



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

July 17, 2008

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

MCPB 07/24/08

VIA: Gwen Wright, Chief
Countywide Planning Division

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Transportation Planning

FROM: Tom Autrey, Supervisor (301)495-4533
Transportation Planning

SUBJECT: Master Plan Coordination with Maryland Transit Administration (MTA)
Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT), MARC Commuter Train Service, and Purple
Line

STAFF

RECOMMENDATION: Discussion item only.

OVERVIEW

This agenda item is intended to provide the Planning Board with a summary of activities underway to coordinate master plan development with MTA alternative analysis and environmental project planning, anticipated applications to the Federal Transit Administration for consideration of funding under its competitive "New Starts" program, and Council of Governments (COG) requirements related to updated land use forecasts.

This discussion is a follow-up to the March 27, 2008 agenda item regarding project planning study status. Mr. Rick Kiegel of the MTA staff has been invited to the meeting. Mr. Kiegel is the Project Manager for the CCT Alternative Analysis / Environmental Assessment (AA / EA) study and is also our staff contact for the White Flint MARC station location analysis. Staff is currently working on six active master plan amendments related to MTA project planning activities:

Gaithersburg West
Germantown
Kensington
Purple Line

Takoma Langley Crossroads¹ White Flint - Phase One

The Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) is preparing to release in late October the Alternative Analysis / Environmental Assessment (AA/EA) for the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) and in mid September the Draft Environmental Impact Statement / Alternative Analysis (DEIS/AA) for the Purple Line. Once these documents are released for public review there will be a 90 day review period followed by the selection of a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) for each project late this year or more likely, early in 2009. The state selects the LPA with input from the local representatives (including the Planning Board).

In addition to these major studies, the MTA released the MARC Growth and Investment Plan in September 2007.

The CCT is an integral part of the infrastructure of the Gaithersburg West and Germantown Master Plans, as is the Purple Line for the Takoma Langley Crossroads Sector Plan. Potential enhancements to the MARC system also need to be closely coordinated with the planning efforts in White Flint, Germantown, and Kensington.

Finally, the update of the land use forecasts used by the Council of Governments (COG) is underway. This update is referred to as "Round 7.2" and it begins next month with the submittal of control totals by the jurisdictions and ends in July 2009 when the forecasts (at a traffic zone level through 2040) are presented to the COG Board of Directors for adoption and eventual inclusion in the regional model used for traffic forecasting and air quality conformance.

A summary timeline of the key milestone dates is presented as Exhibit 1 for reference.

PRIOR BOARD ACTIONS AND/OR BRIEFING

Recent related briefings include the following:

May 8, 2008 – Zoning and Design Recommendations for the Germantown Master Plan.²
April 24, 2008 – Status Report on the White Flint Sector Plan – Phase I
March 27, 2008 – Briefing On Purple Line, CCT, and MARC Project Planning By MTA
February 28, 2008 – Status Report On Gaithersburg West Master Plan
May 17, 2007 – Approval of Purple Line Purpose and Outreach Strategy Report

GAITHERSBURG WEST MASTER PLAN

The February 28, 2008 Gaithersburg West Status Report includes a discussion about the vision for the Shady Grove Life Sciences Center and how that vision is complemented by a potential

¹ This plan is being developed within the context of a bi-county agreement between Montgomery County and Prince George's County with input from the City of Takoma Park.

² A public hearing on the Germantown Master Plan Staff Draft is scheduled for July 28, 2008 in Germantown.

change in the alignment of the CCT in this area.³ The potential CCT alignment change shown in Exhibit 2 would reroute the transitway to serve the Belward campus, the Public Service Training Academy (PSTA), and Life Sciences Center. The shift adds about one mile in length and includes the replacement of two master planned stations with three new potential stations.

