



BaltimoreLink Ad-hoc Committee Meeting Summary

August 23, 2016

8:00 AM – 10:00 AM

Baltimore Community Foundation

2 East Read Street

Levi Conference Room, 8th Floor

Baltimore, MD 21202

Attendees:

Eunice Anderson (Enoch Pratt Free Library), Roxana Beyranvand (Baltimore Collegetown), Father Michael Bishop (Bus Rider), Robin Budish (Transit Choices), Luis Cardona (Downtown Partnership of Baltimore), Celeste Chavis (Assistant Professor, Morgan State University), Mary Pat Clarke (Baltimore City Council District 14), Art Cohen (b'more mobile), Ben Cohen (BWI Partnership), George Frazier (Baltimore Bike Out), Mark Heishman (Transdev), Tom Hewitt (MTA), Betty Hickey (Choice Bus Rider), John Land (Baltimore City Public Schools), Eric Norton (Central Maryland Transportation Alliance), Brian O'Malley (Central Maryland Transportation Alliance), Deborah Perry (Congressman Elijah Cummings Office), Klaus Philipsen (ArchPlan), Mike Puma (Loyola University), Michael Romeo (Transdev), Jimmy Rouse (Transit Choices), Sandy Sparks (Charles Village Civic Association), Kristin Speaker (Charles Street Development Corporation), Marc Stein (Johns Hopkins University), Yolanda Takesian (Kittelson and Associates). Raven Thompson (Baltimore Development Corporation)

Jimmy Rouse, on behalf of Transit Choices opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and initiating a round of introductions. Jimmy explained that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss a response to the presentation made by Kevin Quinn (Director, Office of Planning and Programming with the MTA) on June 27, 2016. Meeting attendees were encouraged to provide comments and suggestions about BaltimoreLink improvements, and what feedback should be given to the MTA at this time.

Additionally, Jimmy reported that Councilwoman Mary Pat Clarke (District 14) has convened a "Bus Workgroup 14" to study the BaltimoreLink plan and make recommendations. Jimmy met with the workgroup on August 18, 2016 to discuss their widespread concerns about proposed changes to the Baltimore bus system in District 14.

Summary:

The following is a summary of the feedback, questions and suggestions about BaltimoreLink 2.0 that emerged from the discussion, which can be divided into two main categories; generic comments and questions about the overall project, and concerns focused on specific routes.

Generic Issues:

1. **Pulling Buses and "Cutting In"** – a prime concern is whether BaltimoreLink will provide a substantive commitment of new resources to Baltimore's bus system or constitutes a "shuffling of the deck" of limited resources. Specifically, there were concerns about an inadequate number of buses and drivers combined with a high absentee rate that results in policies of pulling buses off routes or "cutting in", taking detours on routes to make up time. These problems leave those at bus stops who are "cut out" waiting for the next bus, causing unacceptable lateness to jobs and schools. Unless these inadequacies are addressed,

no shuffling of routes is going to make a substantive difference to the lives of those dependent on transit to reach schools and jobs.

Clearly there needs to be enough new investment in the MTA's bus network to ensure that there are adequate buses and drivers to eliminate those practices of pulling buses and cutting in. Specifically, does the \$135 million that Governor Hogan has promised to put in the system achieve this goal? If not, perhaps the BaltimoreLink committee should advocate for the money promised and ask for more funding.

2. Trip Time Calculations – there were several complaints that the trip time calculator is not compatible with certain browsers in common use. There are also concerns about the accuracy of these calculations without the benefit of actual bus stop locations, bus lanes or TSP. A more accurate calculation is needed.

3. Transfers - in Kevin Quinn's last presentation on June 27, 2016, he stated that there is only a 2% overall increase in transfers. A concern is that some of these transfers come on routes where people are trying to get to the Marc Trains at Penn Station, or downtown jobs. Because the experience of transferring has been fraught with misadventures for so many riders, there is a perception of distrust in the community that any transfers will result in missed buses and long wait time.

4. Riders who have carefully examined the BaltimoreLink 2.0 proposal point to routes where frequency will actually decrease under the new system. Why is this necessary? Is it because the MTA is dealing with too limited resources and "shuffling the deck"?

5. People are concerned about bus stop locations. When will these become available for review by the public? Tom Hewitt (MTA Director of Service Development) responded that bus stop locations and spacing were being optimized and there would not be wholesale reductions in stops. Further, bus stop information should be complete by the end of September, and making the schedule more accurate with realistic run times will improve on time performance.

Specific Routes:

Canton, Fell's Point and Harbor East – it is felt there is a lack of transit going through these communities. There are only two bus routes through Canton, and the Boston Street route requires a transfer to the Eastern Avenue route to get to downtown. There should be a bus from downtown to Fleet Street through Harbor East, Fell's Point, and onto Boston Street to Canton Crossing, and perhaps to future parking lots that employees from Harbor East could take - aka the Red Line except as a bus. The plan does nothing to mitigate the traffic problems in Southeast which are already acute particularly at rush hour, and will only become more so when the Harbor Point project is completed.

