

October 31, 2006

MEMORANDUM

To: Montgomery County Planning Board

Via: Gwen Wright, Acting Chief *GW*
Countywide Planning Division

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Transportation Planning

From: Tom Autrey, Supervisor *TA*
Transportation Planning

Discussion: Update On Bi-County Transitway (Purple Line) Study

Purpose of This Update

The primary purpose of this update is to brief the Planning Board on the status of the Bi-County Transitway (BCT) Study (in particular the project schedule), and discuss steps being taken to protect the right of way in advance of the selection of a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) and the adoption of a Functional Master Plan for the BCT alignment. The briefing is in response to a request by Commissioner Wellington during the Board's discussion on September 28th of development activity in the Silver Spring Central Business District (CBD). It is anticipated that the Maryland Mass Transit Administration (MTA) project team will be available at the November 9, 2006 Planning Board meeting to answer questions after a brief introduction by staff.

This Memorandum has the following major sections:

- Study Status and Schedule
- Development Activity and Protection of Right of Way
- Other BCT Issues
- Recent Board BCT Review
- Alternatives Under Consideration
- Public Process to Date

Study Status and Schedule

The current project schedule as published on the project web site includes the following upcoming major milestones:

- Winter 2006/2007 – Completion of the Alternative Analysis/Draft Environmental Impact Statement (AA/DEIS)
- Spring 2007 – Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) Selection
- Spring 2007 – Fall 2008 – Preliminary Engineering / Final Environmental Impact Statement (PE/FEIS)
- Fall 2008 – Record of Decision
- Spring 2011 – Complete Final Design
- Spring 2013 - Start of Operations

Both the Planning Board and County Council would be providing input on the Locally Preferred Alternative in advance of the selection of the Locally Preferred Alternative by the State. The input would be provided after hearings and staff review of the Alternative Analysis and Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

As noted at the October 26, 2006 Planning Board meeting, the recently issued Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) Draft Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP) noted that funding for the BCT Study would be required as late as FY 2010 (July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2010), approximately one to two years later than the current Fall 2008 target date. Staff has since received an email from the MDOT Director of Planning stating that the draft CTP is incorrect and that the study schedule has not changed. The November 9, 2006 briefing will provide an opportunity to discuss the project schedule in more detail with the MTA project team.

In the next major steps of the process Department staff will review the upcoming Alternative Analysis/Draft Environmental Impact Statement and provide a summary analysis for the Planning Board to consider after public input is received and prior to the time that the Planning Board and Council would be expected to provide input on the Locally Preferred Alternative. Under the current project schedule, this additional public input and summary analysis in advance of the selection of a Locally Preferred alternative would likely take place in the February 2007 to May 2007 timeframe.

Staff would also prepare for the Master Plan amendment process by developing the plan framework and other documentation. This would allow the amendment process to begin promptly after the Locally Preferred Alternative is announced.

Properties could begin to be protected as part of this more formal Master Plan amendment process.

Development Activity and Protection of Right of Way East Of The Silver Spring Transit Center (SSTC)

Overview

The Georgetown Branch Master Plan Amendment was approved and adopted in January 1990 and provides the policy basis for the alignment of the Bi-County Transitway between Bethesda and Silver Spring. There is no Master Plan guidance for the alignment east of the Silver Spring Metro Station. The Planning Department's FY 07 and draft FY 08 Work Programs contain an element that provides for staff review and analysis of technical work, participation in the project public involvement process and initiation of a Functional Master Plan for the alignment from Bethesda to the Takoma Langley Park Crossroads area. The proposed FY 08 work program also includes the initiation of a Takoma/Langley Transit Station Impact Area Sector Plan.

However, since there is no master planned alignment for the BCT east of the SSTC, we cannot put properties proposed for development in mandatory reservation. Development proposals for locations east of the SSTC that are within or near one or more of the identified BCT potential alignments are forwarded to the MTA project team for review and comment. In a number of instances, the MTA project team has met with the applicant so both parties have a detailed understanding of the BCT requirements known at the time as well as the options (both alignment and mode) under consideration. Comments from the MTA are forwarded to the Development Review Division and incorporated in the staff reports.

A brief review of specific examples of relatively recent development proposals may be worthwhile as a means of describing the current effort underway at protecting the right of way.

