The crosswalk and the median on the western side of the new intersection should be designed to eliminate conflicts with buses exiting the Transit Center and turning west on Colesville Road. This crosswalk should be reoriented to be consistent with the pedestrian "desire line" between the Transit Center and the escalators leading to the arcade at Silver Spring Metro Plaza. A good landing must be provided on the north side of Colesville Road that addresses the grade changes; satisfies ADA; and provides sufficient gathering area for pedestrians waiting to cross.

The applicant will also reconstruct the sidewalk under the south side of the Colesville Road railroad bridge in accordance with the Silver Spring streetscape standards. While this may improve access to the Transit Center from NOAA, no plans currently exist to open the western end of the Metrorail station to improve access to the station from NOAA. There are also no plans to construct the proposed bridge from Ripley Street to NOAA that was contemplated as part of the original NOAA approvals.

The dimensions and design treatments for crosswalks and pedestrian refuges (i.e., medians) on the surrounding streets have not yet been determined, although the staff has provided guidance concerning these matters to the project team. (The staff recommends that crosswalks across Colesville Road be at least 15' in width and the crosswalk across Wayne Avenue south of Colesville be at least 20' in width.) The location and design of sidewalks, crosswalks and medians should be addressed in detail in the materials to be submitted for the second Mandatory Referral. The staff has also recommended that the applicant seek to tighten the curb radii at street corners and remove the "bump out" in the curb at the new intersection on Colesville Road.

Streetscaping all public street frontages surrounding the Transit Center is critical to implementing the Sector Plan vision for the Core. The benefits of a high quality streetscape are well recognized in terms of enhancing public safety, promoting redevelopment, and activating public and private space. Continuity within the CBD requires that the applicants utilize the approved Silver Spring streetscape standards.

The streetscape design for all public streets does not conform to the *Silver Spring Streetscape Plan* technical manual (April 1992). The plans indicate different tree spacing, different paving patterns and introduce tree grates. The established streetscape treatment along Colesville Road and Wayne Avenue is Type "B" modified with a herringbone brick pattern and new Halophane teardrop lighting fixtures. Staff recommends that the applicant provide the Type "B" streetscape (modified) along Colesville Road and Wayne Avenue consistent with the treatment established by Discovery Communications. The applicants have agreed to provide metal halide fixtures for all lighting within the site for a white light and better light distribution. Staff further recommends Type "B" (standard) for Ramsey Avenue, Bonifant Street and Ripley Street extended. We also recommend that the brick paving required to satisfy the streetscape standards be carried across all driveway aprons on the site in flush condition to meet ADA Best Practices. With these modifications, the streetscape design will be considered adequate, safe and efficient.

The Mandatory Referral application notes that the applicants will streetscape the project frontage along Colesville Road. They assert that streetscaping along Wayne Avenue is the responsibility of the future joint development. If the private development does not occur, it should be considered the applicant's responsibility to ensure that streetscaping on all the public streets surrounding the Transit Center site is implemented in accordance with the *Silver Spring Streetscape* technical manual. The applicants concede that they will streetscape the Wayne Avenue frontage (and possibly the east side of Ramsey Avenue) "if there is extensive delay" in proceeding with the Optional Method project.

Pedestrian/Vehicular Conflicts

Jughandles are the equivalent of a partial cloverleaf in the heart of the downtown. The current design provides for a 19.8' wide vehicular jughandle in order to allow northbound traffic on Colesville Road to proceed west on Second Avenue. Currently, a left turn lane on northbound Colesville Road permits this movement. The applicant proposes to remove this left turn lane in order to maintain the median and create a new left turn lane for buses on southbound Colesville Road that need to turn left into the lower level of the bus terminal.

While the current design calls for a narrower jughandle than currently exists, the retention of the jughandle would maintain undesirable vehicle/pedestrian/bike conflicts at unsignalized locations. It would also increase the frequency of these conflicts since the use of the proposed jughandle would no longer be restricted to buses. Using a jughandle could also create circulation problems if drivers who are unfamiliar with the jughandle attempt to turn left illegally from eastbound Colesville Road onto Second Avenue, thereby blocking a through lane.

