

## **Park Hills Civic Association Special Community Meeting – Summary**

On **Wednesday, October 13, 2010** the Park Hills Civic Association (PHCA) held its second Special Community Meeting devoted exclusively to the proposed Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) Purple Line station on Wayne Avenue & Dale Drive at the Silver Spring International Middle School Media Center beginning at 7:30 pm. For this particular community meeting, the Civic Association assembled a panel of experts and experienced professionals, who very kindly agreed to answer questions from the community pertaining to six primary areas of concern related to the Purple Line light rail station proposed for Wayne Avenue at Dale Drive:

1. Transit Planning & Traffic Engineering
2. Zoning & Land Use
3. Crime & Community Safety
4. Noise & Vibration
5. Environment & Watershed
6. School Operations & Safety

These questions were solicited ahead of time by the Civic Association (via the PHCA listserv) and distributed to each of the respective panel members prior to the meeting. The panelists then prepared formal responses to each of the questions submitted by Park Hills residents and delivered them in person at the community meeting while also taking questions from the floor.

### **Panel Members:**

- Mike Madden: Project Director – MTA Purple Line Project Team
- Gary Erenrich: Special Assistant to the Director – Montgomery County Dept. of Transportation
- Joe Romanowski: Transit Engineer – RK&K Engineering (MTA consultant)
- Jeff Kuttesch: Traffic Engineer – RK&K Engineering (MTA consultant)
- Harriet Levine: Transit Engineer – Jacobs Engineering Group (MTA consultant)
- Melissa Williams: Senior Planner – Maryland-National Capital Park & Planning Commission
- Bob Carter: Deputy Commander –Montgomery County Police Department
- Mike Staiano: Principal and Founder – Staiano Engineering
- Doug Redmond: Natural Resources Manager – Montgomery County Department of Parks
- Sean Gallagher: Asst. Director, Facilities Management – Montgomery County Public Schools

### **Guests:**

- Monica Ettinger: Legislative Aide – Maryland State Delegate, Sheila Hixson
- Simone Myrie: Legislative Aide – Maryland State Delegate, Heather Mizeur
- Patrick Metz: Associate – Maryland State Delegate, Heather Mizeur
- Hans Riemer: (soon-to-be) Montgomery County Council At-Large Member-Elect
- David Anspacher: Senior Planner – Maryland-National Capital Park & Planning Commission
- Carlos Abinader: Outreach Program Manager – Maryland Department of Transportation
- Kacie Levy: Public Relations Coordinator – Rosborough Communications (MTA consultant)
- Marsha Kaiser: Managing Principal – PB Placemaking Group (MTA consultant)
- Katie Ryan: Co-President – Silver Spring International Middle School PTSA
- Chris Victoria – Board Member, Friends of Sligo Creek
- Kathleen Samiy: President – Seven Oaks-Evanswood Citizens' Association
- Bruce Altevegot: Representative – Seven Oaks-Evanswood Citizens' Association
- Karen Roper: Representative – East Silver Spring Civic Association
- Elahe Izadi: Reporter – TBD Blog ([www.tbd.com](http://www.tbd.com))

**Attendees:**

James Anderson; Deanna Anderson; Christine Arnold-Lourie; Alimayehu Awar; Deborah Belsky; Robert Bor; Alan Bowser; Wendy Caswell; Jim Chika; Janice Chika; Mary Clive; Leslie Downey; Phil Downey; Fred Ehrenreich; Robert Fair; Sandra Fair; Anne Gavin; Paul Guinnessy; Doug Hoff; Susan Hoff; Sandy Kemper; Susan McCauley; Chris Richardson; Brian Riley; James Riley; Jen Riskus; Carolyn Schick; Nancy Schwiesow; Tom Senko; Tina Slater; Stephanie Subramanian; Michael Ussury.

**Greetings & Introductions****Locally-Preferred Alternative (LPA) on Wayne Avenue**

Mike Madden, MTA's Purple Line Project Director, provided an overview of the Purple Line's route between the Silver Spring Transit Center and the Piney Branch/Arliss Street stations:

- Here in Silver Spring the Locally-Preferred Alternative, when approaching from Bethesda, would stay on the south side of the CSX tracks until just past Spring Street, where it will cross over the tracks to enter the Silver Spring Transit Center on an aerial structure one level above the existing Metro tracks and provide connections to Metro's Red Line, the MARC Brunswick line, and various bus routes.
- From there it would exit the Silver Spring Transit Center and cross Georgia Avenue at street level to follow Bonifant Street, where it will go into a station that has been incorporated into the new Silver Spring Public Library, thus adding a new phase (i.e., stream) of traffic into the intersection at Fenton and Wayne.
- From there the light rail would continue on Wayne Avenue at street level in shared lanes down the middle of the street with added left-turn lanes at Cedar Street, Dale Drive and Sligo Creek Parkway. Additionally, MTA acknowledges that the area near Wayne and Fenton is a "bottleneck"; consequently, plans call for an additional inside left-turn lane on Wayne to allow eastbound traffic access to the Whole Foods parking lot.
- Just past Manchester Road the Purple Line would enter a quarter-mile long tunnel under Plymouth Avenue and - due to the steep grades - return to the surface on Arliss Street just before turning left on Piney Branch Road.
- Per the request of the Montgomery County Council, MTA is designing the project so that Wayne Avenue could accommodate a Purple Line station at Wayne and Dale in the future; this means separating the track so that a station platform could be installed at a later date.
- Purple Line light rail station platforms will be 200 feet long (vs. Metro heavy rail stations at 800 feet), 10-15 feet wide, and approximately 14 inches high.