The Process and Schedule

The Community Based Planning staff, as part of the Gaithersburg West Master Plan process, has been coordinating the work of a multi-disciplinary group of staff from the Planning Department, the County Department of Transportation, the MTA, and the Johns Hopkins University (JHU) Master Plan team to examine potential alternative routing for the CCT in the Shady Grove Life Sciences area. The group has conducted a preliminary examination of two alternative alignment options with respect to ridership, costs, and travel time, identified potential conceptual station locations, reviewed the potential alignments with other stakeholders in the area, completed a preliminary (concept level) analysis of potential roadway improvements that will be required, and examined the relationship between the master plan and MTA schedule for advancing the CCT (again, see Exhibit 1 for a summary of the schedules).

The schedule is an important focus of this agenda item. The MTA has agreed to examine an alternative alignment for the CCT in the Shady Grove Life Sciences area concurrent with its on-going work on the CCT AA/EA. In order to accomplish this schedule, the MTA is requesting that the County specify the alignment to be examined and provide an initial updated land use forecast (jobs and housing) by the beginning of August. The concurrent analysis is also important to the timely consideration of a Locally Preferred Alternative for the CCT and the eventual submittal of a New Starts application and request to enter preliminary engineering to the FTA.

The Planning Director has authorized the staff to begin work on providing the MTA with the updated land use forecast.⁴ The Planning Board is scheduled to receive an update on the Gaithersburg West Master Plan in September.

The Alternative Alignment

Two alternative alignment options (A and B) were considered for forwarding to the MTA by the planning team. These alternative alignment options (along with the current Master Plan alignment) are shown in Exhibit 2.⁵ The planning team has recommended that Alternative A be

³ See staff memo dated February 21, 2008, pages 5-6, at:
http://www.montgomeryplanningboard.org/agenda/2008/documents/20080228_GaithersburgWest.pdf

⁴ The updated land use forecasts at this stage will consist of preliminary estimates of jobs and housing for the master plans that are underway where there is a reasonable level of confidence that the estimates would not significantly differ from the ultimate adopted plan. Both the staff and the MTA view this process as on-going. Additional discussion is provided under 'The COG Forecasting Process'.

⁵ Also shown is an updated alignment through Crown Farm in the City of Gaithersburg. Not shown on this map but also to be considered by the MTA within the City of Gaithersburg is a shift of the Master Plan alignment to the southwest side of Great Seneca Highway in order to provide access to the Kentlands Market Square redevelopment before crossing Great Seneca Highway to Quince Orchard Road.

forwarded to the MTA for analysis concurrent with the CCT AA/EA. The basis for this recommendation includes the following:

- The recommended alignment option to be analyzed is more central to the potential development on the Public Service Training Academy site.
- The overall alignment is slightly shorter – thereby providing quicker travel times between stations that will help attract more potential riders.

However, Alternative A presents some challenges compared to Alternative B, including impacts to several hundred feet of an intermittent stream, wetlands, and environmental buffers. There will also be greater right-of-way requirements for Alternative A as it crosses Great Seneca Highway midway between existing roads.

Further concept level analysis of both alignments will continued to be examined by the planning team in order to identify the potential for any fatal flaws with either alignment. Issues associated with any new CCT alignment include coordination with several property owners and sensitive environmental resources and land uses. Our analyses will also include a judgment regarding the degree to which CCT implementation would either be accelerated or delayed by a realignment based on the timing of property redevelopment.

PURPLE LINE AND CCT REVIEW SCHEDULE

In 2007, the Planning Board approved a Purple Line Purpose and Outreach Strategy Report that included a schedule that assumed Planning Board and County Council review of the DEIS/AA after the completion of the 90 day public review period.⁶ To expedite the selection of a Locally Preferred Alternate, staff now proposes that the review schedule for both the Purple Line DEIS/AA and the CCT AA/EA should be completed in time for Council to consider the reports with Planning Board input prior to the close of the 90 day review period, as indicated in Exhibit 1.

WHITE FLINT SECTOR PLAN – PHASE ONE

One issue under consideration as part of the White Flint Sector Plan effort is the potential location of a MARC commuter station in the vicinity of Old Georgetown Road and the CSX right of way. Another location that is being suggested as an alternative to the Old Georgetown Road location is near Nicholson Court and the CSX right of way. A map that includes these two alternative locations, as well as the existing MARC stations in Rockville and Garrett Park is shown in Exhibit 3.