The applicants should continue to seek an alternative way to allow adequate vehicular circulation in the Core without the jughandles. Potential alternatives include:

1. Narrowing the travel lanes to 10' and relocating the retaining wall on the north side of Colesville Road by a few feet (in an area that will be reconstructed anyway) in order to have sufficient roadway width to retain the left turn lane on eastbound Colesville Road at Second Avenue; add a new left turn lane to enable buses that are traveling westbound on Colesville Road to turn into the Transit Center; provide the through lanes needed to maintain adequate traffic flow; and provide a median at least as wide as the existing median. (Note: The applicant has agreed to explore this alternative, but their assessment will not be available in time for Planning Board consideration of the Mandatory Referral application.)
2. Reconnect Ramsey Avenue as a public street between Wayne Avenue and Colesville Road with a new traffic signal at Colesville Road/Ramsey Avenue. The intersection of the proposed jughandle at Wayne Avenue would be eliminated because traffic would be channeled to an existing signalized intersection at Wayne Avenue/Ramsey Avenue. (Note: this alternative would significantly impact the existing driveway into Discovery's garage which would impact its feasibility and cost.)
3. Allow left turns from eastbound Colesville Road to Ramsey Avenue. Drivers could then choose to proceed along Ramsey to Cameron Street or to access northbound Georgia Avenue by turning right on Fidler Lane and then left on Georgia Avenue. If new traffic signals are warranted at the Colesville Road/Ramsey Avenue and Georgia Avenue/Fidler Lane intersections, pedestrian mobility in the CBD would be improved by providing signal-protected crossings at non-major intersections.
4. Create the left turn lane for buses entering the lower level of the Transit Center by eliminating one westbound through lane on Colesville Road between Wayne Avenue/Second Avenue and East-West Highway. West of East-West Highway, only two westbound travel lanes exist on Colesville Road since the curb lane is used for parking. The existing left turn lane on eastbound Colesville Road at Second Avenue could then be retained.

Bi-County Transitway/Purple Line

The Maryland Transit Administration is considering two alignments for the Bi-County Transitway in the vicinity of the proposed Silver Spring Transit Center. The alignment along the railroad tracks is consistent with the Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan and has been incorporated into the conceptual design for the Transit Center. The second alignment follows Second Avenue and Wayne Avenue through the CBD. This alignment would be less conducive to intermodal connectivity because a BCT station on Wayne Avenue would be located about 400' from the Metrorail and MARC platforms.

As noted above, the Mandatory Referral application indicates that sufficient area has been reserved along the railroad tracks to accommodate a potential alignment for the Bi-County Transitway (BCT) and the Metropolitan Branch Trail. The applicant asserts that these facilities will be provided in an easement associated with future joint development. The area must be provided for the BCT and MBT even if no private development occurs; hence, the need for a dedication.

At a conceptual level, the proposed Transit Center does not preclude a Wayne Avenue alignment for the BCT. Detailed plans and profiles are not yet available for the BCT alignment along Wayne Avenue. As the MTA study proceeds, DPWT must demonstrate that there are no insurmountable obstacles to connecting the BCT alignment along Wayne Avenue with the Transit Center.

Shared Use Paths (Bike Trails)

The design for the Transit Center addresses several of the shared use paths recommended in the Sector Plan (Attachment 11, CBD Bike Plan). Prior designs for the site have shown the future Capital Crescent/Metropolitan Branch Trail on an elevated structure through the site, connecting the at-grade Metropolitan Branch Trail south of the Transit Center with an elevated crossing of Colesville Road north of the Transit Center. The current Transit Center plans allocate space along the railroad tracks for the future Metropolitan Branch Trail and the BCT, but the design of the two facilities is not resolved pending a decision regarding the alignment for the BCT. Since a decision regarding the BCT alignment has yet to be made, the design of the Transit Center should establish a feasible plan and profile for constructing the interim trail through the site. This could be considered the master plan alignment until such time as an alternative alignment is selected for the BCT that requires a different plan/profile.

Until the final alignment for the BCT is selected, the Transit Center project should include a shared use path at-grade between the Transit Center (at Colesville Road) and the northern limits of the Metropolitan Branch Trail currently in DPWT facility planning (i.e. from the Transit Center south to Takoma Park). Construction of the Metropolitan Branch Trail south of the Transit Center—including the portion behind the new fire station—is considered to be outside the scope of the Transit Center project. (The Transit Center project also does not provide an elevated crossing of Colesville Road to the north, i.e., where the Metropolitan Branch Trail becomes the Capital Crescent Trail.)

The Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan also recommends an off-road path along Colesville Road, beginning at Wayne Avenue (where the Silver Spring Green Trail crosses Colesville Road) and proceeding west along Colesville Road to Rock Creek. The provision of a separated bike trail along the Transit Center's Colesville Road frontage could be problematic, due to the anticipated vehicular and pedestrian activity in this area. The staff recommends that the Transit Center design be modified to integrate bike activity and pedestrian activity rather than segregate them along the Colesville Road frontage. Rather than constructing an asphalt shared use path to the sidewalk, differentiated brick paving would be used to symbolize the bike connection along Colesville Road west of Wayne Avenue. (A separated off-street shared use path along Colesville Road would begin west of the railroad bridge.) Bicyclists should be encouraged through signage to walk their bikes along the Transit Center's frontage along Colesville Road.

The Transit Center project will also implement a painted, on-street bikeway along Bonifant Street connecting to the planned off-street path along Dixon Avenue. At the southern end of the Transit Center, bicyclists will be able to go from the Metropolitan Branch at grade to the Bonifant Street trail to the Dixon Avenue path. The Dixon Avenue path will intersect the Silver Spring Green Trail along Wayne Avenue. Within

the Transit Center, bicyclists on the Metropolitan Branch Trail will need to use elevators to get down to Colesville Road to access the trail leading south to Rock Creek. The applicants should consider using two-sided elevators to facilitate their use by bicyclists. The applicants should also explore alternative ways to facilitate more direct access between the Metropolitan Branch Trail and Colesville Road.

Bike Storage Facilities

As is the case with the new roadway connecting Bonifant Street and Ripley Street, the Transit Center project does not presently provide for construction of another important facility recommended in the CBD Sector Plan: the proposed bike station. (To the extent that neither master planned facility is proposed for implementation as part of the Transit Center, this may indicate that significant additional funding is needed.) The bike station would include a staffed retail space of approximately 2000 square feet incorporating bike storage and rental facilities, and perhaps emergency repair services. At a minimum, the proposed plans for the Transit Center need to identify a future location to implement the bike station as soon as funds can be obtained.

In addition to potential locations within the Transit Center, consideration could be given to constructing the bike station in the open space in the jughandle area if the vehicular jughandle is deleted. This would help to activate this area along Colesville Road. Constructing the bike station in this location would place it immediately adjacent to the Silver Spring Green Trail, as well as adjacent to the headquarters of Discovery Communications—the new sponsor of the United States Bicycle Racing Team. Although the jughandle area is publicly owned property, it was excluded from the Mandatory Referral by the applicants. Apparently, the applicants intend to allow their joint development partner to count this area as part of the public use space requirement for the private development. Construction of the bike station in the jughandle area could be part of the amenity package for the private development.

The existing Silver Spring Metro Station (north and south sides of Colesville Road) includes 30 bike lockers and bike rack space for 40 bikes. The applicant plans to replace the existing bike storage facilities (lockers and racks) at the Metro station in like kind and quantities. The staff recommends that the number of bike lockers and racks be increased to reflect future bike needs, particularly if DPWT chooses not to incorporate the recommended bike station into the design of the Transit Center.

Public Spaces

The design of the Transit Center contains a number of areas (e.g., entrances, passenger queuing areas, the central core area within the bus loops) that must be carefully designed. The designs for these spaces—including the canopy over the central core—should be evaluated at the second Mandatory Referral.

Metro Urban Park

Metro Urban Park exists due to a perpetual easement that WMATA granted to the M-NCPPC in 1977 to compensate for property owned by the M-NCPPC at Jesup Blair Park in South Silver Spring; WMATA needed the property at Jesup Blair Park in order to implement the Red Line of the Metrorail system. The easement agreement contemplated that Metro Urban Park might need to be reconfigured in the future to

accommodate joint development on the site. The existing park is currently proposed for reconfiguration on site to accommodate the design of the proposed Silver Spring Transit Center. The design of the Transit Center is related in part to the reservation of property for joint development.

