

ACTION COMMITTEE FOR TRANSIT

Transit Times

The Newsletter of the Action Committee for Transit of Montgomery County, Maryland
Volume 24, Number 3, July 2010

ACT's monthly meetings are held at 7:30 PM, the second Tuesday of each month, at the Silver Spring Center, 8818 Georgia Avenue (near the intersection of Georgia Avenue and Spring Street), in the Woodside Conference Room.

The Silver Spring Center is a ten minute walk north of the Silver Spring Metro Station; it is a two-block walk from the nearest Ride-On #5 stop; and, the Metrobus "Q" and "Y" routes pass in front of the Center.

For meeting updates check our website listed on pg 2.

July 13: Gabe Klein or Scott Kubly of the D.C. Department of Transportation - "D.C.'s Streetcar Program"

Aug 10: Ross Capon, President, National Association of Railroad Passengers - "High-Speed Rail"

Sept 14: Gubernatorial Primary Election Day - Go out and VOTE!

- Book Review: *\$20 Per Gallon: How the Inevitable Rise in the Price of Gasoline Will Change Our Lives for the Better* by Christopher Steiner (p. 7)
- ACT to Prepare a Transit Scorecard for the Upcoming Elections (p. 8)

ACT Defeats Cuts in Regional Transit Service

Quon Kwan

ACT was instrumental in helping to defeat cuts in Metrobus, Metrorail, and Ride-On bus service.

Metrorail and Metrobus Service

ACT working through Transit First, helped to defeat the proposed cutbacks in Metrobus and Metrorail service through leafleting, letters, and testimony at public hearings.

Transit First is a coalition that includes ACT, Alexandria Transit Riders Alliance, Amalgamated Transit Union Local 689, Arlington Coalition for Sensible Transportation, Audubon Naturalist Society, CASA de Maryland, Clean Water Action, Coalition for Smarter Growth, Crofton First, DC Night Riders, Greater Washington, MCGEO—UFCW Local 1994, Prince George's Advocates for Community-

Feature Articles

- ACT Defeats Cuts in Regional Transit Service (p. 1)
- ACT Opposes Closure of Campus Dr at University of Maryland College Park (p. 3)
- Bombshell *Post* Poll Shows 2-1 Majority for Transit Over Roads (p. 4)
- Guidelines for Bus Stop Facility Design & Placement (p. 5)

Join ACT Now

You can join ACT by remitting membership dues. Your membership dues are based on the category of membership that you choose:

\$10 [rider (code R on mail label)]
 \$25 [activist (code A on mail label)]
 \$50 [conductor (code C on mail label)]

[the two digits after your category of membership code indicates year paid]

Send your check for the chosen category of membership to:

Action Committee for Transit
P.O. Box 7074
Silver Spring, MD 20907
www.actfortransit.org

You may also give your membership dues to Treasurer John Carroll at the next ACT meeting. The address on your check will be used as the mailing address unless otherwise indicated.

Your dues support ACT Activities and this newsletter.

based Transit, Progressive Maryland, Save Maryland Area Rail Transit, Transit Riders United of Greenbelt.

In an April 23, 2010 letter from The Transit First Coalition to the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Board of Directors member, Peter Benjamin, the coalition commented on the new Metro budget proposals submitted by Interim General Manager Richard Sarles. Transit First said it was encouraged by the plan to avoid most previously proposed service cuts. It called on WMATA to avoid cutting late-night rail service and urged local governments not to substitute cuts bus service for needed financial

contributions. The coalition is deeply concerned, however, by proposed reductions in the transit system's capital budget. The aging Metrorail system requires increasing investments in maintenance and repair to exorcise the specter of a steady decline in service, which would be a disaster for the hundreds of thousands of area residents who depend on Metro every day.

WMATA has adopted a budget with no service cuts in Metrorail or Metrobus. However, fare increases are somewhat larger than proposed earlier. This is a victory for transit riders, but we pay the price of bearing an unfair financial burden. During the public comment period on the budget, the overwhelming majority of riders said that they preferred fare increases instead of service reductions and no service reductions are planned.