As previously noted, the MTA briefed the Planning Board on MARC project planning activities on March 27, 2008. The focus of that presentation was the MARC Growth and Investment Plan

⁶ See Purpose and Outreach Report, Exhibit 2, at: <http://www.mcparkandplanning.org/Transportation/projects/documents/FINALPURPOSEANDOUTREACHREPORT010808.pdf>

that was released in September 2007.⁷ The plan does not include a station in the White Flint area but does include an “Outer Montgomery Station”, additional tracks in Rockville and Silver Spring, a new parking garage at the Germantown Station and parking expansion at Metropolitan Grove, Rockville, and Kensington. The Planning Board Chairman noted at the March briefing that the MTA’s input on the feasibility of locating a station in the White Flint area is of higher priority than working on establishing a new station in an area of low density. The MTA staff will brief the Planning Board on the status of its examination of the feasibility of potentially locating a station at either of the two suggested locations in the White Flint area. The Planning Board is scheduled to discuss the preliminary staff recommendations for the White Flint Sector Plan on September 11.

COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS (COG) LAND USE FORECASTING

The COG is beginning the process that will eventually lead to an updated forecast (Round 7.2) of jobs and housing through the year 2040 – ten years beyond the current Round 7.1 forecast. The process is expected to be completed about a year from now. The timetable is shown in Exhibit 1. It is important to place the update of the land use forecast for the on-going Master Plans in the context of the COG and FTA processes.

The vision for the life science area and Germantown is dependent in part on the CCT. The teams that have been working on the Gaithersburg West Master Plan and the Germantown Master Plan believe it is imperative to get an early reading from the MTA as to the likely impact of proposed development and potential alignment changes on CCT ridership and costs – especially as it relates to the potential for securing FTA funding assistance. If at all possible, the impacts should be determined in time to be included in any initial application for funding under the FTA New Starts program, knowing that revisions to these initial estimates will be necessary after the Master Plans are adopted and the associated land use reflected in the Round 7.2 (and later) forecasts for inclusion in the regional model.

The updates to the land use forecast will consider all areas of the County, including White Flint, an active additional plan not along the CCT or Purple Line where there is a significant difference between what it is in the current plan and what is envisioned after the update is completed. As is the case with Germantown and Gaithersburg West, the forecast for the zones that comprise the White Flint Sector Plan will again be updated and included in the Round 7.2 forecast once the White Flint Sector Plan is adopted.

Staff does not plan at this point to promote significantly different land use forecasts for the traffic zones in the Takoma Langley Crossroads Sector Plan area. This bi-county plan is not anticipated to be forwarded to the Council or Executive until September 2009 at the earliest and the current activity is focused on the development of land use alternatives at a very conceptual level.

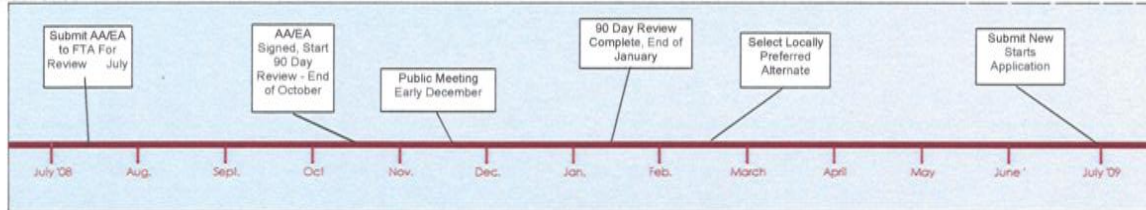
The development of the updated forecasts will, however, be performed comprehensively for all areas of the County.

