

## Transit Task Force Update Meeting in Germantown

On Monday night at the Germantown Uptown Center, Mark Winston, Chair of the Montgomery County Transit Task Force (TTF), and Tom Street, the County's Chief Administrative Office provided an update on their work. The TTF was established by the County Executive to come up with recommendation on designing a comprehensive transportation system for the county. The task force is looking at all of the county's transportation priorities including the Purple Line, the Corridor Cities Transitway and developing a county-wide rapid transit vehicle (RTV) system, formerly known as bus rapid transit (BRT).

Monday night's meeting focused on the RTV system and the Corridor Cities Transitway. The highlights of the presentation were as follows.

- The Task Force will forward recommendation to the County Executive in the beginning of March.
- The Task Force is looking at a RTV system which will be about 150 miles long, 150 stations and covering most of the county.
- Stations will be sheltered to protect riders against weather and they will have benches and real time information on arrivals as well as automatic fare card machines. The fare card system will be integrated into other transportations systems such as Metro, so passengers can use their Metro Smart Trip Cards.
- Where feasible the system will have designated lanes to reduce travel time. These lanes could be on the median, side-of-road, or exclusive bus lanes within the roadway.
- At certain intersections rapid transit vehicles would have priority in crossing by using a transit priority system which allows them to extend a green light or shortening a red light by a few seconds. The idea is to reduce travel time and increase predictability for riders.
- Cost of building the RTV system is projected to be around 2.5 billion (in current dollars). This estimate excluded any cost associated with acquiring land for right-of-way. It would take about 10-20 years to build the entire system. Construction of the RTV system is unlikely to being before 2015.
- The cost of building the system will be divided between the county and the State. The task force is evaluating the idea of establishing special tax districts within a certain radius of the RTV lines to help pay for it. This would be similar to what Virginia did in extending the Metro system to Dulles Airport. Under current law both residential and commercial properties would be subject the special tax.
- The construction of the Corridor Cities Transitway is scheduled for the first phase of development.

Following the presentation there was a question and answer period. The focus was on whether the RTV system would benefit up-county communities that would not be within walking

distance to an RTV stop. Also discussed was whether the system was designed to alleviate congestion in our most congested communities or is it focused on facilitating planned-development on Belward Farm or the FDA at White Oaks.

Mark Wilson argued that up-county communities would benefit from the new transit system. Even those not using it would see reduced commuting times because the system would take cars off the road. He said the task force took both current congestion and future development into consideration.

For those interested in more information about the Transit Task Force, please see [www.Montgomerycountymd/transit](http://www.Montgomerycountymd/transit)

Compiled by Bragi Valgeirsson.