New Metrorail and Metrobus Fares

Beginning June 27, Metrorail fares increase 18 percent, with the peak period boarding charge increasing from \$1.65 to \$1.95. The maximum peak period Metrorail fare will increase from \$4.50 to \$5 for customers who pay with SmarTrip® and from \$4.50 to \$5.25 for customers who pay with a paper fare card.

A new system of peak-of-the-peak pricing, which will cost Metrorail riders an additional 20 cents for trips that are taken weekdays between 7:30 and 9 a.m. and between 4:30 and 6 p.m., was also approved. The maximum fare during this period for customers who use a paper fare card will be \$5.45. The surcharge will encourage customers to help alleviate crowding during busy weekday rush hours. Peak-of-the-peak pricing will be implemented on August 1 to allow Metro staff additional time to make the necessary computerized fare collection changes.

Metrobus fares will increase 20 percent, from \$1.25 to \$1.50 for customers who pay with SmarTrip® and from \$1.35 to \$1.70 for customers who pay with cash. The price of a Metrobus ride remains lower than bus fares in most major Metropolitan areas. New York, Chicago, San Francisco and Seattle each charge \$2 or more for a bus ride.

Ride-On

Montgomery County Executive Ike Leggett first proposed a round of cuts to Ride-On bus service in March 2010. On top of those cuts, a new round of cuts was added in April. The county had not announced which routes would suffer, except that Route 30 would lose all mid-day service and Route 33 would end at Medical Center instead of Bethesda.

In response to the proposed cuts, ACT in a letter dated April 27, 2010 urged the council to restore all Ride-On service cuts and obtain the needed money by scaling back the \$80 million underground garage proposed for Lot 31, across from Barnes and Noble in Bethesda. As ACT pointed out in detail previously (see *Transit Times*, vol. 24, no. 1), this overpriced garage will largely sit empty. Furthermore, ACT endorsed the executive's proposal to eliminate the county's pedestrian safety program. *"This program has largely been a waste of money, and its main purpose is to disguise MCDOT's refusal to change its anti-pedestrian policies,"* the letter stated.

Nearly all Ride-On service will be preserved under a budget approved by the County Council May 20, which rejects most, but not all, of the proposed cuts in Ride-On service. All bus lines will continue to run for the same hours of service, but some will run less frequently. Routes 22, 32, 33, and 43 will be shortened, and route 7 will be modified. Ride-On is expected to impose the same fare increases as Metrobus. For more details on the Ride-On cuts, go to ACT's web site at actfortransit.org/bus.html and then click on the [large pdf document](#). The originally proposed cuts are listed on pages 38 and 39; the items with an arrow on the left are the cuts in the final budget. Cuts will take effect September 5.

[Thank you to all the ACT members and volunteers who worked hard writing letters and distributing flyers to keep these bus cuts from becoming a reality. Your efforts made a difference]

ACT Opposes Closure of Campus Dr at University of Maryland College Park

ACT letter of May 9, 2010 to UM President Dr. Mote
by Cavan Wilk

Action Committee for Transit is very concerned about the University of Maryland's plans to close Campus Drive to all traffic this summer. While we support closure to automobiles, the closure to most buses, including Metrobus, TheBus, and almost all ShuttleUM routes, would diminish access to campus via transit. It also seems designed to rally the University administration's efforts against a Campus Drive Purple Line alignment. Relegating ShuttleUM, Metrobus, and TheBus to the edges of campus would force many students to transfer buses to reach the College Park-UMD Metro or other destinations off campus. It will lengthen transit trips and reduce ridership, contradicting University of Maryland policies. Rerouting of Metrobuses to the fringes of campus increases travel times, and consequently increasing operating expenses and requiring greater tax subsidies.

According to the Maryland Transit Administration, 750 transit vehicles use Campus Drive on a typical school day, compared to 5,500 private cars (most of which are single-occupant). Banning private cars while allowing buses would reduce vehicular traffic by 88% -- certainly enough to make Campus Drive a pedestrian-oriented area for students, faculty, and staff. Meanwhile, Shuttle UM ridership has soared as the University builds more off-campus student housing. Is it consistent for one University policy to support campus transportation by shuttle and for another policy to ban those very same shuttles? Closing Campus Drive to transit vehicles also runs counter to goals in the Master Plan and Climate Action Plan to encourage alternative transportation.