Fenton Village

Three projects (8215 Fenton Street Site Plan, Easley Subdivision (Adele) Project Plan and the Public Parking Lot Three Redevelopment Request For Proposal (RFP)) in this area east of the SSTC came under consideration as the decision (in mid 2005) that MTA would consider a third alignment along the easement between Thayer Avenue and Silver Spring Avenue was made. The MTA project team reviewed the alignment in the context of the three projects and determined the Lot 3 redevelopment could not be accommodated in combination with the two prior approvals. Staff wrote the Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT) recommending that activity related to the Lot 3 redevelopment be postponed until the selection of the LPA. They agreed and deferred the RFP for

the parking lot. Subsequently, an application (Studio Plaza) was filed that included parcels in close proximity to Lot 3.

Long Branch Medical Building

The MTA reviewed the Long Branch Medical Building application for potential impacts upon two different potential alignments at the intersection of Flower Avenue and Arliss Street. The applicant's plans were modified to insure compatibility with both alignments under consideration.

Ripley South

A Project Plan has been submitted to develop parcels adjacent to the CSX right of way on the south side of Ripley Street. The applicant is working with the MTA project team to address potential conflicts with the BCT alignment in this area.

Other Potential Applicants

Two potential applicants (Falklands North; and Lee Development/Apple Avenue) are currently working with the MTA project team to identify potential issues related to the alternative alignments.

Summary

It is staff's intent at this point to continue this approach to coordination, review, and protection of alternative alignments east of the SSTC until a LPA is selected. As noted above, our FY 2007 and draft FY 2008 work programs include the development of a Functional Master Plan for the BCT alignment. Work on the Master Plan is expected to begin in the latter half of FY 2007 (January 2007 to June 2007) but likely would not be available in initial Draft Form for review until Fall 2007, assuming the selection of the LPA is made in Spring 2007.

Other BCT Issues

In staff's opinion, the MTA Project team has done an outstanding job of soliciting input from stakeholders (see description of public input process below) along the corridor. The process has resulted in the identification of a number of issues. A representative *sample* of major concerns as expressed by representatives of some Focus Groups in the County is listed below.

Woodmont Avenue

Concern exists about the potential impact upon on-street parking and traffic flow in this largely commercial area between the Bethesda Metro Station and Jones Bridge Road.

Jones Bridge Road

Residents along Jones Bridge Road continue to be opposed to the alignment that has the BCT operating as Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) over Jones Bridge Road. There is no alternative that calls for Light Rail Transit (LRT) operating over Jones Bridge Road.

Lyttonsville

Residents in Lyttonsville are concerned about the potential location of an Operation and Maintenance facility in this area – south of Brookville Road and west of Lyttonsville Place, as well as noise and other issues.

Connection With The Silver Spring Transit Center (SSTC)

Capital Crescent Trail supporters and other advocates of good bike and pedestrian access are concerned about the connectivity with the SSTC and the other trails in the Silver Spring CBD.

Alternative alignments include a surface alignment along Wayne Avenue, crossing Colesville Road at grade and providing less direct access to the public component of the SSTC joint development project.

East Silver Spring

Concerns expressed in East Silver Spring include noise, impact upon neighborhood character, conflict with vehicular traffic, school safety issues, impacts upon Sligo Creek and adjacent parkland, and residential and small business displacements, among other issues.

Most Recent Planning Board Review Of The BCT Study

Staff provided the Planning Board an update on the Study in a memo of June 29, 2005. The memo noted in part:

“Back on September 30, 2004, the Board discussed the Study and recommended alternatives that that should be carried forward to detailed analysis. At that point, MTA was seriously considering only two alternative alignments (Wayne Avenue and Sligo Avenue) for the segment east of the Silver Spring Central Business District. After discussion, the Board recommended continuing the analysis of both alignments in order to better assess their respective costs and benefits. The County Council agreed, and subsequently sent a letter to the Maryland Department of Transportation echoing that view. Both the Planning Board and County

Council reinforces their preference for light rail and for tunneling, where needed, to avoid major community and environmental impacts.”¹

The same June 29, 2005 memo describes a third (new at the time) alternative alignment east of the Silver Spring CBD – a tunnel alignment along an existing underground easement between Silver Spring and Thayer Avenues that would run at surface along Thayer Avenue in the area east of the easement. The memo notes that the defined alternatives for East Silver Spring as well as other alignments both west of Silver Spring and further east toward Long Branch will be included in an Alternative Analysis / Draft Environmental Impact Statement (AA/DEIS) leading to the selection of a LPA anticipated in the spring of 2006. The most recent published study schedule, however, shows the completion of the AA/DEIS in the winter of 2006/2007 and selection of a LPA in the spring of 2007. The LPA consists of both the preferred mode (Light Rail or Bus Rapid Transit) and a preferred alignment. The revised time frame for the major study milestones is due in part to the challenges posed by the alternative alignments along the CSX right of way and through East Silver Spring, and the extensive public input process.

