

## 3 MEETING SUMMARY

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Participants

Project Team

DRPT:

Jennifer DeBruhl  
Todd Horsley  
Ciara Williams  
Christopher Arabia

MDOT/MTA:

Zachary Chissell  
Elizabeth Kreider  
James Ritchey

Consultant Team:

Melissa DuMond  
Paul Elman  
Erin Murphy  
Lucas Muller  
Steve Weller  
Amanda Bahrij  
Grace Daigle  
Andrew Wainwright  
Andrew Zalewski

Project Stakeholders

Arlington County, VA:

Jim Larsen  
Kirk Dand

City of Alexandria:

Jennifer Slesinger

Fairfax County, VA:

Elizabeth Mann  
Malcolm Watson  
Zach Khromal  
Yuqing Xiong  
Marcus Moore  
Malcolm Watson

MDOT:

Gladys Hurwitz  
Heather Murphy  
Michelle Martin

Montgomery County, MD:

Dan Hibbert  
Gary Erenrich  
Sandra Brecher

M-NCPPC:

Patrick Reed

MWCOG:

Eric Randall  
Nicholas Ramfos

North Bethesda

Transportation Management

District:

Peggy Schwartz

NVTA:

Ria Kulkarni

NVTC:

Allan Fye  
Ben Owen  
Dan Goldfarb  
Dinah Girma

OmniRide:

Holly Morello

Prince William County:

Courtney Glass

Vanpool Alliance:

Joe Stainsby

VDOT:

Abraham Lerner

Fatemeh Allahdoust

WMATA:

Charlie Scott  
Jonathan Parker

Date/Time: October 16, 2020, 9:30 AM – 12:00 PM

Subject: Stakeholder Meeting #3

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## Key Takeaways

The third stakeholder meeting began with introductions in which stakeholders were asked to share organization successes during this season. Many stakeholders were proud of the way transit has been able to serve the metro DC region during COVID-19. The project team gave updates on I-495 NEXT and I-270 Managed Lanes studies and stakeholders presented recent work that might influence travel across the Bridge. The project team then presented the preliminary study recommendations regarding transit, technology, and commuter assistance programs that passed initial screening of the study and breakout sessions were held to discuss the presented material.

## Study Updates from Stakeholders

Montgomery Planning updated participants on the Corridor Forward Plan which is a master plan for transit options in the Maryland, metro-DC region. Six scenarios will advance preliminary analysis and will undergo robust scenario planning. A key project assumption is that all routes to Virginia will travel across the American Legion Bridge. Website link was posted in the meeting chat and can be found [here](#).

NVTC presented the impact of teleworking in the northern Virginia area based on a recent study. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, 10% of the region teleworked according to MWCOG. The peak of teleworking during spring of 2020 was 40-50%. Modeling telework behavior in the future, the study found that mode share increases at high teleworking rates because of the low-income workers still traveling to on-site jobs. As such, single occupancy vehicle trips had the most volatility, and bus as a mode became more prominent.

MWCOG gave an update on the 2019 State of the Commute General Public Report, which has commuter information pre-pandemic. The next report is planned for 2022. According to other work they are doing, there is a high percentage of employers interested in continuing telework after pandemic restrictions are lifted. They are modifying some of their survey questions to learn more about this topic.

VDOT mentioned they have a commuter survey that has been developed. The [website](#) was also posted in meeting chat. And Montgomery County commented that there has been extensive internal effort toward planning BRT.

## Refinement Process Results

The project team presented all preliminary recommendations and explained the initial screening process and why recommendations were screened out based on a variety of different factors. Clarification was given during the call that travel demands were based on a blend of existing and future land use projections. For the off-model analysis, it was discussed that the transit mode share was set at 5% based on assumptions in previous studies. Sensitivity testing will be done in the model to more accurately predict the percentage of transit use as a mode share.

## Breakout Group Session Summaries

### Group 1

Group 1 began their breakout group discussion with conversation about the potential transit route recommendations presented. Participants gave several examples of how the strategy for implementation could evolve over time based available infrastructure, changes in land use, increased route popularity, and other factors. Participants were surprised by lack of demand from White Flint. Montgomery County is focused on centering growth in the White Flint and White Oak areas, so they would expect demand to rise over time. They suggested infill stops with future services. Several questions were raised related to consideration of equity in planning the routes. Participants indicated Montgomery County is very focused on equity in transit and suggested looking at other studies in the region to determine if something other than the federal poverty line should be used as the low-income threshold due to high cost of living in DC metro. The example was given that WMATA uses \$30,000 as its low-income threshold. Participants also noted that frequencies for the services seemed really low. They suggest looking at Omni-ride, MTA, and others for guidelines on minimum frequencies. The project team indicated that adjustments to frequencies were being considered as part of the modeling efforts currently underway.

