

ECA Fall Membership Meeting October 17, 2018

Board Members Present: David Barnes, Joyce Gwadz, Bridget, Foist Jeffrey Drichta, Julie Clark

President David Barnes called the meeting to order and reminded attendees about voting in the upcoming election and provided logistical information, which can also be found on the ECA website.

1. Montgomery County DOT Presentation on Intersections.

DOT representatives, including the following individuals, participated in an interactive presentation:

Michael Paylor, Chief, Division of Traffic Engineering and Operations

Khursheed K.B. Bilgrami, Acting Chief, Traffic Engineering Studies Section

Michael Guiliano, SVT Contracting

Kristen Haas, SVT Contracting

During the presentation, the DOT representatives explained that the Arlington Rd. study began in 2014 as a bike lane study and was revisited in 2017 due to pedestrian related crashes. The study looked at the issue from a “road diet” point of view, i.e. reducing the number of automobile lanes in order to add a bicycle lane. However, Arlington Rd. had too much traffic to take out a lane. Nevertheless given the reported pedestrian issues, including 6 pedestrian incidents from 2014-2017 related to left turning vehicles, DOT set out to improve safety without removing lanes. (Although all reported crashes were left turning, attendees added that they had witnessed or heard of additional right turning pedestrian/vehicle incidents.) During the study period, the DOT also looked at improving safety at the intersections of Arlington Rd. and Elm St. and Arlington Rd. and Edgemoor Ln. Changes were made at all three intersections.

Bethesda Avenue – implemented an “all pedestrian phase.” DOT had to balance increased car congestion with time allowed for all pedestrian phase. Since that initial change, the left turn signal for westbound traffic was restored and signal time adjusted based on observations to reduce queuing.

Elm Street - In addition to the current changes, the County has plans to upgrade this intersection for ADA compliance and signal timing.

Edgemoor Lane - The County implemented “Split Phasing” for cars traveling east or west (only one direction moves at a time) and longer walk times and walk signals that appear before the green light giving pedestrians a head start.

Neighbor feedback during the meeting –

- The all pedestrian phase is well-received for the increased safety but the signage is inadequate and confusing. Discussion regarding diagonal crossing. The DOT staff indicated that diagonal crossing is not allowed here because the corners are not ADA accessible for diagonal crossing. However, in subsequent discussions, they said that, although they advise pedestrians to use the marked crosswalks, it is generally OK for pedestrians to cross diagonally when all traffic is stopped and walk sign is illuminated in both directions.
- Additional feedback regarding pedestrian safety from right turning cars. Spokesman stated that all CBD (central business district) intersections should be no right turn on red. Neighbors noted that there are CBD intersections that allow right turns on red.
- Question - why not install an “all pedestrian phase” at Elm St. and Edgemoor Ln. and Arlington Rd. intersections for consistency. A County spokesman indicated that this change would require longer pedestrian walk times and experience does not justify the change.

To submit comments on these Arlington Road Intersection revisions send an email to: mcdot.trafficops@montgomerycountymd.gov

2. Purple Line Station presentation.

David provided a report. There will be 21 stations connected by above ground light rail trains, connects to Metro and Marc Stations. The prediction is that ridership will average 70,000 riders a by 2030. 2022 is the target for first operations. The Purple Line will require rerouting the Capitol Crescent Trail in Bethesda and Green Trail in Silver Spring. The above-ground building above the station at the old Apex Building site, will be very large – three towers (an office building 22 stories and two apartment buildings 28 stories). These will be the tallest buildings in Bethesda. There will be below ground parking as well as additional above ground parking that will be hidden by residential units. There will be a sky bridge connecting the residential buildings and retail shops along the first floor. The entrance to the Purple Line and new Metro entrance will in a plaza area at ground level and connected underground. There will be high speed elevators to the Metro level. This area will also be accessible through an improved walkway beside Mon Ami Gabi and Bethesda Row Cinema. The high-rise buildings are projected to be completed May 2021. The bike path toward Silver Spring will use a combination of a rebuilt tunnel and then continue beside the light rail.

There was a question regarding parking at the Purple Line stop. David indicated that there are no plans for Purple Line parking (just as there is no Red Line parking there now). The intent to encourage people to use public transportation instead of cars.