Alternatives Under Consideration

The MTA project team has identified eight specific alternatives for further consideration in the alternatives analysis. Two of the eight alternatives, “No-Build” and a Transportation System Management (TSM) alternative, are required to be reviewed under Federal Transit Administration (FTA) guidelines. The remaining six alternatives are “build alternatives” that include various combinations of the previously reviewed alignments and are stratified to cover a range of capital investment, right of way exclusiveness, and operating efficiency. In theory, the alternative analysis to follow will result in a fairly evenly distributed range of results for environmental impacts, travel time savings, capital and operating costs, and ridership, among other variables.

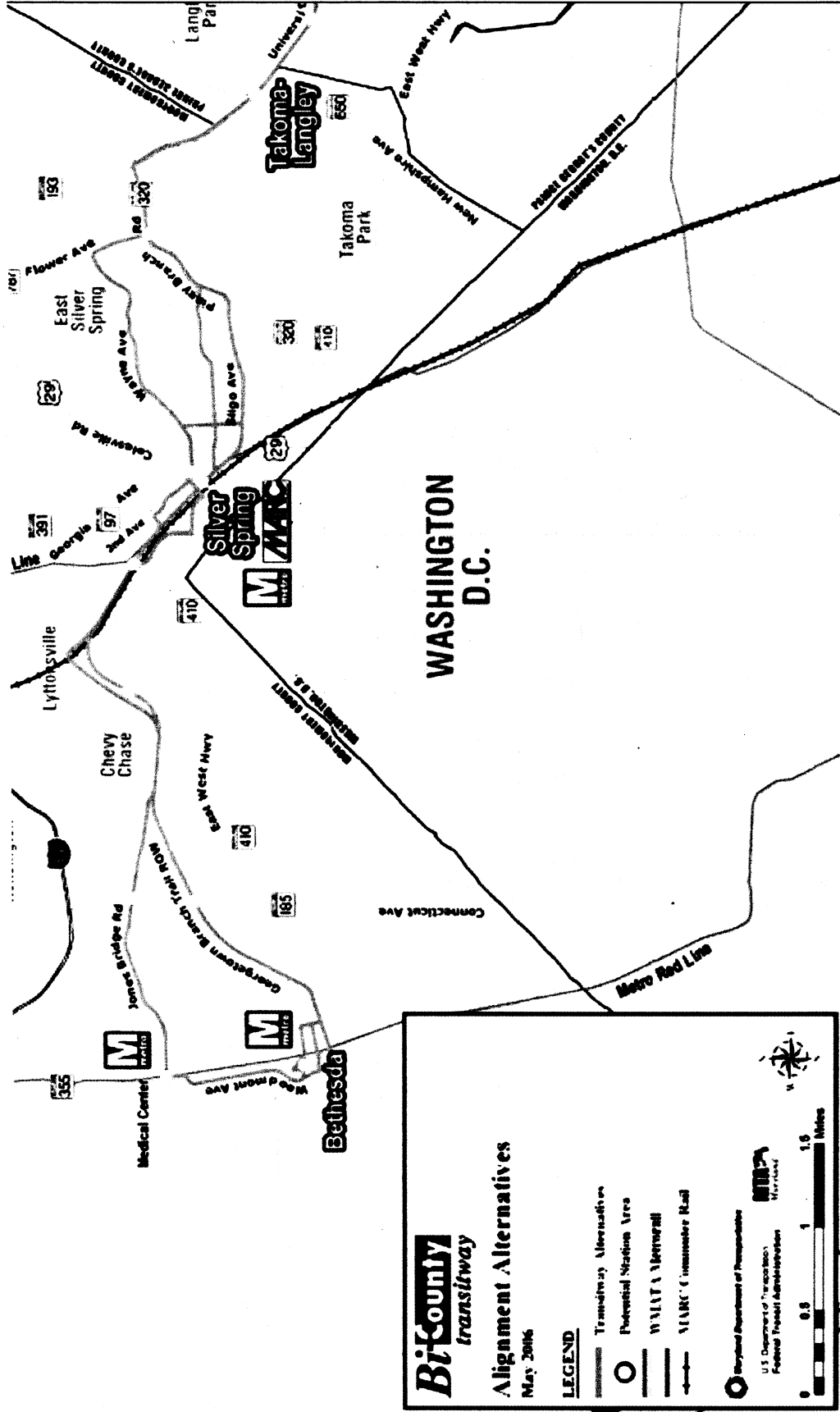
A map of the alignments under consideration is presented in Figure 1 and a matrix describing the alternatives in some detail is presented in Table 1 at the end of this memo. The description of the alternatives is taken from the MTA’s Draft (March 2006) Detailed Definition of Alternatives Report. The column labeled “Notes on Related Items” has been provided by staff as means of providing additional context to the description and is not intended to represent the complete set of issues raised by the public or staff with respect to any one aspect of the corridor. A list of specific questions raised by each Focus Group, along with the MTA project team responses are available for review on the project web site at www.bi-countytransitway.com.