In addition, as you know, the undergraduate Student Government Association (SGA) opposes the closing. In a recent email to Purple Line Now, a coalition of which ACT is a

founding member, SGA Director of Environmental Affairs Joanna Calabrese, wrote, *"I strongly believe that students will react negatively to this current plan [to close Campus Drive to transit vehicles]. The Stamp is a central transit hub and a primary destination of students and visitors. Denying transit access to such a central place would make it difficult for visitors, staff, students, and faculty to reach a prime campus destination and would unnecessarily complicate area transit routes."*

Finally, closing Campus Drive to transit vehicles seems to signal the University of Maryland's continuing and unwise refusal to take advantage of the many benefits of the Purple Line running through campus. Transit access to the Washington, D.C. area is one of the University's major competitive advantages over other state flagship research institutions.

[Update: On May 21st the University of Maryland announced that during the 8 week summer closure of Campus Dr. to vehicles, they will experiment and only close the road to transit vehicles for 4 of those weeks.]

Bombshell Post Poll Shows 2-1 Majority for Transit Over Roads

ACT Press Release of April 4, 2010

The public overwhelmingly favors a massive reversal of current transportation priorities, today's [Washington Post transportation poll](#) shows. 62% of Metro area residents said that efforts to reduce traffic congestion should focus on trains, buses, and other public transportation. Only 30% said the focus should be on building and expanding roads.

The priority that area residents favor by a majority of more than two to one differs drastically from current spending patterns. The cost of highway expansions now being built in the area, including the Intercounty Connector, the Virginia Beltway toll lanes, Montrose Parkway,

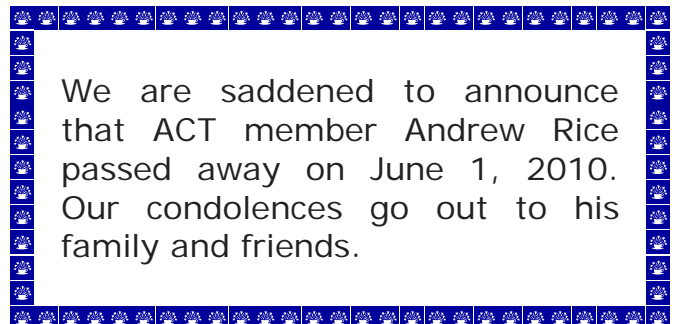
and numerous lesser road widenings, dwarfs investments in transit. The only major transit project currently under construction is the Metro Silver Line to Tysons Corner and Dulles Airport.

Further evidence of public support for transit came from the *Post's* question about the current Metro budget crisis. By a majority of 52% to 40%, residents said that Metro should get new funding sources -- even if it meant raising taxes -- rather than cut service. The poll did not ask about raising taxes to pay for new roads, but voters in recent years have strongly resisted new taxes to pay for highways.

The poll also showed continuing high levels of public satisfaction with Metro, despite the system's recent spate of accidents and maintenance-related slowdowns. 80% of regular Metrorail riders, and 70% of the public as a whole, rated the system as good or excellent. The most commonly cited major reason for not using Metrorail was that jobs are located too far from stations. Metrobus and county bus services also got high approval levels from riders, but non-riders gave the bus systems much lower ratings.

"This poll demonstrates once again that the public is way ahead of our political leaders," commented Action Committee for Transit president Ben Ross. *"A massive shift in spending from roads to transit is long overdue."*

The *Post* poll covered residents of Loudoun, Fairfax, Montgomery, and Prince George's counties as well as the District of Columbia and inner Virginia suburbs.



