

BALTIMORE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION BOARD

October 27, 2015

Baltimore Metropolitan Council

5:06 to 6:15 P.M.

MINUTES

The 274th meeting was called to order at 5:06 P.M. by the Vice Chair, the Honorable Stephanie Rawlings-Blake.

1. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITY

Ms. Rawlings-Blake indicated that this time was set aside for the public to address comments to the BRTB members. She asked that individuals identify themselves and limit their comments to the stated time of 3 or 5 minutes.

- Mr. Ben Groff, a Baltimore City resident and University of Maryland graduate, presented comments on *Maximize2040*. The major point is to improve quality of public transit. Fifty-seven percent of the Public Project Ideas generated were for major transit projects. Looking at the plan there is less than 20% devoted to transit in the first ten years – that is out of balance with what is being asked for by the public. Mr. Groff also suggested that the Red Line be listed with the Illustrative Projects until such time as funding can be secured. Also noted in the plan is the growth in population and a much higher VMT that is unacceptable. The BRTB should consider the trend that younger people want livable communities that are supported by transit options.
- Mr. Edward Cohen, Chair of the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) Citizens Advisory Committee for Accessible Transportation and the Acting Chair of the MTA Citizens Advisory Committee. Comments from these two committees have been given to the MTA Administrator but have not been cleared for distribution at this time. The comments focus on the reorganization and recycling of rail infrastructure in the region. Rail has been part of the fabric of Baltimore starting with a report in 1895 on expanding underground rail. Over the years the city has moved away from that and is confronted with narrow streets and lane widths, limited sidewalk width and short, high density blocks. While these committees have not supported the Red Line they do have a plan that recommends underground rail that has segments built in a specific sequence that will make it

affordable. In the meantime, MTA is urged to provide many more buses to address overcrowding on current service.

- Ms. Heather Weir recommended that Baltimore City and the MTA create a preference to hire contractors that employ youth or disabled individuals. She stated that local youth who are enrolled in a City or county vocational or trade school could be hired. She gave an example that youth who help reconstruct the Greenmount corridor could take pride of “ownership” in this area. They could also become “better bets” for mortgages and commercial lending, or perhaps be enticed toward locating in that area which is relatively transit centered and accessible. She also stated that, as a disabled individual, she cannot stress enough the value of early, gainful work experience as it helped her maintain a level of self-sufficiency. She wrapped up by saying that her hiring comments are transportation related because transit, freight, and related construction/manufacturing jobs remain among the highest paying career options for high school graduates.

[Written Comments from Ms. Heather Weir]

- Mr. Greg Shafer presented PAC Resolution #2015-15 on *Maximize2040*. Mr. Shafer noted that the PAC has been working with the BRTB over the last year to develop *Maximize2040* and the PAC commends the BRTB for its involvement of PAC in all aspects of the development of *Maximize2040* and for incorporating its feedback about performance measures into the plan. The PAC also commends the BRTB for its public involvement, in particular the wealth of comments received during the call for Public Project Ideas. The document is also clear and easy to read.

The PAC is very concerned about the gaping hole in the plan when the funding for the Baltimore Red Line was pulled. This is of particular concern when the plan shows that its target of 500,000 transit riders is not even close to being achieved with the proposed mix of projects. Furthermore, the plan indicates that the number of miles driven by the public on congested roadways increases by 77% to 38% (goal is 25%) and the number of hours spent in traffic increases fourfold. The PAC believes the plan should focus more on expanding the transit network to meet the goals of increasing transit ridership and reducing congestion.

The PAC recommends that the following changes to the final *Maximize2040*: 1) Update the plan within a year after the Assessment of Transit Needs for Baltimore is completed; 2) Include priorities for additional projects that make significant progress in achieving the *Maximize2040* Goals in case the level of funding increases; 3) Be more transparent by including scores on projects included and excluded from *Maximize2040*. 4) Consider how land use in each jurisdiction relates to transportation and *Maximize2040*.

[Handout: PAC Resolution #2015-15]

- The Honorable Kevin Kamenetz introduced a letter from Ms. Phyllis Lansing and Mr. David Pollitt who attended a BMC meeting earlier in the day. Residents of the Charlestown Retirement Community are concerned by the crisis in April and believe issues around poverty can be addressed by the Regional Plan for Sustainable Development. Charlestown residents want a better future for the Baltimore region and care about the many employees of the Retirement Community who live in the City.

[Written Comments from Mr. David Politt and Ms. Phyllis Lansing]

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION ON RESOLUTION #16-6

Mr. Todd Lang introduced the updated Baltimore Region Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan which is designed primarily to improve transportation services for individuals with disabilities and seniors. The plan contains an assessment of unmet needs and recommended strategies that will guide future projects funded through the Federal Transit Administration Section 5310 Program, and is the result of stakeholder outreach conducted by BMC and MTA staff between June and September 2015.

Ms. Rawlings-Blake asked members for a motion to approve Resolution #16-6, endorsing the updated plan. A motion to approve was made by the Honorable Barry Glassman and seconded by Mr. Peter Gutwald. Ms. Rawlings-Blake asked if there was any discussion by the members and then by the audience.