¹ Memo from Alex Hekimian to Planning Board, June 29, 2005

Station locations within or adjacent to the County along the corridor include:

- Bethesda Metro Red Line
- Medical Center Red Line (An Alternative 3 Design Option Only)
- Connecticut Ave
- Brookville Road/Lyttonsville
- 16th Street
- SSTC
- Flower/Piney Branch Road
- Takoma/Langley Crossroads

FIGURE 1 – MONTGOMERY COUNTY ALIGNMENT ALTERNATIVES



Source: Maryland Transit Administration

TABLE 1 - SUMMARY OF ALTERNATIVES – BI-COUNTY TRANSITWAY

Alternative	Description	Primary Alignment	Design Options	Notes On Related Items Within The Corridor
Alternative 1 – No-Build	Baseline alternative that includes transit service, highway network, forecasted volumes, and land use in the adopted Constrained Long Range Plan for 2030.	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Joint use development planned for Silver Spring, College Park, and New Carrollton Metrorail Stations. BRAC realignment to impact Bethesda Naval Medical and Walter Reed Annex.
Alternative 2 – TSM Alternative	Upgrades in transit service through improvements that are not capital intensive – e.g., more frequent service, limited stop service, signal prioritization, queue jumpers and other methods of making bus service more attractive.	Woodmont Avenue, Jones Bridge Road, East West Highway, Wayne Avenue, and University Boulevard with buses operating in outside shared lanes.	Not Applicable.	Similar alignment (excluding Jones Bridge Road segment) as existing Metrobus Route J4. MTA developing operational plan for implementation of enhanced J4 type service within next six months.
Alternative 3 – Low Investment BRT via Jones Bridge Road	Bus Rapid Transit in shared lanes over majority of corridor length.	North on Woodmont Avenue from Bethesda Metrorail Station, east on Jones Bridge Road, across Connecticut Avenue at grade, crossing Jones Mill Road at grade, entering the Georgetown Branch right of way to cross Rock Creek. North on Brookville Road to the CSX right of way, then south along the south side of the CSX tracks to 16 th street. Once at 16 th street the alignment turns south then east on to East West Highway, then north on to Colesville Road, under the CSX bridge and into the Silver Spring Transit Center (SSTC). Exiting the SSTC along Wayne Avenue, across Georgia Avenue, to Flower Avenue, turns south on Flower Avenue and then east on Piney Branch Road, to University Blvd and the Takoma / Langley Transit Center.	<p>Medical Center - Begin at Medical Center Station instead of Bethesda Station</p> <p>2nd Avenue / Wayne Avenue - Cross the CSX right of way on an aerial structure paralleling the tracks on the north side to Spring Street, turn on 2nd Avenue crossing Colesville Rd at grade to the SSTC, then along Wayne Avenue east to Flower Avenue.</p> <p>Sligo Avenue - From Wayne Avenue, the alignment would turn south on Fenton Street, and then east on Sligo Avenue.</p>	<p>Planning Board on July 10, 2003 recommended against further analysis of the Jones Bridge Road alignment.</p> <p>Significant opposition from residents along Jones Bridge Road for this alternative.</p> <p>MTA Project Team has been in contact with Naval Medical regarding BRAC impacts.</p> <p>BRT alignment along Woodmont could eliminate on-street parking.</p> <p>BRT alignment along Woodmont east on Jones Bridge Road does not have direct connection with Medical Center Station</p> <p>Wayne Avenue at-grade alignment does not have direct connection with SSTC.</p>