Guidelines for Bus Stop Facility Design & Placement

Quon Kwan

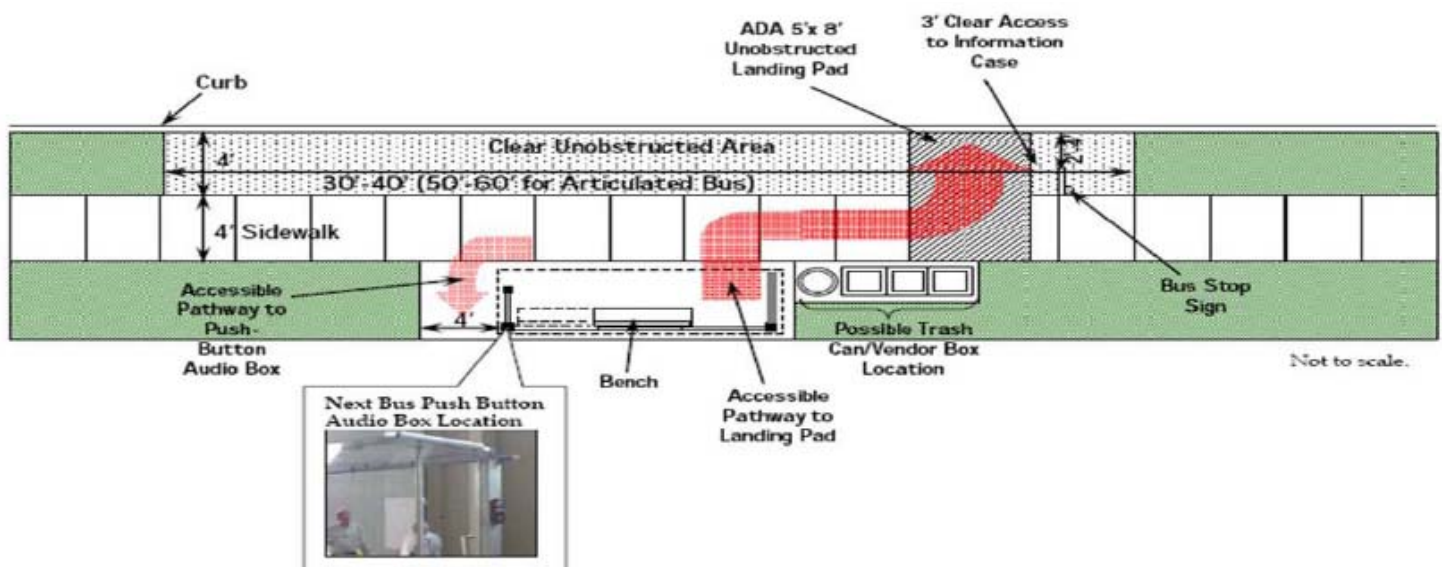
On November 18, 2009, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) issued preliminary guidelines for bus stop design, information, and placement after review by Riders Advisory Council, Regional Bus Stop Task Force, and public meetings participants.

With almost 12,000 bus stops, the Metrobus system faces numerous problems of readability, old technology, and a lack of regional design coordination. First, the new guidelines are intended to provide specific bus stop **physical design criteria** to be integrated with local planning policies, land use ordinances, pedestrian plans, and street design guidelines. Second, the new guidelines address current problems and provide new consistent, reliable, and effective **customer information**. Third, The guidelines discuss appropriate bus stop **placement** relative to land uses, intersections, and street designs. Incorporated are standards

for accessibility in accord with the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA). As part of placement, spacing at an average of 4 to 5 bus stops per mile is recommended to optimize operational time and cost savings.

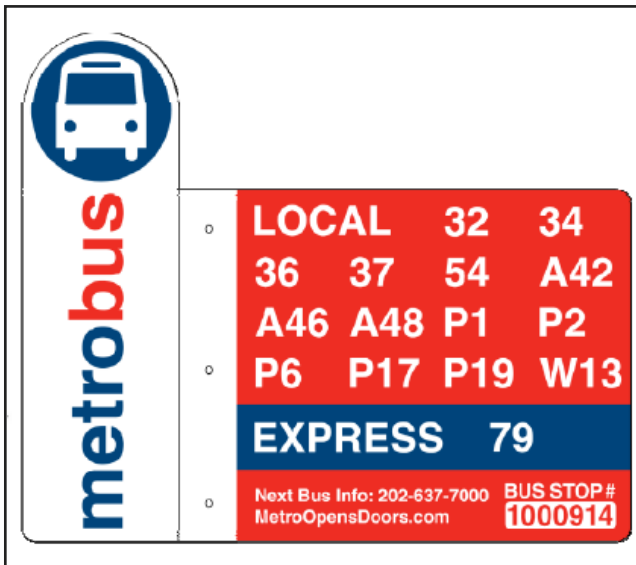
With respect to the physical design criteria (see picture below), the following elements are standardized:

