









Corridor Cities Transitway Briefing

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Summary

The Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) has recently completed 15% preliminary engineering plans for the segment of the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) between the Shady Grove Metrorail Red Line station and the MARC station at Metropolitan Grove. MTA Project Manager Rick Kiegel will brief the Planning Board on the project status, schedule, outreach, and key issues as the project advances toward 30% design and the completion of the preliminary engineering phase. This brief staff report presents an update on outreach and major concept design issues of note.

Planning Board Action

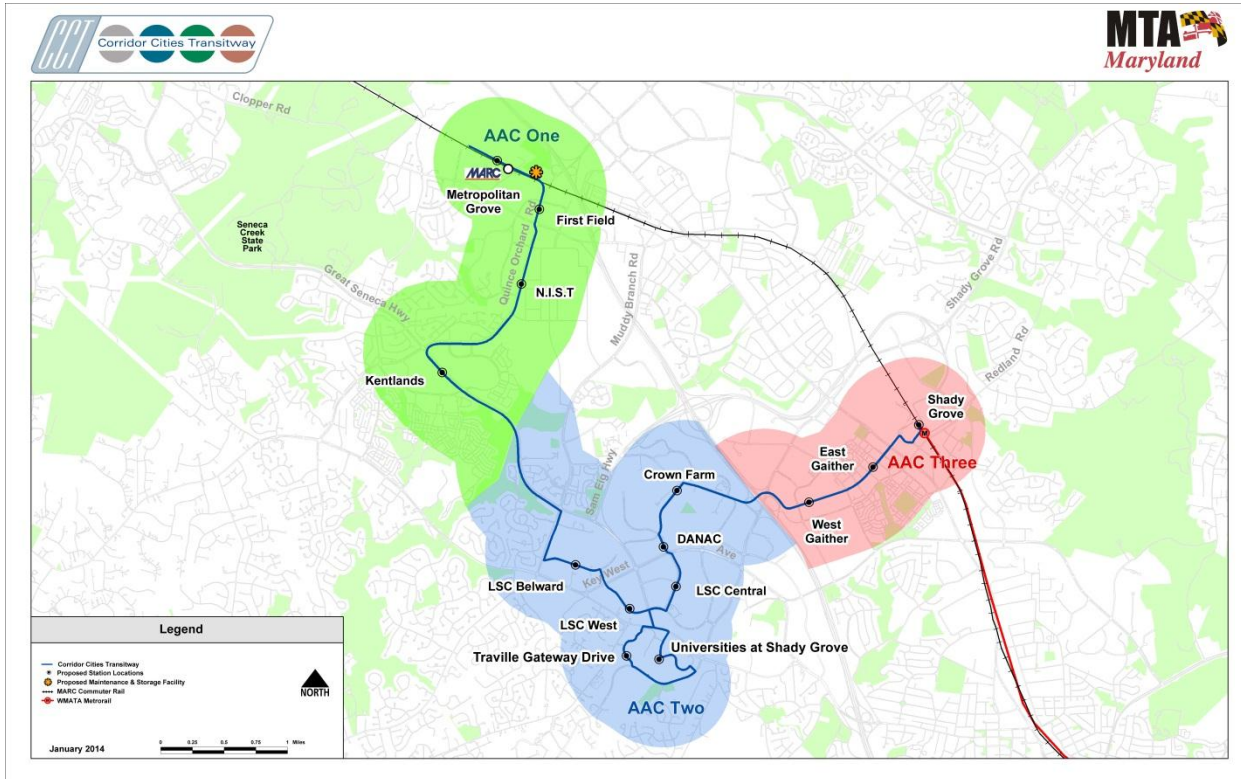
This is a briefing only. The objective is to provide the Planning Board with an update on the project and afford the Board an opportunity to ask questions of the MTA Project team and staff. The balance of this staff memo is intended to provide additional background and context for the Planning Board and public in advance of the MTA briefing and update, and to provide information on some of the broader issues moving forward. It is anticipated at this time that the CCT will come before the Planning Board for review as a Mandatory Referral about this time next year.

Outreach

The MTA has established three Area Advisory Committees – or AAC's - for this phase of the CCT project planning. The kick-off meeting was held in April of this year. Each of the committees has since met five times. The meetings to date have focused upon various aspects of the projects – operations profile, typical sections (transit lane and travel lanes widths, etc.), engineering constraints, traffic, urban design, stormwater management, station types, etc. The topics covered at each series of meetings are essentially the same but the content and discussion differ in the three different areas along the corridor.

Each Committee has 15-20 members and is associated with a specific segment of the CCT (see Figure 1). Staff has primarily attended the AAC Two meetings as the other committee segments are largely within the Cities of Rockville (AAC Three) and Gaithersburg (AAC One).

Figure 1 – CCT Area Advisory Committees



Source: MTA

The MTA maintains a web site devoted to CCT project planning at: www.mta.maryland.gov/CCT. In addition to the web site and the AAC framework described above, the MTA also meets with civic associations and other interested organizations along the corridor on as needed or requested basis.

