



Section 200 Focus Group Meeting #5 Minutes

MEETING DATE: September 20, 2007
TIME: 6:30 pm
PLACE: HEAT Center, Aberdeen

Attendees:

NAME	TELEPHONE	EMAIL	AFFILIATION
Gene Bandy	410-732-9573	gbandy@baltometro.org	Baltimore Metropolitan Council
Janet Gleisner	410-638-3230	jggleisner@co.ha.md.us	Harford Cty. Dept. of Planning and Zoning
Judy Rose	410-676-9318	Joppajudy@msn.com	Little Gunpowder Improvement Association
Melissa Williams	410-537-5651	Mwilliams9@mdta.state.md.us	Maryland Transportation Authority
Teri Moss	410-537-1021	tmoss@mdta.state.md.us	Maryland Transportation Authority
Shawn Schmelzer	410-537-1061	sschmelzer@mdta.state.md.us	Maryland Transportation Authority
Steven Swarr	410-329-3100	SSwarr@jmt.com	Johnson, Mirmiran & Thompson
Brian Riffel	443-224-1621	briffel@wrallp.com	Whitman, Requardt & Associates
Mark Roberts	443-224-1573	mroberts@wrallp.com	Whitman, Requardt & Associates
Mike Rothenheber	410-329-3100	MRothenheber@jmt.com	Johnson, Mirmiran & Thompson
Linda Moreland	302-366-0227	moreland@remline.com	Remline Corp

Welcome and Introductions

Melissa Williams opened the meeting with introductions and an overview of the topics for the evening. Linda Moreland reviewed the roles and responsibilities of the focus group.

Schedule

Ms. Williams reviewed the schedule for the project through summer of 2008 and the signed Final Environmental Document. Ms. Williams asked the focus group members to attend the public hearing and invite their constituencies.

Questions/Concerns:

- Judy Rose asked how the draft document will be presented to the public. Ms. Williams stated that it will be available on the website and will be placed in libraries for the public to review.



Noise Analysis

Shawn Schmelzer explained how the noise analysis was conducted. The first step is to identify areas within the study area that could be impacted by increased noise levels. There were 28 noise sensitive areas (NSA) identified within the study. The second step is to take 24-hour noise readings to determine the peak noise periods for the study area through a diurnal curve. These readings were taken in 4 different locations throughout the corridor. The third step is to take short term field measurements within the NSA's to determine current noise levels. These measurements are performed over a 20 minute period. The data that is collected is used to calibrate the model that will be used to estimate future noise levels and to give accurate readings on the current conditions. For the Section 200 project 128 short term noise readings were performed. The fourth step is to input the field measurements into the Federal Highway Administrations Traffic Noise Model (TNM) program and calculate future noise levels for each alternate. The final step in the process is for the MdTA to determine the best approach to mitigate noise if it is warranted. This could include noise barriers, retaining walls, trees, or berms. It must also be determined if noise barriers are effective, reasonable and feasible. The MdTA has identified 7 areas within the study area where noise barriers are effective, reasonable and feasible.

Questions/Concerns:

- Ms. Rose asked if noise levels are taken at night and during different seasons, particularly when the leaves are off of the trees. Mr. Schmelzer explained that 24-hour measurements are taken to determine the peak noise period. In addition, the model takes into account the difference in noise due to the loss of leaves in the fall.
- Ms. Gleisner said that one of the areas that jump out is the MD 24/MD 924 where the senior housing is located. Many of the seniors like looking out and watching things. If a wall was built to reduce noise, it would block the view; you would be taking something away. Ms. Williams explained that if a wall is deemed to be both reasonable and feasible, it then must be voted on, and approved by 75% of the benefited residents.
- Mr. Rothenheber explained that once the Section 200 final environmental document is signed, any new developments that come after that time would not qualify for a noise wall as a result of this project.
- Ms. Rose asked if there was a map of the noise barriers online. Ms. Williams said that mapping that includes the proposed locations of noise walls will be posted on the web site prior to the Public Hearing.