- Bus stop pole and flag location
- Landing pad, passenger entry and exit locations
- Accessible pathways (suitable for wheelchair use)
- Information case, maps, and signage
- NextBus [global positioning system (GPS)-enabled estimate of bus arrival time]
- Seating (bench) and shelter
- Lighting
- Passenger waiting area
- Trash receptacle
- Vendor boxes



The bus stop information guidelines are as follows:

- Uniform approach to stop, information content, & placement
- New flag (36" x 18" – see below) to bear international bus stop logo, bus routes, special service notes (e.g., "Express") reflective surface, phone number, web address, and unique identifier ("Bus Stop#")
- New pole (12' U-channel, breakaway feature) with information case, and tactile-raised plaque with "Bus Stop#"
- New information case (6" w x 30" h – see picture to the right) to show stop-specific schedule information (running time chart replaces time point display because it is more commonly used). New readability standards (e.g., 12 point for times and 2-3 inches for route numbers)



BUS STOP SCHEDULE

Anacostia – Eckington Line

P6

Destination: Rhode Island Ave. Brentwood [M]

* Operates on Friday Sat. AM Only

Weekdays Only

Counterclockwise – Northbound

5:10 AM	9:40	3:40	8:45
5:30	10:10	3:58	9:20
5:51	10:40	4:18	9:54
6:11	11:10	4:40	10:28
6:31	11:40	5:00	11:03
6:49	12:09 PM	5:20	11:37
7:09	12:39	5:40	12:07 AM
7:30	1:09	6:00	12:37
7:50	1:39	6:22	1:07
8:10	2:09	6:45	1:37
8:30	2:39	7:10	2:07
8:50	3:01	7:37	2:37
9:10	3:16	8:11	

Saturdays Only

Counterclockwise – Northbound

5:48 AM	11:06	4:36	10:19
6:18	11:36	5:06	10:52
6:48	12:06 PM	5:36	11:23
7:18	12:36	6:06	11:54
7:48	1:06	6:32	12:24 AM
8:08	1:36	7:04	12:54
8:36	2:06	7:37	1:24
9:06	2:36	8:10	1:54
9:36	3:06	8:43	2:24
10:06	3:36	9:16	
10:36	4:06	9:47	

Sundays Only

Counterclockwise – Northbound

6:50 AM	11:17	4:01	8:41
7:20	11:52	4:37	9:10
7:50	12:27 PM	5:13	9:43
8:20	1:02	5:49	10:16
8:57	1:37	6:25	10:49
9:32	2:13	7:01	11:22
10:07	2:49	7:35	11:55
10:42	3:26	8:08	

Travel Time For Route 32/36

Approximate travel times to next destinations

Car Free Day – September 22, 2010

UNCAR FOR A DAY
go car free in metro dc

Thank you to those members and friends who made donations to ACT In Memory of Harry Sanders. Your thoughtful words and memories of Harry are greatly appreciated.

Several ACT volunteers helped to pass out the Maryland Transit Administration's brochure *Fast Facts about the Purple Line & the Capital Crescent Trail* at Bike to Work Day on May 21st, targeting pit stops in Bethesda and Silver Spring. **Thanks** for getting out the *Facts*.

\$20 Per Gallon: How the Inevitable Rise in the Price of Gasoline Will Change Our Lives for the Better by Christopher Steiner

Book Review by Tina Slater

In the last gas crisis, full-size sport utility vehicles (SUVs) were replaced by fuel-sipping Priuses. The recession came and gas prices fell. Will prices stay this low forever? Probably not. Christopher Steiner, engineer-turned-journalist and staff writer for Forbes magazine, shows the future at different gasoline price points (Chapter \$6, Chapter \$8, etc.). Rather than being the voice of doom, Steiner shows how our lives will improve.

As the price of oil climbs, so will the costs of all energy, and this will fuel innovation. Chapter \$6 will bring the death of the SUV. As we buy less gasoline, we'll pay less in fuel taxes, starving the budget needed to maintain our infrastructure. We may see usage taxes (tolls) on major roads, especially at rush hours. London has been successful with congestion pricing. The benefit is decreases in air pollution.