It should be noted that the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) has introduced a similar approach for outreach as it advances planning work for four transitway corridors (Georgia Avenue, MD 355, Veirs Mill Road, and US 29) included in the Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan.

CCT and Staging in the Great Seneca Science Corridor (GSSC) Master Plan (2010)

The CCT is a central element of the staging adopted in the GSSC Master Plan. More specifically, the Plan notes that before Stage 2 is opened the following must occur:

“Fully fund construction of the CCT, including the proposed alignment through the Life Science Center (LSC), from the Shady Grove Metro Station to Metropolitan Grove within the first six years of the County’s (Capital Improvement Program) CIP or the State (Consolidated Transportation Program) CTP.”

In addition and related to the CCT, the plan also calls for the following before proceeding to Stage 2:

- Fully fund relocation of the Public Safety Training Academy from LSC West to new site;
- Fund the LSC Loop Trail in the County’s six-year CIP and/or through developer contributions as part of plan approvals; and
- Attain an 18 percent non-auto driver mode share (NADMS). The most recent survey by Commuter Services estimates the current NADMS at 15.6 percent. NADMS in this case is defined as the percent of work trips in the LSC made via transit, bike, walking, or carpooling during peak travel periods on a typical weekday;

A biennial monitoring program and a GGSC Implementation Advisory Committee were also established to oversee progress toward implementation of the GSSC Master Plan. The Planning Board submitted the first biennial monitoring report in July, 2013 noting in part that there was no more capacity for commercial development under Stage 1 of the GSSC Master Plan. Other key findings of the monitoring report related to the CCT and/or the staging issue include the following:

- The LSC is within the R&D Village Policy Area. The 2022 Transportation Policy Area Review (TPAR) assessment for R&D Village projects overall adequate roadway adequacy. As for individual roadways, Sam Eig Highway is noted as falling below acceptable Level of Service (LOS) if improvements are not programmed;
- Funds have been allocated in the State CTP for CCT planning and engineering but not construction;
- Funds for the purchase and design of the new Multi-Agency Service Park along Snouffer School Road have been included in the County CIP. Funds have also been included for the relocation of the PSTA to the new site and the target for opening of the new site is 2016;
- The LSC Loop has not been funded for construction. Funds to develop concept plans have been obtained through the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) / Transportation Planning Board’s Transportation Land Use Connection (TLC) program and are being supplemented by County CIP funds for facility planning. Because portions of the LSC Loop coincide with the shared use path that is to accompany the CCT, planning for these two projects is being closely coordinated.

The funding plan for the construction of the CCT is to be refined by the MTA as the plan progresses but the project planning process remains consistent with that used for the Federal Transit Administration’s New Starts Program - similar to the Purple Line in Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties and the Red Line in Baltimore.

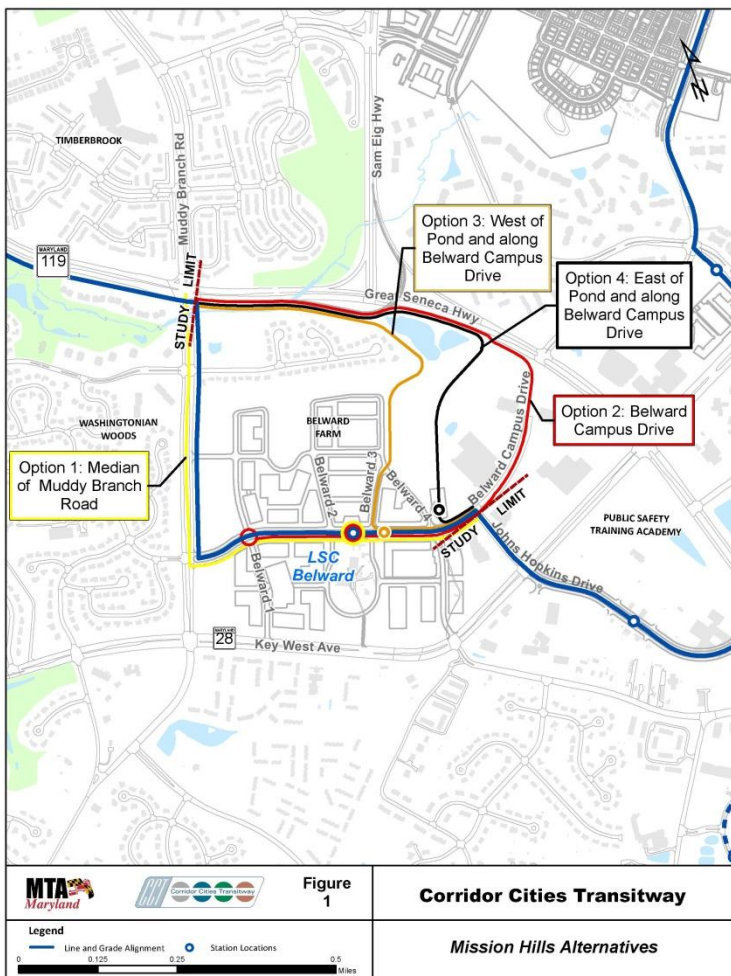
The MTA provided an update on the CCT for the GGSC Implementation Advisory Committee at its last meeting on October 14, 2014.