Alternative	Description	Primary Alignment	Design Options	Notes On Related Items Within The Corridor
Alternative 4 – Medium Investment BRT via Master Plan Alignment	<p>Bus Rapid Transit - primary alignment is for the most part on an exclusive guideway west of Silver Spring and shared right of way east of Silver Spring.</p>	<p>Begins at the Bethesda Metro Station and accesses the Georgetown Branch right of way from Pearl Street, crossing Connecticut Avenue at grade. Follows the CSX right of way on the south side and crosses over the CSX right of way on an aerial structure, paralleling the tracks on the north side to Spring Street. The alignment then proceeds to 2nd Avenue to the SSTC crossing Colesville Road at grade. East of the SSTC, the Transitway follows Wayne Avenue until Fenton Street, where it turns south to Sligo Avenue. It then continues east on Sligo Avenue at grade and turns north on Piney Branch Road to University Boulevard and the Takoma Langley Transit Center.</p>	<p>Woodmont Avenue / Jones Bridge Road – Uses Woodmont Avenue and Jones Bridge Road but uses the Master Plan alignment east of Jones Mill Road.</p> <p>Aerial Crossing of Connecticut Avenue – For either Jones Bridge Road or the Master Plan alignment, would use aerial structure to cross Connecticut Avenue.</p> <p>Brookville Road – After crossing Rock Creek, would use Brookville Road instead of Master Plan alignment, proceeding north to CSX right of way.</p> <p>Aerial Crossing of Colesville Road – alignment would cross Colesville Road on an aerial structure.</p> <p>Wayne Avenue – Instead of using Fenton Street to access Sligo Avenue, this option would continue on Wayne Avenue through East Silver Spring.</p> <p>(continued)</p>	<p>Significant opposition from Columbia Country Club to Master Plan alignment. – either mode.</p> <p>Potential BRT storage yard between Brookville Road and Master Plan right of way, near DPWT Service Park.</p> <p>Sligo Avenue would be reduced to one lane of vehicular traffic under this alternative (primary alignment).</p> <p>Wayne Avenue (between Sligo Creek Parkway and Flower Avenue) at-grade options would require about ten feet of additional right of way between Sligo Creek Parkway and Flower Avenue.</p> <p>MTA is looking at various options for crossing Sligo Creek.</p>

Alternative	Description	Primary Alignment	Design Options	Notes On Related Items Within The Corridor
Alternative 4 – Medium Investment BRT via Master Plan Alignment - Continued	See Above Description	See Above Description	<p>Tunnel Between Thayer and Silver Spring Ave. – This alignment would use <i>Fenton Street</i> to access an alignment that would pass behind the houses along Thayer Avenue and Silver Spring Avenue in a tunnel.</p> <p>Key Intersections Along University Blvd. – This option would use aerial structures to cross the major intersections along University Blvd.</p>	The last two design options may have been dropped from further consideration.
Alternative 5 – High Investment BRT via Master Plan Alignment	Bus Rapid Transit over an exclusive right of way until it reaches Thayer Avenue just west of East Silver Spring Elementary Road.	Alignment begins on the Georgetown Branch right of way near the Bethesda Metro Station and includes a connection with the Bethesda Metro Station. The guideway follows the Master Plan alignment, crosses over Connecticut Avenue on an aerial structure, over Rock Creek Park on a new bridge, and under the CSX right of way in a tunnel north of Kansas Avenue. The alignment continues along the north side of the CSX right of way in a tunnel and transitions from tunnel to surface west of 16 th Street. The alignment then enters an aerial structure over the CSX right of way 1,000 feet northwest of Colesville Road.	<p>CSX Design Options</p> <p>Option 1 – Master Plan Alignment</p> <p>BRT and LRT alignments cross the CSX right of way in a tunnel north of Kansas Avenue and continue along the north side of CSX right of way in a tunnel, transitioning from tunnel to surface west of 16th Street. This option can use either the 2nd Avenue alignment or continue into the SSTC on aerial structure that provides for a 23-foot clearance over the CSX right of way.</p>	MTA is reviewing an option to stay on the south side of the CSX right-of-way until the alignment reaches the SSTC.