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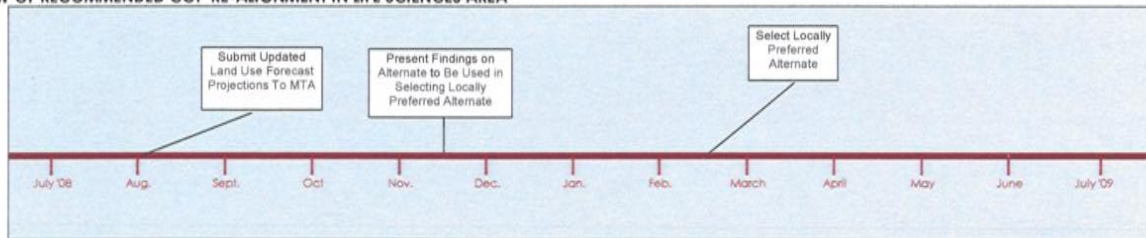
⁷ See <http://www.mtmaryland.com/services/marc/schedulesSystemMaps/marc%20plan%20full.pdf>

Exhibit 1 Schedule Comparison

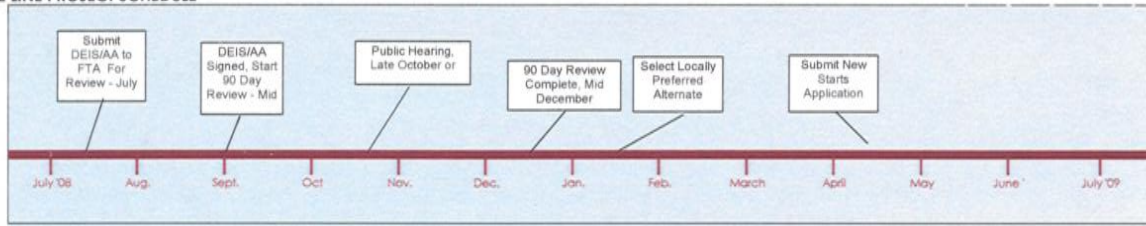
CCT PROJECT SCHEDULE



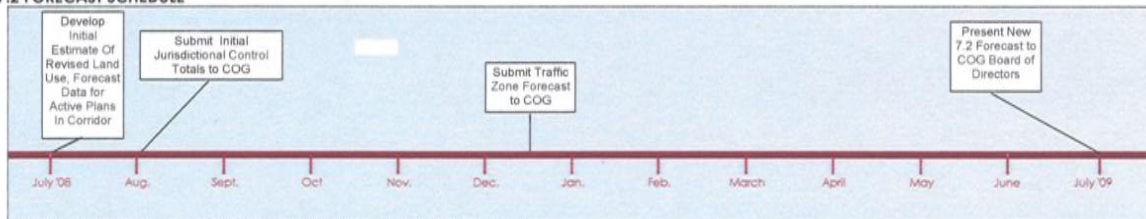
REVIEW OF RECOMMENDED CCT RE-ALIGNMENT IN LIFE SCIENCES AREA



