

History of GOCA's Positions on Transit

November 10, 2015

1980 Olney Master Plan Highlights

Georgia Ave median is preserved for future “busway”

WMATA is responsible to construct and operate a “rapid transit system and accompanying regional bus service.”

Due to low density development in Olney, “A more likely method of providing transit service is regional express service from central locations with fringe parking and commuter drop-offs. The service should be express to major employment, retail, and Metrorail stops along Georgia Ave and New Hampshire Avenue.”

2005 Olney Master Plan Highlights

Georgia Ave Busway Study (1998) “recommended that a 2 lane, bi-directional, bus-only roadway be constructed within the Georgia Ave median for approximately 7 miles between the Glenmont Metrorail Station and the vicinity of Spartan Road south of MD 108 in Olney.”

Parking would be at Longwood Rec Center’s park and ride lot and improved access to the Norbeck Rd park and ride lot. The 2002 WMATA Regional Bus Study identified Montgomery General Hospital campus as a site for increased transit service and potential park and ride facility. Optimize busway use through feeder bus service

July 2012 GOCA Resolution

GOCA resolves to support the RTS (formerly known as BRT) concept, but withheld full support until details were known. GOCA opposes special tax districts as a funding mechanism for BRT.

November 2013

County Council approves and adopts the Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan that describes how RTS would fit into the County's transportation network as well as recommended specific corridors: Georgia Ave, US355, New Hampshire Ave, Randolph Rd, University Blvd, US29, Veirs Mill. Several area master plans depend on a RTS in order to be completed.

May 2014

SHA presents 5 plans for the Georgia Ave RTS which range from improving existing bus service (with no dedicated lanes) to two full RTS lanes at 22 ft wide each.

January 2015

County Executive Leggett suspends study on Georgia Ave RTS citing that due to the low density of development in Olney and little future development outlined in the Olney Master Plan, there is greater transit need in other listed corridors

February 2015

MoCo Transportation Priority Letter to the State

1. Purple Line
2. Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT), stages 1 & 2
3. Montrose Parkway East
4. Metro Bus Priority Corridor Network – supporting road improvements
5. US29 BRT Burtonsville to Silver Spring
5. US 355 BRT Bethesda to Clarksburg
5. US 29/Tech Rd, grade separated interchange
- 8 MD 97/28 grade separated interchange
- 9 US 29/Fairland grade separated interchange
- 10 MD 28 widen to 4 lanes between 97 and Layhill Rd

Master Plans Approved Requiring RTS

To implement the recently approved master plans (White Flint, White Oak – including Science Gateway, Clarksburg, Great Seneca Science Corridor), the RTS needs to be built. “developing transit is crucial to meeting County economic development goals.” (Executive Summary of the Report of the County Executive’s Transit Task Force, page 3)

The County has plans to implement RTS so the question is how will it be designed and where will the money come from?

Transit Task Force reviewed funding sources

- ◆ Variety of combinations of the County wide real property tax (for capital), excise tax (for operating), and local-option sales tax
 - pros: already have ability to implement excise tax, sales tax would includes non-county taxpayers
 - cons: sales tax requires state permission, tends not to generate needed revenue
- ◆ Federal funding
 - pros: major source of many infrastructure funding, benefits federal employees in area
 - cons: uncertain and generally inadequate to support major part of capital cost
- ◆ State funding
 - pros: spreads support over a long time, state benefits via increased economic activity
 - cons: current administration has not indicated support for RTS
- ◆ Ruled out corridor based real property tax

Transit Task Force (TTF) concludes an independent Transit Authority is the best alternative, most feasible, and least burdensome to any single group of taxpayers.

March 2015 GOCA Resolution

GOCA opposes the creation of the proposed ITA as defined at the time and asks the County to pursue transit projects in a fiscally responsible manner, funded through existing federal, state, and county funding methods and not special taxes. Transit and road projects should be the direct responsibility of the County Executive. Proof of viability of one line should be established before proceeding with additional lines, and citizen should have input on the design.

Recommended changes to the first ITA Proposal

- ◆ Upper limits on any new taxes (\$0.07 per \$100 assessed value residential, \$0.30 per sq ft commercial)
- ◆ Improved financial accountability –
 - County Council annually approves capital, operating budget, and any eminent domain decisions
 - County Council can veto new taxes
 - Money raised must be used to fund transit activities
- ◆ Up to seven board members
- ◆ Employees of transit authority remain County employees

Recommendations address many of GOCA's initial concerns

However.....

- ◆ Congestion is a regional problem that needs regional solutions
- ◆ The entire proposed RTS is large
- ◆ The lack of full analysis on the effectiveness of the entire proposed RTS compared to other, lower cost alternatives (e.g. improving current bus routes/schedules/fares, improving intersections & traffic light timing)
- ◆ The lack of accountability for the performance of the ITA
- ◆ The county already has the authority to create special tax districts (e.g. County-wide and White Flint)

Things to think about

- ◆ There is a need to address congestion as it directly affects the quality of life of its residents and success of the business community.
- ◆ Without a separate funding mechanism such as the ITA, routes may need to be built incrementally and funding may come from general funds to construct and operate BRT. If money is allocated from the general funds then the trade off is likely fewer services for county residents (such as schools, parks, libraries, police, etc).
- ◆ BRT along US29 and US355 may benefit Olney by diverting traffic that currently passes through Olney to these corridors.