Alternative	Description	Primary Alignment	Design Options	Notes On Related Items Within The Corridor
<p>Alternative 5 – High Investment BRT via Master Plan Alignment - continued</p>	<p>See Above Description</p>	<p>continuing to an elevated platform at the SSTC that is above the Metro and MARC platforms. From the SSTC, the alignment crosses under Georgia Avenue and continues east in the proposed tunnel between Thayer and Silver Spring Avenues. The guideway surfaces just west of East Silver Spring Elementary School, turns north and follows Thayer Avenue. At Piney Branch Road, the guideway turns northeast crosses Sligo Creek on an aerial structure, crosses Flower Avenue at grade, then turns south onto University Boulevard. Along University Boulevard, there would be a grade separated crossing at New Hampshire Avenue.</p>	<p>Option 2 – Master Plan /South CSX Alignment</p> <p>BRT and LRT alignments approach the CSX right of way from the east along the Master Plan alignment but instead of crossing the CSX in a tunnel, the alignment was modified to run along the south side of the CSX alignment, crossing the CSX right of way on a aerial structure between Spring Street and Fenwick Lane, then continuing along the north side on the aerial alignment describes in Option 1 above.</p> <p>Option 3 – Brookville Road/ South CSX Alignment</p> <p>BRT and LRT alignments approach the CSX right of way from the east along Brookville Road and follows the south side of the CSX right of way, crossing to the north side between Spring Street and Fenwick Lane as described above in Option 2.</p>	<p>Significant opposition to Thayer/Silver Spring tunnel alignment that surfaces behind East Silver Spring Elementary School and continues along Thayer Avenue at -grade. There is currently pedestrian access to the school from Thayer Avenue.</p> <p>Progress Place and Ripley South (across from KSI Midtown Silver Spring) conflict with the Thayer Avenue and /Silver Spring Avenue and Sligo Avenue alignments. The Lot 3 redevelopment conflicts with at least one segment of the Thayer Avenue / Silver Spring Avenue alignment east of Fenton Street.</p>

Alternative	Description	Primary Alignment	Design Options	Notes On Related Items Within The Corridor
<p>Alternative 5 – High Investment BRT via Master Plan Alignment - continued</p>	<p>See Above Description</p>	<p>See Above Description</p>	<p><u>Design Options Outside of CSX Corridor</u></p> <p>Brookville Road – After crossing Rock Creek, this alignment would use Brookville Road instead of the Master Plan alignment to the CSX right of way.</p> <p>Sligo Avenue Tunnel – this option would continue parallel to the CSX right of way until turning east under Georgia Avenue and continuing under Sligo Avenue.</p>	
<p>Alternative 6 – Low Investment LRT via Master Plan Alignment</p>	<p>This alternative includes at-grade crossings of Connecticut Avenue and Colesville Road and follows Wayne Ave at-grade east out of the SSTC.</p>	<p>This alignment begins on the Georgetown Branch right of way near the Bethesda Metrorail Station (see Alternative 5 above), crosses Connecticut Avenue at grade, and Rock Creek on a new bridge. At the CSX right of way, the alignment follows the south side and crosses over to the north side on an aerial structure, paralleling the tracks to Spring Street where it turns on 2nd Avenue, crossing Colesville Road at-grade to the SSTC. East from the SSTC, the alignment follows Wayne Avenue and after crossing</p>	<p><u>CSX Design Options</u></p> <p>See description above</p> <p><u>Design Options Outside of CSX Corridor</u></p> <p>Brookville Road – After crossing Rock Creek, this alignment would use Brookville Road instead of the Master Plan alignment to the CSX right of way.</p>	<p>Potential LRT Operations and Maintenance Yard south of Brookville road from east of Lyttonsville Place to Stewart Avenue.</p> <p>Lyttonsville community has expressed concern about noise and other factors related to the Maintenance Yard and other aspects of the project for both LRT and BRT.</p>