Stormwater Management

Brian Riffel spoke to the group about the importance of stormwater management. Stormwater runoff is rain or snow melt that doesn't soak into the ground or evaporate. Stormwater affects water quality. Pollutants build up on the surface and when it rains, they are washed off the surface and are rapidly delivered to downstream waters. Roadway construction projects also affect groundwater. Projects that increase the amount of impervious surface, such as pavement, decrease the amount of water that



recharges into the ground. Increased impervious areas also increase the frequency and magnitude of storm flows which can erode stream banks and cause flooding.

The Maryland Department of the Environment requires that stormwater runoff be mitigated for as part of this type of project. In order to mitigate, facilities must be constructed to deal with the runoff. An example of a way to mitigate for runoff is to construct stormwater management ponds. Ponds retain the water and the water either soaks into the ground or after pollutants settle out it can be slowly discharged into nearby waterways. Another type of facility is a wetland facility where the runoff is spread over a large area of vegetation. This slows the water down allowing it to soak into the ground or allowing the sediment and pollutants to settle out before it is discharged into a nearby waterway.

Environmental Stewardship

Mr. Rothenheber explained what environmental stewardship is and how it will be incorporated into this project. The first thing is to identify the environmental resources in the project area, then try to avoid them. If that isn't possible, efforts are made to minimize the impacts to resources. If impacts can't be avoided, the MdTA will need to mitigate. Elements of environmental stewardship that have been incorporated in the project include:

- Re-alignment of ramps
- Retaining walls/steep slopes
- Noise barriers
- Separate pedestrian/bicycle connections
- Transit accommodations
- Park & ride facilities

Mr. Rothenheber reviewed a chart of environmental impacts including right-of-way, displacements, historic structures, prime farmlands, woodlands, wetlands, waters of the U.S. and noise walls. There are no residential displacements in this project, but two potential commercial displacements.

Questions/Concerns:

- Ms. Gleisner stated that under the ETL alternate 150 acres of woodlands will be impacted. That is a lot of trees when the county is struggling to keep and maintain the woodlands. Ms. Williams explained that 150 is the high number and it may not end up being that high. Any woodlands that are impacted will be replaced and mitigation measures will be developed as the project moves forward. Mr. Rothenheber said that the team will work with the county to see where mitigation can occur.

Maintenance Facility Study

Mr. Rothenheber told the group that a maintenance facility study was conducted to identify current and future maintenance and operations requirements. Categories included in the study were travel lane miles, shoulder lane miles, bridges, guard rail/barrier walls, lighting and signs. Section 100 was also added into the study. There is a definite need for facility improvements.



Questions/Concerns:

- Mr. Bandy asked if the team had any site in mind for the maintenance facility. Mr. Rothenheber said they do have some in mind but a final site has not been determined.
- Mr. Bandy asked if there would possibly be two maintenance facilities. Mr. Rothenheber responded that there could be one or the MdTA may keep the current site and build a second larger maintenance facility. If a new site is purchased it would require a minimum of 12 acres.

Emergency Access Plan

The project team has been speaking to emergency services in the area to get their feedback on the alternates and interchange options. There are several jurisdictions in the project area including: Kingsville Fire Company, White Marsh Fire Company, Joppa-Magnolia Fire Company, Abingdon Fire Company, Aberdeen Fire Company and the Maryland State Police.

Brian Riffel stated that there are five existing median openings that will be closed between New Forge Road and the Maryland House because they can not be accommodated due to roadway widening. These include: north of New Forge Road, south of Bradshaw Road, south of Abingdon Road, south of Calvary Road, and north of MD 543.

The Section 200 improvements will include full access at the interchanges at MD 152, MD 24, MD 543, and MD 22. Gated access will be provided at selected overpass structures like Bradshaw Road. There will also be openings in the barrier separating ETLs from GPLs to allow for emergency services access. Emergency services will be able to use the GPLS or the ETLs. Roadway shoulders will be 12-14 feet. The proposed average spacing between access points is 3 miles, which is a slightly further than what is out there today.

Park & Ride Study

Mr. Rothenheber reviewed the results of the study which was conducted to determine the needed improvements to the park & ride facilities serving I-95 from MD 43 to MD 22.

MD 43 – There will be no impacts to the existing site. There are currently 755 available spaces. The park & ride is not operating at full capacity.