Local Bus #3 - Problems

LocalLink 53 no longer serves 33rd Street. It doesn't go to the central business district (CBD), ends on North Avenue, forcing those proceeding to the CBD to transfer to light rail or other bus routes. The closest it gets to Penn Station is North Avenue.

Express BusLink 103 only runs during peak hours, weekdays. Peak hours are defined as 6:30-9:00 AM and 4:00-6:00 PM. It bypasses E. 33rd Street, but does serve the central business district. Example: from Greenmount Avenue and E. 33rd Street to the State Office Complex on W. Preston Street is about 2.5 miles. Currently, one bus ride gets one to within walking distance of the complex. Under the proposed plan, the trip would require a transfer and riding two buses.

Route #3. The #3 would be replaced by the Green line, completely dropping service along 33rd Street, forcing many residents who now can get to their destination in one ride to transfer to a second bus.

- Riders from Waverly and Ednor Gardens southbound to Penn Station, the State Office Complex, and other downtown destinations would have to take the #24 either east to the Green Line or northwest to the Silver Line.. Note that this disrupts the bus-to-rail linkage that MTA proclaims as one of its goals.

- Riders going north to Morgan State University and Good Samaritan Hospital would have to take the 22 or 24 and then transfer to the Green line.

Possible Alternatives:

- Re-connect northeast Baltimore with direct bus-to-rail connections and downtown without transfers.
- Reconnect Charles Village, Waverly and Ednor Gardens to northeast Baltimore northbound without transfers.

#11 Bus Route

Problems

Reduced Access to Major Destinations. - South of Mt. Royal Avenue the #11 bus currently travels through Midtown Belvedere, Mt. Vernon, and central Downtown. It stops at the Waxter Senior Center, Enoch Pratt Central Library, and the Baltimore School for the Arts. It provides easy access to destinations including the Maryland State Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, the Leadership Academy for Girls (a charter school), the Walters Art Museum, the Basilica, Peabody School of the Arts, Lexington Market, the Hippodrome and Everyman theaters, the University of Maryland Medical Center, and the many professional and business offices, hotels, restaurants, shops, and churches clustered along its route.

- There would no longer be a bus route along the Maryland Avenue/Cathedral Street corridor south of Mt. Royal Avenue.
- Guilford Avenue below Mt. Royal Avenue is four long blocks east of Maryland Avenue/Cathedral Street, along a corridor and has virtually no destinations.
- LocalLink #51 passengers would have an incredibly steep, up-hill climb to reach the destinations listed above. This would be particularly difficult for the many elderly and disabled people who currently ride the #11 bus, among other riders.

Less Safe - Guilford Avenue south of Mt. Royal Avenue is isolated. On the east side is an elevated section of I-83 with parking below. On the west side are mostly blank walls that constitute the rears of buildings. The corridor lacks 'eyes on the street,' which provide surveillance and greater safety. It would be less safe to wait for a bus or transfer along this corridor than along the current #11 route.

Concern: The Maryland Avenue corridor is congested because there are many major destinations along it that people need or want to reach, and because too many people drive to these destinations by private car. The proposed route change would relegate bus riders to a less-safe, isolated corridor blocks away from the vitality of Midtown, Mt. Vernon, and Downtown. This change would privilege drivers over bus riders, discourage bus ridership, and exacerbate congestion, as more people would drive rather than take mass transit.

Routes #8, #22, #27, #30

Route 8/48. MTA would replace the 8 and 48, with the Red line, which would follow the same route but would have less frequent stops. This is one of the busiest bus routes in the city.

Possible Alternative: Restore full service to both the #8 and its express #48 to maintain the current frequency of both on these heavily used and peak-time standing-room-only routes.

Route #22 (#24 in new system). The new route would be similar to the current route, but frequencies decrease from every 10 minutes to every 15 minutes at peak time.

Possible Alternative: Maintain current frequencies.

Route #27 (now #94 in 14th District). This bus connects the residential and business districts of downtown, Remington, Hampden, and along Falls Road.

- Frequency would be reduced from 20 minutes at peak/45 minutes off peak to 45 minutes peak/60 minutes off peak.
- Currently, MTA pulls buses from this route to service other routes, making service this highly unreliable. Combined with the reduction in service, will make this line even more unreliable.

Route #36 (replaced by #53).

- Currently takes residents of Ednor Gardens to Penn Station and City Hall without transfer.
- New route would end at North Avenue, requiring transfers to get to locations served directly by current route.

Possible Alternatives: maintain current route, and access to downtown without transfers.

Jimmy Rouse concluded the meeting by thanking everyone for attending. He also acknowledged Tom Hewitt for his time listening to the feedback, and the opportunity to exchange information about the BaltimoreLink 2.0 proposal.