Alternative	Description	Primary Alignment	Design Options	Notes On Related Items Within The Corridor
<p>Alternative 6 – Low Investment LRT via Master Plan Alignment - continued</p>	<p>See Above Description</p>	<p>Sligo Creek Parkway enters a tunnel and surfaces on Piney Branch Road before continuing along University Blvd crossing New Hampshire Avenue at grade.</p>	<p>Sligo Avenue – this option would use Sligo Avenue at-grade east of Silver Spring. Sligo Avenue would be accessed via Fenton Street from Wayne Avenue</p>	
<p>Alternative 7 – Medium Investment LRT via Master Plan Alignment</p>	<p>Light Rail Transit over an exclusive right of way until it reaches Thayer Avenue just west of East Silver Spring Elementary Road</p>	<p>The primary alignment for this alternative is the same as Alternative 5 – High Investment BRT</p>	<p><u>CSX Design Options</u> See description above</p> <p><u>Design Options Outside of CSX Corridor</u></p> <p>Brookville Road – After crossing Rock Creek, this alignment would use Brookville Road instead of the Master Plan alignment to the CSX right of way.</p> <p>Sligo Avenue Tunnel – this option would continue parallel to the CSX right of way until turning east under Georgia Avenue and continuing under Sligo Avenue</p>	

Alternative	Description	Primary Alignment	Design Options	Notes On Related Items Within The Corridor
<p>Alternative 8 – High Investment LRT via Master Plan Alignment</p>	<p>Light Rail Transit over an exclusive right of way until it reaches University Blvd. This alternative utilizes a tunnel under Sligo Avenue between the SSTC and University Blvd.</p>	<p>The primary alignment for this alternative is the same as Alternative 5 – High Investment BRT and Alternative 7 – Medium Investment LRT except for the tunnel below Sligo Avenue to University Blvd.</p>	<p><u>CSX Design Options</u> See description above</p> <p><u>Design Options Outside of CSX Corridor</u></p> <p>Brookville Road – After crossing Rock Creek, this alignment would use Brookville Road instead of the Master Plan alignment to the CSX right of way.</p>	

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS TO DATE

The public involvement process conducted by the MTA project team since the formulation of the alternatives has been extensive and is summarized below.

Web Site

There is a project web site that contains the full set of Community Focus Group Maps of the alternative alignments, answers to questions posed at the Focus Group meetings, and an opportunity to participate in a “virtual” focus group meeting, among other features. The project web site can be found at: www.bi-countytransitway.com.

Community Focus Groups

Community Focus Groups were established to cover eight different areas along the project alignment. Six of the segments were either partially or wholly within Montgomery County and included the following:

- Master Plan (Georgetown Branch Right of Way)
- Jones Bridge Road – Woodmont Avenue
- CSX – Brookeville Road – Lyttonsville
- Downtown Silver Spring
- East Silver Spring
- Takoma – Langley Park

Two series of meetings were held with designated representatives of civic associations and other organizations within the general geographic areas noted above. The first series was held in November 2005 and the second series was held in late April and early May 2006. The typical format at the meeting involved opening general remarks by the project team on various issues (schedule, mode characteristics, interface with related projects like the Silver Spring Transit Center, trail concerns, noise, etc.) followed by a more detailed review of the alignment characteristics in an effort to solicit both concerns and suggestions. One unique aspect of the meetings was the stated intent to avoid a comparison of the alternative alignments but instead to focus on the advantages and disadvantages of each specific alignment under review at that specific Focus Group meeting. A third round of focus groups is scheduled to begin in the near future.

Other Coordination

The MTA project team has met with over 40 civic organizations, community groups, and representatives of local jurisdictions over the last year to solicit input on the project. Open Houses for the general public were held in June at four different locations along the corridor. Staff and the MTA have coordinated efforts at development review throughout the corridor, and staff has been involved in MTA led briefings and work sessions on related projects such as the Takoma – Langley Park Transit Center, and the Bethesda – College Park Enhanced Bus Service Study. In addition, there have been walking tours with stakeholders along the alignments, especially in East Silver Spring.

EVALUATING THE ALTERNATIVES

FTA's New Starts project justification criteria will be used to evaluate the alternatives. These criteria include the following²:

Mobility Improvements

- Hours of Transportation System User Benefits
- Low-Income Households Served
- Employment Near Stations

Environmental Benefits

- Change in Regional Pollutant Emissions
- Change in Regional Energy Consumption
- EPA Air Quality Designation

Operating Efficiencies

- Operating Cost per Passenger Mile

Cost Effectiveness

- Incremental Cost per Hour of Transportation System User Benefit

Transit Supportive Land User and Future Patterns

- Existing Land Use
- Transit Supportive Plans and Policies

² Source: www.fta.dot.gov

- Performance and Impact of Policies
- Other Land Use Considerations

Other Factors

- Project Benefits Not Reflected By Other New Starts Criteria