In summary, the CCT is one of two major staging thresholds (the other being the NADMS target) that need to be met before advancing to Stage 2.

Muddy Branch Road

The segment of the CCT along Muddy Branch Road is a focus of concern for a number of stakeholders. Prior MTA plans had called for the CCT to run along the east side of Muddy Branch Road. This alignment however would most likely result in the acquisition and demolition of one single family residence in the Mission Hills neighborhood, complicate access to and from both Mission Drive and Belward Campus Drive intersection with Muddy Branch Road, and limit the number of northbound right turn movements from Muddy Branch Road onto Great Seneca Highway. In response to community concerns, the MTA examined four alternative alignments (see Figure 2) in their Mission Hills Alternatives Analysis Report (released in May 2014) in addition to the original “Line and Grade” option that called for the CCT on the east side of Muddy Branch Road. Based upon the analysis the MTA has revised its plans to now show the CCT in the existing median of Muddy Branch Road from Belward Campus Drive to Great Seneca Highway (Option 1).

Figure 2 – Alignment Options from Mission Hills Alternatives Analysis Report (May 2014)



The Master Plan guidance on the CCT alignment along Muddy Branch Road shows the alignment along east side of Muddy Branch Road then transitioning into the median prior to the intersection with Great Seneca Highway (see Figure 3)

Master Plan Guidance – Figure 3

map 20 LSC Belward: Urban Form



To the north and immediately adjacent to Belward is the Mission Hills neighborhood, a subdivision of 52 single-family homes in the City of Gaithersburg. Across Muddy Branch Road to the west are the Washington Woods and Westleigh neighborhoods, also in the City of Gaithersburg. South of Darnestown Road are the North Potomac neighborhoods, in the County's 2002 Potomac Subregion Master Plan.

The Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) has indicated it opposes the MTA proposal to locate the CCT in the existing median of Muddy Branch Road with four general purpose travel lanes. One reason for the stated opposition is that MCDOT would like to retain the ability to add two travel lanes in the median as Muddy Branch Road is master planned to eventually be six lanes. If MTA constructs the CCT in the current median of Muddy Branch Road, the County would then likely be responsible for acquiring and demolishing the residence closest to Muddy Branch Road and Mission Drive if Muddy Branch Road is widened to six lanes in the future.

In addition, some members of the surrounding community remain in favor of an alternative alignment altogether – Option 4 from the Mission Hills study (see Figure 2) that would avoid Muddy Branch Road and result in a more north-south crossing of Belward Farm.

MCDOT's preferred alternative as conveyed to staff is the following:

"At this time MCDOT's preferred alternative is the line and grade alternative that would allow additional general purpose lanes to be added to the median of Muddy Branch Road. However, MCDOT does not oppose Option 4 from the Mission Hills study. If MTA continues to propose construction of the CCT in the median of Muddy Branch, MCDOT has indicated that they would like this to be done in a way that retains sufficient right of way on either side of Muddy Branch for the future addition of two travel lanes."

Staff Approach Going Forward

Staff is now reviewing the 15% concept plan drawings provided by MTA and will be examining relevant issues all along the alignment with a focus on those that fall under County jurisdiction. We expect to return to the Planning Board on multiple occasions prior to the Mandatory Referral next year seeking Board response and guidance related to specific issues and staff recommendations. We expect for instance to be developing a recommendation on the placement of the CCT along Muddy Branch Road. We will be meeting with MTA, MCDOT, and attending AAC and other community group meetings to get a comprehensive understanding of stakeholder concerns. In many respects, this process is not unlike the process we have recently completed for the Purple Line. A critical source of information and advice through the process will be the Planning Board's GSSC Implementation Advisory Committee.

Our on-going review of stakeholder concerns and our preliminary review of the MTA plans recently submitted reinforces the prevalence of a number of specific issues discussed during the development and adoption of the GSSC plan:

- The plan vision is for a more walkable and bikeable Life Science Center – this has implications for roadway and lane widths as well as the design (and cost) of how stormwater is managed, among other things;
- The community is apprehensive about the planned changes to the area and is particularly concerned that stakeholder agencies have not yet examined all of the potential options and perhaps as important, have not related the options under consideration to one another (i.e., four vs. six lanes on Muddy Branch Road, the planned interchange at Muddy Branch Road and Great Seneca Highway, and the CCT);
- There are master planned identified projects (road widening, potential interchange construction, CCT "2nd phase", etc.) that will eventually need to be reconciled from a compatibility, design, and cost standpoint with the overall goal of advancing the CCT and moving toward achieving the ultimate vision of the GSSC plan.

Finally, it should be noted that the staff has redoubled its efforts at ensuring coordination with local plan development applications along the corridor. This becomes more critical as the CCT plans develop with more specificity and assumptions as to available (and desired) space.