

Town of Chevy Chase  
Purple Line Mitigation Advisory Group Meeting  
November 9, 2010

Minutes by Joan Rood

Attendees: Mary Anne Hoffman (Chair); Pat Burda (Council Liaison); Jacob Bardin; Rich Brancato; John Burnes; Andy Hill; Leslie Hill; Joan Rood

Guests: MTA Purple Line Project Manager Mike Madden and MTA consultants; Montgomery County Transportation staff Tom Autrey, Gary Erenrich and David Anspacher; Susan Buffone, aide to Councilmember Roger Berliner; Bethesda resident Thomas Clark; reporter Natalie Neumann

**Overview of MTA's Procedural Process:** Mike Madden, Purple Line project manager, began the meeting by explaining several procedural aspects of the project, summarized as follows:

- MTA has submitted new ridership estimates to the Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) for evaluation and permission to start the Preliminary Engineering Phase of the Purple Line light rail project.
- MTA expects FTA to respond by March 2011 on whether the project is eligible for federal funding for the preliminary engineering work.
- MTA expects a final Record of Decision from the FTA on funding by Sept. 2012. Funding for the two other Maryland projects (the Baltimore red line and the Corridor Cities project) will be determined at the same time.
- MTA will begin small group public work sessions starting in either December 2010 or January 2011, to address specific aspects of the Purple Line, including each proposed station, the Capital Crescent Trail and the section of the transitway adjacent to the Town. MAG members will decide who wants to attend which small group meetings and also will make Town residents aware of the upcoming small group sessions.
- MTA will continue to work with MAG throughout the Preliminary Engineering Phase.

**Bethesda Station.** MTA showed artist renderings of the proposed Bethesda station. MTA also indicated that because the piers in the Air Rights tunnel are not reinforced, it may not be economically feasible to lower the train track bed in the tunnel to allow the trail to pass above the trains through the tunnel. If it is not economically feasible to lower the track bed through the tunnel, the trail will have to be rerouted outside the tunnel. Gary Erenrich said the County is looking at alternatives if the risks and responsibilities of the putting the Trail through the tunnel make an elevated Trail there not feasible.

**Trail Width.** At the request of the Montgomery County Council, MTA plans a 12-foot trail width with 2-foot shoulders where possible. This will be possible through most of the land adjacent to the Town, Madden said. In narrow places along the current trail, MTA will first reduce or eliminate the shoulders before reducing the trail width.

**Southside Path.** MTA shared drawings of a proposed unpaved, graded path that could be placed to the south of the transitway, abutting the Town between the Lynn Drive path and Elm Street Park. Town residents could use this path to get to Elm Street Park and the Purple Line station. Although MTA would attempt to roll the cost of developing the path into the Purple Line construction budget, the Town would be responsible for maintaining the path. MTA will go forward with plans for such a path only if the Town requests it. There is no current deadline for the Town to indicate whether it would like such a path.

**Mayor Lublin's Letter to the MTA.** Attendees next discussed Mayor Lublin's Oct. 19 letter to the MTA containing the Town's desired mitigation measures. Committee Chair Mary Anne Hoffman outlined the following six desired mitigation measures the Mayor's letter suggested:

- Noise walls higher than the 3-foot walls now planned
- Making the higher noise walls "green" walls
- Significantly depressing the tracks along the Town's borders;
- A privacy fence along the elevated portion of the trail;
- Keeping a crossing at Lynn Drive;
- Ensuring safety along the transitway and, in particular, safety at the proposed at-grade crossing at Lynn Drive through with slower train speeds, good operator line-of-sight and active pedestrian warning systems.

**Higher Noise Walls.** MTA will perform ambient noise testing in backyards abutting the trail. MTA will provide Councilmember Pat Burda with a list of yards it wishes to access so that she can seek permission from affected residents. MTA also will reassess the amount of noise likely to emanate from the Purple Line should it ever be built. The MTA will not be in a position to discuss noise abatement measures, such as higher noise walls, until it completes these additional noise studies. On Rich Brancato's suggestion, MTA will consider the effect on noise of the retaining wall to the north of the transitway being higher than the proposed 3-foot noise wall to the south of the transitway.

**Green Walls.** MTA will place fencing on top of the noise walls, and this fencing can be green. MTA consultants seemed flexible about the height and design of the fencing and will come back to MAG to show green wall and fence options.

**Depressing the Track Bed.** Significantly depressing the track bed along the Town's borders is not feasible due to the amount of water that would flood the track bed, according to MTA consultants.

**Privacy Fencing.** MTA consultants said that fencing along the elevated portion of the trail cannot provide full privacy to those residents living along that section of the trail for two reasons. First, there will be two sharp curves along the elevated portion and bike riders must be able to see around those curves. Second, MTA perceives that trail users would be and/or feel less safe along that portion of the trail if a privacy fence existed because they could not be seen by residents living along the trail. Therefore, the fencing along this portion of the trail must allow for some visibility, but it could be somewhat opaque. MTA said it will work with the Town on fencing that will give Trail users some visibility and Town residents privacy.

**Lynn Drive Crossing.** Keeping the Lynn Drive crossing is a priority for MTA. It would prefer not to use an at-grade crossing for safety reasons, and it is working on grade-separated alternatives as well as safety features for an at-grade crossing. MTA will slow the proposed 45-mile-an-hour speed of the trains through the Lynn Drive area if the site-line study indicates that a slower speed is warranted, but it is unwilling to lower the train speed to as low as 25 miles-an-hour even though it will travel at that speed or slower through much of the 14-mile trip between Silver Spring and New Carrollton. MTA will be prepared to discuss the the Lynn Drive crossing in more detail at the MAG's January 4, 2011 meeting.

MAG's next meeting will be at 7 p.m. in the Town Hall on December 2, 2010.