Vanpool Alliance representatives expressed concern that new transit service over the Bridge would pull users from existing vanpool routes. There was discussion as to how to focus on capturing SOV trips rather than moving passengers from vanpool to bus, including the possibility of introducing incentives for vanpool routes that show a reduction in riders due to the new transit services.

Participants indicated that they were surprised by polling results from Stakeholder Meeting #2 showing a preference for real-time parking information over transit signal priority to improve travel times. They indicated that real-time parking information is valuable in more suburban areas, but less useful in urban areas with limited parking. Participants would like to see implementation of variable messaging signs and apps that provide information such as SOV and transit travel times and next bus arrival time to allow commuters to make informed choices about their travel mode before leaving the house.

## Group 2

In regard to future regional change, some stakeholders in Group 2 stressed that the growth in Tysons will increase in its draw of commuters over the Bridge. Maryland representatives stressed that there are plans in development that will cause more job growth in Maryland. Two factors that will affect future travel is the rate of teleworking and the use of autonomous vehicles. It was discussed how these factors may decrease the cost of travel and decrease congestion over the bridge.

Concerning the potential transit route recommendations, there was an emphasis on Montgomery Mall being an important stop on routes. The route from Fredrick to Arlington was brought up and stakeholders commented that it would also be beneficial to connect Frederick to DC via commuter bus. If this route was developed, travel should stay on managed lanes as much as possible. Routing should be connected through I-66 which would also open up additional funding opportunities.

Regarding commuter assistance programs, stakeholders agreed that technology will provide more flexibility for commuters which might increase participation. Another benefit is that both Virginia and Maryland have strong existing CAP programs which makes coordination for new incentives across the Bridge more doable and effective.

## Group 3

Discussion in Group 3 began with an evaluation of evolving regional travel trends in the future. There was consensus among participants that COVID-19 and the ensuing stay-at-home measures have dramatically changed the commuting patterns of workers in Virginia and Maryland in two specific ways. First, teleworking is likely going to continue even after the threat of COVID-19 has diminished, even if at a limited capacity where employees telework one or two days per week. Second, an increasing proportion of travel is moving to the off-peak time and the distribution of travel through the day is changing. However, whereas the number of people driving, and total miles traveled decreased dramatically in the early stages of the pandemic, vehicle miles traveled (VMT) is coming close to pre-COVID-19 levels again, and transit and carpool/vanpool usage has decreased.

In regard to potential transit route recommendations discussed during the presentation, participants outlined a few recommendations for the Project Team to consider in future analysis. First, more frequent service and shorter headway times would help make the service more attractive and competitive. Second, some routes operate as peak direction only and do not stop at highly travelled to destinations, such as White Oak, MD. Third, transit mode share assumption (currently 5%) could potentially be improved by looking at the mode share split for transit on similar facilities in the region, such as I-95.

Participants also highlighted the administrative challenges of coordinating interstate transit services and multi-jurisdictional commuter assistance programs (CAPs). Participants agreed that CAPs at the local level have worked well with each other and MWCOCG has been instrumental in pulling the region together to coordinate on transportation demand management (TDM) strategies. The challenge going forward is how these transit and CAPs can be coordinated and implemented as part of the traffic mitigation plan during the construction of the Managed Lanes in MD and Express Lanes in Virginia.

## Meeting Follow Up Questions

After the meeting, stakeholders reached out to the project team with some follow up questions. The responses to those questions are summarized below.

One question was asked for clarification on how the transit recommendation capital cost per passenger was calculated and exactly what it represents. The project team responded that the capital cost per passenger was assumed to be a capital cost per average daily boarding. For example, recommendation 2a, East Bethesda – Tysons East, requires two vehicles daily x \$600,000 for each vehicle which equals \$1,200,000. Daily boarding was estimated at 256 riders (using forecasted zone to zone travel demand from MWCOG travel demand model). The capital cost per passenger then was calculated to be \$4,682 which is \$1,200,000 divided by 256. In everyday terms, the lower the capital cost per passenger is, the higher the return is on capital dollars.

Another question was regarding Dulles Airport as a destination. The project team explained that it was brought up in the last meeting for consideration but did not pass initial screening. It was screened out due to insufficient travel demand as documented on slide 15.

Additionally, a question was asked about the goal for the study and what will be its result. Specifically, if the recommendations will be given to DRPT for guidance in future funding or if there is designated funding associated with the potential recommendations. The project team responded that, to generalize, the study will provide Virginia and Maryland concepts that may be operationalized in the future. These recommendations are for transit that may be pursued in the context of the managed lanes improvements going on in both states. Currently no specific funding sources have been identified by the study sponsors, DRPT and MTA, to support the potential recommendations.

## Action Items

1. Stakeholders to help distribute Survey 2 after its launch

## Lookahead

- December 3: Stakeholder Meeting #4