Although the Mandatory Referral submission includes a concept plan which identifies the location and general shape for the replacement park, the area provided is slightly less than the area encompassed by the existing park easement as shown on the record plat (Attachment 12). It also overlaps with the preliminary design for the proposed private development on site and encompasses elevators designed to provide vertical circulation between levels of the transit facility; both aspects are unacceptable. The applicant must correct the design for the park so that these problems are addressed. When the Planning Board reviews the Project Plan for the proposed joint development, the relationship between the private development and the park must be evaluated carefully to ensure that the development's spillover effects into the park are acceptable.

The Planning Board and staff have previously provided the applicant with broad guidance concerning the expected quality of the replacement park. The park must be designed by a nationally recognized landscape architect with extensive experience and expertise in designing urban public spaces. The applicant has provided only an unimpressive design for an interim park and no design for the ultimate park. Site plan level drawings for both scenarios should be provided at the second Mandatory Referral for **approval** by the Planning Board. The M-NCPPC will not vacate the existing park easement until we are satisfied with the delineation and design for the replacement park.

In addition to approving the delineation and design for the replacement park, the Planning Board must also approve a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the applicants before the existing park easement is vacated. The MOU should address maintenance, security, liability, programming and phasing of the new park. The applicants propose to fund and implement an interim park design. They expect their joint development partner to implement the ultimate, two-tiered design for the replacement park. The ultimate park should be implemented along with the private development because the park is proposed to be located on structure (i.e., on top of a private garage). Any arrangement between the applicants and their partner regarding the cost of implementing the final park design is between those parties. **The Transit Center CIP project should cover the implementation of the final replacement park, even if the applicants anticipate a developer contribution to complete the park.**

Both the interim and final designs for the park should provide for an attractive and functional "transit gateway" to Silver Spring. The interim park design could be in place for some time if the private development is delayed by market conditions or other factors. The Mandatory Referral application includes only a schematic design for the interim park and an "open space/landscape plan" that describes the final park design in a very conceptual way. Neither plan measures up to the Planning Board's expectations for the park.

Prior to returning for the second Mandatory Referral, the applicant should provide a design for the interim park that reinforces and supports the image of the park as an important urban open space and a gateway to downtown Silver Spring. Detailed site plan-level drawings should be provided that incorporate the following design principles:

- Reorganize pedestrian walkways establishing clear, accessible routes to and from the Transit Center, eliminating redundant pathways and excessive pavement
- Take advantage of the existing grade change across the site to help create a special sense of place
- Use plant material and other physical elements to create spaces
- Include plant material of a size that will have an immediate impact. Shade trees planted within the park should be no smaller than 4 inches in caliper at the time of planting
- Ensure that all facades of structures bordering the park be designed as attractive edges to the park and that care is taken to screen views of parked and idling vehicles and shelter the park from noise and exhaust.

The concept for the ultimate park design also requires significant revisions. At the time of the second Mandatory Referral, the applicant should provide detailed site plan-level drawings that contain the following:

- A minimum of 0.8116 acres of land identifiable and appropriate for use as a public park. The park area shall be fully accessible and easily visible from the adjacent public sidewalks and streets. The designated park area shall not include elements such as elevators, foundation planting beds or the entrances to private buildings, or stormwater management facilities.
- Easily accessible, adequate gathering space for both large and small events, appropriately distributed and located on the site.
- High quality site amenities and details, including (but not limited to) significant water features, public art, extensive landscape planting, lighting, a variety of areas and options for seating.
- Utility service to support program activity.
- Carefully designed, attractive retaining walls, stairways and ramps that sensitively accommodate grade changes within the park.
- A minimum soil depth of at least 4 feet to accommodate the planting of large scale trees. All planters must be designed with adequate drainage and irrigation.

Since there is no absolute guarantee that the private development at the Transit Center will occur in the near future, implementation of the ultimate park should proceed after a reasonable period of time. The interim park design should not be left in place indefinitely. By the time construction begins on the Transit Center, the applicants should decide if they are going to implement the interim park design (for a limited period of time to be prescribed in the MOU) or abandon the expectation that joint development will occur in the near future and implement a design for the long term that is more in keeping with the Planning Board's vision for the new park. Either way, the applicants' responsibility is to ensure completion of the replacement park as part of the Transit Center project.