For more information:

Purple Line: <https://www.purplelinemd.com/en/>

Development at Apex site: <https://www.clarkconstruction.com/our-work/projects/wilson-elm>

3. Farm Women’s Market development.

David introduced the topic by noting that the Women's farm Market and surrounding area is one of the most talked about properties and that neighborhood concerns include not just the market, but also the parking lots and surrounding low-rise buildings. The developer held public meeting on 10/4, which Joyce Gwadz attended for the ECA.

Joyce made a presentation on the topic including the following information:

Developers: EYA, Bernstein, and Folger Pratt

Locations: 7121 Wisconsin, 7126 Wisconsin, Farm Women's Market

Two proposals under consideration:

Alternative 1: Develop 7121 (17 story, about 175 feet high, retail / residential) and 7126 (residential only?), preserving the Farm Women's Market and keeping the surface parking lots (Lot 24 (behind the Farm Women's Market) and Lot 10 (between Leland and Walsh Streets) as they are.

Alternative 2 (more likely, and where most discussion was focused):

Develop 7121 and 7126, and preserve the Market, as in Alternative 1.

Additional retail/restaurant building behind the Farm Women's Market, two stories and about 30 feet high, to be no wider than the Market. Developers use a portion of the parking lots for residences (apartments on Lot 24; 18 townhouses on Lot 10). The apartment building would be about 70 feet high, and stepped to have a townhouse-like design facing the neighborhood; the townhouses would be 4 story and 45 feet or less in height. The balance of the parking lots is turned into a park (the remaining space on Lot 10 is more a "greenway") and the public parking is put underground. Potential development of the parking lot area under Alternative 2 provides funds to put in the parks and underground parking. The first level of the underground parking will be public parking, and the second will be for residents of the new apartments.)

For further information, google "Bethesda Farm Women's Market Development Proposal" (or "Bethesda Magazine October 5 Farm Women's Market) and see the Bethesda Magazine article of October 5 (which includes diagrams). However, Joyce reported that the article seems more negative on the parks proposal than what she observed at the meeting.

4. Upcoming Neighborhood Events –

Halloween Party and Parade. 5 PM start time at Elm Street and Exfair Road parade followed by pizza party at the Edgemoor Club. Great turnout last year and

Edgemoor House and Garden Tour. Former ECA President Judy Gilbert Levey reported on the history of this bi-annual event. Will bring back the house and garden tour April 28, 2019. The funds raised are devoted to neighborhood beautification. Volunteers are working on it now and neighbors are invited to the next organizational meeting on November 11 at Judy Levey's house.

5. Capital Crescent Trail plans.

Board Members Susan Hendricksen and Bridget Foist attended a community meeting, after which, Bridget briefed the ECA on the meeting as follows:

Capital Crescent Trail

Alternative 1: Permanent Road Diet

Re-configuration of Little Falls Parkway into a two-lane (one lane in each direction) road with an uncontrolled speed table crossing. More visible to motorist than current flex posts. Used on Sligo Creek parkway.

Motorist travel – increase 7 seconds

Pedestrian travel – no increase

Approx. cost \$800,000

Alternative 2: Trail re-orientation to traffic signal at Arlington Rd.

Re-orientation of the Capital Crescent Trail to the Arlington Road intersection, with a controlled signalized crossing and a permanent road diet.

Motorist travel – increase 13 seconds

Pedestrian travel – increase 30 seconds

Approx. cost \$1.5 million

Alternative 3: Pedestrian bridge

Motorist travel -3 seconds

Pedestrian travel – no change

Approx. cost \$4 million

Timeline:

Currently seeking public feedback. Plan to present preferred alternative in winter of 2018/2019 to planning board for approval.

Develop funding request in coordination with MCDOT

Ways to give feedback:

Andrew Tsai, P.E., Project Manager

Andrew.Tsai@MontgomeryParks.org

Open Town Hall – Montgomery Parks homepage under “parks and projects”, click on Open Town Hall

https://www.opentownhall.com/portals/260/forum_home?phase=open

For more information: Capital Crescent Trail Crossing:

<https://www.montgomeryparks.org/projects/directory/capital-crescent-trail-crossing-at-little-falls-parkway/>

New Business:

Question about whether there is a study of the loss of trees in Bethesda. There may be some study at the County level and David will check on this.