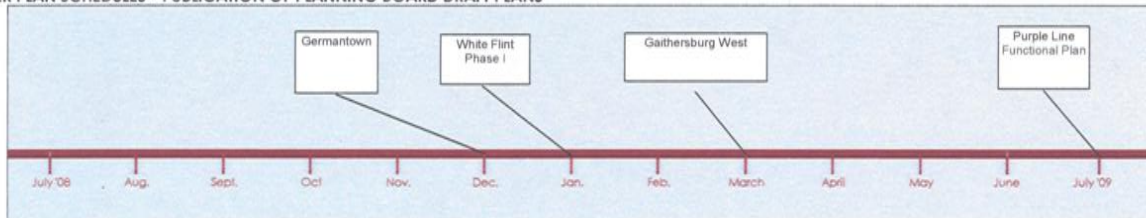
PURPLE LINE PROJECT SCHEDULE



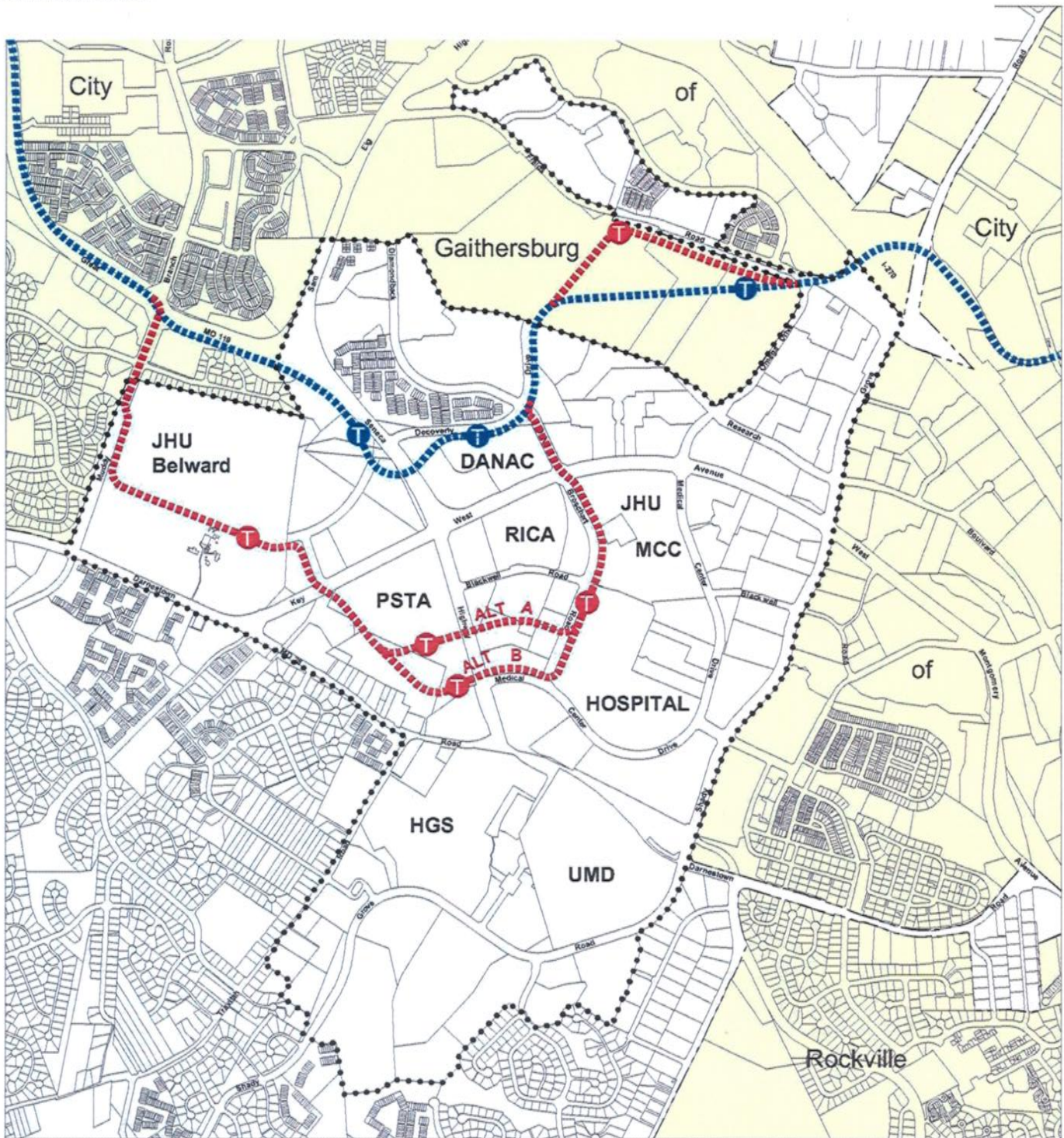
COG 7.2 FORECAST SCHEDULE



MASTER PLAN SCHEDULES - PUBLICATION OF PLANNING BOARD DRAFT PLANS



**EXHIBIT 2 - CONCEPT LEVEL ALTERNATE CCT
ALIGNMENT AND STATION LOCATIONS IN LIFE
SCIENCE AREA**