If the ultimate park is to be constructed as part of the private joint development, Project Plan and Site Plan reviews will provide additional opportunities to refine the design for the ultimate park. The Planning Board may wish to consider a commitment by the developer to install the ultimate park to be part of the developer's amenity package. Of course, the Planning Board may also require other amenities to support the private development as well as facilities to meet the recreation guidelines. The private development will also have to satisfy the Public Use Space requirement; improving parkland that is already public does not constitute the provision of new Public Use Space. The regulatory reviews for the joint development should also address potential spillovers between the private uses located at grade (e.g., cafes) and the park.

Finding #5: The proposed project is generally consistent with environmental guidelines and requirements.

Forest Conservation

A Natural Resources Inventory/Forest Stand Delineation (NRI/FSD) has been completed and approved for the subject property. The application includes a Preliminary Forest Conservation Plan (Attachment 13). Although the subject property is not forested, individual trees are growing under urban conditions. A line of significant and specimen size Willow Oaks are currently surviving in a lawn panel along the Ramsey Street right-of-way. They will be removed as part of the new development on site. Approximately 0.82 acres of tree cover is needed to fulfill afforestation requirements. Tree cover will be provided through the shade or canopy trees planted to implement the proposed streetscaping.

Noise

Noise from buses and other vehicles is largely unavoidable due to the nature of the proposed facility. Noise mitigation within the bus decks has not yet been addressed.

At the time of Site Plan approval for the private development, the developer must prepare a noise study indicating the noise level resulting from all combined noise sources, including Metrorail, traffic from the surrounding roads and buses on site. A maximum interior level of 45 dBA Ldn within residential buildings must be met by attenuating projected exterior noise levels through the use of acoustical treatment and mitigation measures. An acoustical engineer shall provide certification of this noise level to the staff for concurrence prior to the issuance of building permits.

Structure Design

The location of air intakes and exhausts for the proposed Transit Center could significantly impact the pedestrian environment within and adjoining the facility. A plan for mechanically ventilating the site-- identifying the specific locations for air intakes and exhausts-- should be provided as part of a second Mandatory Referral at a more advanced stage of design. The staff specifically recommends relocating the proposed emergency generator outside the master planned right-of-way for the future connection between Bonifant Street and Ripley Street. Although this generator will be tested only periodically, the exhaust for the below-grade generator will negatively affect the pedestrian environment at grade. The applicant has agreed to consider this matter.

DPWT will not apply for U.S. Green Building Council Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification for the Transit Center. The applicant provided a scorecard summary that estimates the number of points that the project would likely receive if certification was requested. DPWT estimates that 16 points (out of a possible 68 points) would likely be credited and 27 points would be possible. At least 26 points are needed for LEED certification. Most of the points in the estimated score for the Transit Center would be for indoor environmental air quality (within several small enclosed spaces), use of a sustainable site, and improved energy efficiency.

Stormwater Management

A Stormwater Management Concept Plan has been submitted, but is not approved for the subject property. The Department of Permitting Services (DPS) requires a concept plan for the entire development, including all future buildings. Stormwater management quantity and quality will be handled with underground storage tanks and filters. DPS encourages the use of porous paving, green roofs, and above ground bioretention features to reduce the size and increase the effectiveness of the underground facilities. Use of these facilities would result in an additional 3 LEED points or 19 points likely toward certification.

CONCLUSION

The staff recommends approval of the Forest Conservation Plan. In addition, the staff recommends that the Planning Board approve transmittal of the comments contained in this report to the Montgomery County Department of Public Works and Transportation and to WMATA.

GK:ha: j:\2005 staff reports\Team 1\Transit Center MR

Attachments:

1. Vicinity Map
2. Surrounding Uses
3. Scope of the Mandatory Referral Review
4. Existing Zoning
5. Relationship of Transit Center to the Ripley District
6. Plan View, 305' Level
7. Plan View, 330' Level
8. Plan View, 350' Level
9. Elevations
10. Illustration of a Prior Design
11. CBD Bikeway Network Plan
12. Record Plat for Existing Park
13. Memorandum from Environmental Planning Staff
(addressing Approval of Preliminary Forest Conservation Plan, etc.)
14. Memorandum from Development Review Division
15. Memorandum from Transportation Planning Staff
16. Letter from Urban District Advisory Board
17. Letter from KSI
18. Letter from the Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail
19. Letter from WABA and Others
20. Letter from Coalition for Metropolitan Branch Trail