School budgets will feel the pinch, as school buses cease pick-ups within 1-2 miles from school, reducing childhood obesity. School athletic programs won't be shuttling teams across the state to playoffs; instead, the kids will play closer to home.

Chapter \$8 will see the emptying of the skies, as airline companies, already losing money, will have to spend 60% of their operating costs on fuel. That's simply unsustainable. Mid-size towns will lose most of their flights; trips under 500 miles will be done by car, bus or train. A coast-to-coast flight will cost \$2,000. Taking the family to Europe will become a once-in-a-decade event; once over there, you'll be able to use Europe's extensive train network and will probably stay for several weeks.

Another result of \$8 a gallon gas will be families concentrating in one region. Otherwise, they won't be able to see each other for the holidays. Colleges, too, will see their geographic diversification fall off, as students attend closer to home.

Chapter \$10 will see driving habits change forever. UPS will use electric trucks. We'll charge our plug-in hybrids overnight in our garages, ultimately pushing us toward the all-electric car. Suburban living won't be cheap – not everyone will be able to afford to heat a 3,000 ft² house. People will head to their jobs in the city on mass transit from energy efficient homes. (Note that an apartment unit doesn't have four walls exposed to the elements). As cities swell, densities will be reached to build subways, trolleys and light rail.

Another chapter covers how container ships will no longer rule the seas, shipping formerly cheap plastic goods (made from petroleum) from China to Wal-Mart stores. Food will change too: about 80% of the energy used in the U.S. food system is for processing, packaging, transporting, storing and preparing food. Supporting local food systems offers significant savings. Aren't we lucky to have the Montgomery County Agricultural Reserve? A most welcome prediction is a rise in Amtrak's status: "A Renaissance of the Rails" propelled by fuel costs

While \$20 per gallon gas might sound like a catastrophe, it just might be the future we desperately need.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

[continued from pg. 8]

please send a contribution to ACT at P.O. Box 7074, Silver Spring, MD 20907. Perhaps you have a neighbor or friend that would be willing to support this effort as well? Unfortunately, as ACT is not a 501(c)3 organization, contributions are not tax deductible.

Also, we will need many volunteers to **help distribute the scorecards at Metro stations** the week of August 30. If you can help for an hour or two during the morning rush that week, please contact me at admin@actfortransit.org or 240-308-1209. Thanks in advance for any help you can provide.

Transit Times

Action Committee for Transit, Inc.
P.O. Box 7074
Silver Spring, MD 20907

PRSRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
SILVER SPRING, MD
PERMIT # 1931

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

ACT to Prepare a Transit Scorecard for the Upcoming Elections

Cindy Snow

Once again ACT will be putting together a Transit Scorecard to be mailed to ACT members and distributed at Metro stations before the Primary election. Questionnaires have been sent to all candidates who have filed for U.S. Congress, the Maryland General Assembly, County Executive and County Council. The questions are posted on our website and can be accessed via a link on our homepage. Responses from the candidates will also be posted on the website after the due date of July 15.

We Need Your Help. If you haven't received the fundraising letter that was mailed out to ACT members to request a contribution toward printing and mailing of the scorecard,

[continued on pg. 7]

Editorial Remarks

Your Transit Times editor is Quon Kwan. Cutoff date for receiving materials for the next publication is **Sept. 17**. Send your materials to Quon at: gykwan@gmail.com or call him at: (h) 301-460-7454.

ACT Officers/Staff for 2010:

President: Ben Ross
V. Pres.: Jim Clarke
V. Pres.: Hans Riemer
V. Pres.: Tina Slater
Secretary: Tracey Johnstone
Treasurer: John Carroll
Board Member: Cavan Wilk
Board Member: Jason Waskey

Non-Voting ex officio board members:

Richard Hoyer: Pedestrian & Bike Safety
Webb Smedley: Purple Line Now!
Miriam Schoenbaum: SMART (MARC riders)

Program Chair: Neil Greene
Webmaster: Jeri Roth
Staff Member: Cindy Snow
admin@actfortransit.org (new address)