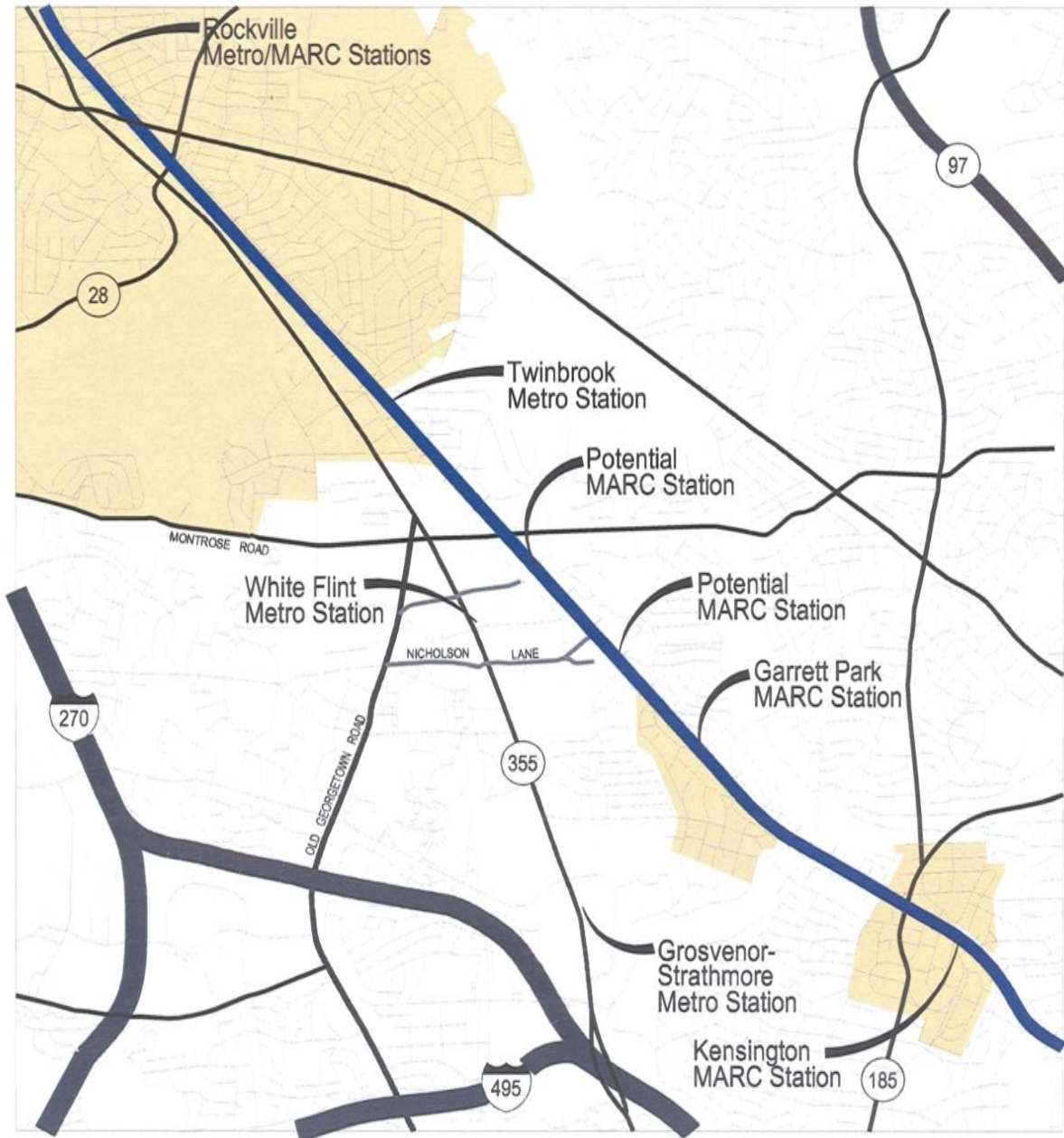


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- • • • Life Sciences Center Study Area
- City of Gaithersburg, City of Rockville
- Current Corridor Cities
Transitway and Stations
- Alternate Corridor Cities
Transitway and Stations



MARC and METRO in WHITE FLINT AREA



 Incorporated Areas

 CSX Rail Line



July 2008