MD 152 – The 2007 expansion of the existing I-95/MD 152 park and ride are currently under construction and almost finished. With the expansion, there will be 316 parking spaces. This parking lot will be impacted by the project and will need to be relocated. Today buses cannot service the existing park & ride lot. The new lot will require at least three acres. The team has searched for sites within ½ mile and initially 5 sites were under consideration. These have since been reduced. The new site will have approximately 325 spaces and accommodate transit services.



Questions/Concerns:

- Ms. Rose explained that Harford County residents do not want development to occur on the north side of I-95. It is outside of the development envelope. Someone will want to widen MD 152 and develop it and that will be opening up the door. There is nothing wrong with the existing parking lot and she could not see why the buses could not stop there. Mr. Rothenheber said that the current park and ride lot can't stay where it is with the planned improvements to I-95, since the interstate will impact the property.
- Ms. Rose asked why the Team hasn't looked at Route 40 for a park and ride location. She explained that there is property for sale at that location. Mr. Rothenheber replied that an extensive site search was conducted and a minimum of three acres is needed. They did not find any sites other than the five that were mentioned that could be used, but will go back and take another look.
- Ms. Rose stated that the Aberdeen Proving Ground was a major user and people like the location of the current lot. Ms. Williams explained that the team has not gotten public feedback, but hopefully they will at the Public Hearing.

MD 24 –The MdTA plans to maintain the existing park and ride to the south of I-95 and construct a new site on the north side of I-95. The new site will require a minimum of 2 acres. Sites within ½ mile of the interchange were looked at. Initially 3 sites were under consideration. The new location would allow approximately 250 spaces.

Questions/Concerns:

- Ms. Rose asked if the park and ride would have access to the interchange. Mr. Rothenheber said that the proposed new MD 24 park and ride would have access to I-95 via MD 24. Ms. Rose then asked if the interchange would have pedestrian access to MD 24 to help people get to more businesses. Mr. Rothenheber explained that MdTA is proposing a separate bicycle and pedestrian crossing wither north of the interchange at Woodsdale Road or south of the interchange at Fashion Way.

MD 543 and MD 22 – There are no impacts to the existing park and rides at MD 543 or MD 22. Both park and rides are currently underutilized.

Public Hearing

Linda Moreland discussed the public outreach efforts that will be used to let the public know about the upcoming public hearing. The outreach plan includes mailing a flier to all residents and businesses within ½ mile of the Section 200 corridor and within a one mile radius of all interchanges within the study area. Posters will be placed in libraries, malls and other public locations. Ads will be placed in local newspapers including the Examiner, Afro-American, NE Booster, Times-Herald, Aegis, APG News and the Record.



Ms. Williams went over the format for the hearing. The hearing will start at 5:00 p.m. with an open house style review of display boards, followed by a formal 30 minute presentation, followed by formal public testimony. Private testimony will be taken at any time during the hearing. Public testimony will be limited to 3 minutes per person.

Alternates

Brian Riffel reviewed the three alternates – No-Build, General Purpose Lanes, and Express Toll Lanes.

Questions/Concerns:

- Ms. Gleisner asked if anything was going to be done at MD 7 and MD 543 in light of increased BRAC traffic coming down MD 7. Mr. Rothenheber explained that there would be some improvements, such as double lefts and additional through lanes in all directions. Ms. Gleisner said that from Harford County's perspective they do not want to end up with another MD 24/MD 924. Mr. Rothenheber said that they don't see MD 543/MD 7 as much of a problem as MD 924. Ms. Williams is involved in the Maryland Department of Transportation's BRAC initiatives and if anything changes, the team will be made aware and can go back and revisit the models. Mr. Riffel stated that SHA has gone through a BRAC improvements study and the Section 200 improvements exceed what their study showed. Ms. Gleisner asked if the MD 7/MD 543 improvements would fall under MdTA. Mr. Riffel said that whatever is in the footprint of the interchange improvements would be absorbed into the Section 200 project.

Meeting Wrap Up

Linda Moreland will be sending out minutes and copies of the PowerPoint presentation to all Focus Group members.