The Honorable David Craig noted two errors on page 4-5. BMC staff indicated that they will correct these errors. Ms. Rawlings-Blake asked if there was any further discussion. Hearing none, she asked for a vote and Resolution #16-6 was unanimously approved.

3. BRIEFING ON THE BALTIMORE AND POTOMAC TUNNEL PROJECT

Secretary Pete Rahn introduced the upcoming two speakers who are members of his staff. Mr. Bradley Smith started with information on the history of the B&P Tunnel. The tunnel was built in 1873 and is a 1.4 mile, two-track rail tunnel on the Northeast Corridor located between Penn Station and the West Baltimore MARC Station. The tunnel is owned and operated by Amtrak and serves 140 trains per day for Amtrak, MARC and Norfolk Southern. Currently, MDOT is managing a Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) grant for \$60 million that includes Baltimore City as a partner.

Mr. Smith described the project purpose to address the structural and operational deficiencies of the existing tunnel which is nearing the end of its useful life. The tunnel does not provide enough capacity for current needs and is not suited for high-speed usage due to tight clearances and sharp curves. For an initial screening the team evaluated 16 project alternatives using fifty criteria designed to determine if the purpose would be met and if the alternative was constructible. As a result, 4 alternatives were carried forward: 1) no-build, 2) restore/rehabilitate the existing tunnel, 3) Great Circle passenger tunnel, and 4) Robert Street South. These four alternatives were refined and it was determined that four tracks would be required, each track in an individual bore, and two options could help improve operations and avoid/minimize impacts to the community.

Next the team developed an evaluation matrix that lead to dropping two options; restore/rehabilitate the existing tunnel and Robert Street South. Being carried forward is the no-build and 3 versions of the Great Circle alternative. The options focus on varying alignments and locations for vent stacks. There were three community meetings in October and a Preferred Alternative is expected in early 2016.

The remaining NEPA process and schedule looks for a Record of Decision in spring 2017.

[PowerPoint: Baltimore & Potomac Tunnel Project]

4. UPDATE ON FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION FUNDING STATUS

Mr. Phil Dacey briefed the BRTB on the latest status of Federal Transportation funding. Mr. Dacey explained that authorization established surface transportation programs over a multi-year period whereas appropriations provide the annual funding for federal programs. The current bill expires on October 29 and it is very likely another short-term extension bill will be enacted to keep programs active. Long-term the Senate passed a 6-year policy reauthorization (DRIVE Act) in July but only identified 3 years of funding. Last week the House marked-up a 6-year policy reauthorization but has not identified funding.

Mr. Dacey described the erosion of the highway trust fund (HTF) and measures to shore it up. The HTF has experienced shortfalls since 2008. MDOT is promoting a long-term solution to provide reliability to the program. Finally he provided the current FFY 2016 appropriations update and compared the FFY 2015 to the FFY 2016 proposals by the President's budget, the House and to the Senate.

[PowerPoint: Impact of Upcoming Federal Transportation Legislation]

5. OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business. The meeting adjourned at 6:15 P.M.

ATTENDANCE

Members

Honorable Barry Glassman, Harford County Executive
Paul Comfort, Maryland Transit Administration (MTA), Administrator
Honorable David Craig, Secretary, Maryland Department of Planning
Pete Gutwald for the Honorable Michael Pantelides, City of Annapolis
Brian Hug for the Honorable Ben Grumbles, Maryland Department of the Environment
Honorable Kevin Kamenetz, Baltimore County
Philip Nichols for the Honorable Allan Kittleman, Howard County
Honorable Pete Rahn, Secretary, Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT)
Honorable Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, Mayor of Baltimore City, Vice Chair
Honorable Steve Schuh, Anne Arundel County Executive
Honorable Stephen Wantz, Carroll County Board of Commissioners

Staff and Guests

Regina Aris, Baltimore Metropolitan Council (BMC)
Tyson Byrne, MDOT
Robert Berger, BMC
Steve Cohoon, Queen Anne's County
Candece Crastein, Vehicles for Change
Phil Dacey, MDOT
Lynda Eisenberg, Carroll County Department of Planning
Lyn Erickson, MDOT
Chris Firehock, Central Maryland Regional Transit
Ben Gilardi, Public Advisory Committee (PAC)
Terry Freeland, BMC
Monica Haines Benkhedda, BMC
Victor Henry, BMC
Jim Knighton, MTA
Martha Arzu McIntosh – Anne Arundel County Office of Planning & Zoning
Kimberly Brandt, 1000 Friends of Maryland
Tony McClune, Harford County, Department of Planning & Zoning
Heather Murphy, MDOT
Emery Hines, Baltimore County, Department of Public Works
Steve Holt, Citizens Planning Housing Association
William Johnson, City of Baltimore
Pat Keller, MTA, Statewide Service Development
Todd Lang, BMC
Sam Moxley, Baltimore County Executive Office
Gregory Murrill, Federal Highway Administration
Eric Norton, PAC
Greg Shafer, Chair, PAC
Bradley Smith, MDOT, Office of Freight and Multimodalism
Bihui Xu, Maryland Department of Planning, Transportation Planning
Ted Yurek, State Highway Administration

Respectfully submitted,

Todd R. Lang, Secretary
Baltimore Regional Transportation Board