**MTA Purple Line – Next Steps**

- According to the January 5, 2011 edition of the Gazette, "To date, the project has received \$25 million in federal funding and \$15 million from the state. The Maryland Transit Administration is waiting on state and federal budgets to determine how much money will be available this year."
- Presently, MTA is advancing the Purple Line through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) New Starts evaluation process, where the FTA evaluates the project with respect to such criteria as cost-effectiveness, validity of ridership estimates, and soundness of cost estimates, among a number of other measures. At every step of the way, MTA will need to obtain permission from the federal government in order to proceed to the next phase. FTA recently announced that they will not formally begin the New Starts evaluation process until they first approve MTA's ridership estimates – this is expected to take place around the end of November 2010.
- Both the State of Maryland and Montgomery County hope to begin Preliminary Engineering, a roughly two-year phase of the project, in March 2011. To save time, MTA will simultaneously

complete the Final Environmental Impact Statement, with both project phases expected to be complete by Fall 2012.

- Once the process enters the Final Design phase, which again will require permission from the Federal government, a Full Funded Grant Agreement (FFGA) is negotiated: this is where MTA will secure a commitment from the Federal government that they will fund the project, along with the State, and receive a determination as to how much funding the project will receive each year. Only then will MTA and the State learn whether the Purple Line project will be built. If the FTA determines the Purple Line to be eligible for funding, Congress nevertheless will still need to appropriate funds for this project.
- 2014 is the earliest point at which construction for the Purple Line could begin.
- MTA recently announced the formation of small community “work groups” that will focus on specific station areas and, in some cases, specific issues, such as the Capital Crescent Trail. There will be a community work group for the proposed Dale Drive station, and meetings are expected to begin in early 2011.

## **Answers to Purple Line Questions Submitted by the Park Hills Community**

### **A. TRANSIT PLANNING & TRAFFIC ENGINEERING [Mike Madden, Gary Erenrich & the Purple Line Project Team]**

Preface by Erenrich:

These questions, approximately two-thirds of which are devoted to transit planning and traffic engineering, are excellent, and they provide a good framework for the county to use with Park & Planning, MTA, and the State Highway Administration to be able to begin discussions which need to take place on some of these answers, such as maintenance responsibility, memoranda of understanding with State Highway and the County, and how to maintain snow removal, among other things. As we go through Preliminary Engineering and Core Design, our traffic engineers, highway maintenance, and transit division will all be working closely with the community and MTA, meeting regularly and responding issue-by-issue to these and other concerns in a coordinated effort.

1. What are the criteria that will be used to determine whether or not to build a station at Dale and Wayne?

**Answer:** We intend to continue to work with the community and County about what they want.

2. I understand that the Council voted not to build a station at Wayne Dale in the initial construction phase. If the Council voted to build a station there in the future, could you describe whether the construction of a station would be a "big deal," or whether a station could be built fairly quickly.

**Answer:** Addition of the Dale Drive Station at a later date will only require the construction of the station platform and amenities. No widening of the roadway will be required. It is anticipated that these activities could occur with minimal disruption.

3. How does the proximity to a stop affect property values?

**Answer:** Proximity to a light rail stop has been shown to raise residential property values (e.g. San Diego, Boston, Portland, Philadelphia). Unlike commuter rail, there is not a penalty for living near a light rail line, but not near the station. This is because commuter rail is (unlike LRT) loud and dangerous.

4. What homes/commercial property from Dartmouth, Greenwich, Dale and Schuyler will you be taking through eminent domain to: (a) separate parent drop-offs from bus movements; (b) maintain and improve parking for staff and faculty; (c) keep staff and faculty parking separated from bus movements; (d) and prevent additional traffic from entering the Sligo Creek Elementary School area. Also, if - in the initial construction phase - the Purple Line is built so that a Dale Station can be put in at a later date, will there still have to be significant alterations to the school entrance and the re-routing of the school buses from their existing drop-off points?

**Answer:** No homes will be taken. Where property is taken, it will not be for any of the reasons listed above, but to provide room for the left turn lanes and the Green Trail. The traffic pattern of the school buses and parent drop-offs will stay the same.

Additionally, the entrance will still be accessed off Wayne Avenue by parents, and school buses will still circulate through Schuyler. Due to the widening for a left-turn lane in place of the station platform, the school's entrance must be relocated either with or without the station. The MTA has worked with the schools and, at the request of the school, has redesigned the school staff and faculty parking lot. The relocation of the driveway further east will help reduce congestion and conflicts at the intersection of Dale and Wayne, while maintaining full access to the driveway.

5. How much property will be taken - exact footage amounts, i.e. how much widening and for what distance? Please compare with and without the proposed Dale station.

**Answer:** The plans right now are conceptual. MTA can meet with individual property owners to go through on a more detailed level what the impacts to their property will be. Some of what the MTA will be taking is the roadway right-of-way. (The road widening with, and without, the proposed station will be the same). Because the amounts are different for every parcel this is not the right forum to address exact footage amounts. We can answer these questions for each street address individually. However, I would note that we are not yet in Preliminary Engineering, and so any quantities may be subject to change.

6. What sort of compensation can residents along Wayne Ave expect with their property values decreasing due to the increased traffic density brought on Wayne Ave by the train and car traffic, and the loss of a sizable portion of their front yard?

**Answer:** Increases in traffic will come with time and population and job growth, not from the Purple Line.

7. If there is a stop at Dale and Wayne, which residential streets will need to be used for arrival and departure of Sligo Creek Elementary's and Silver Spring International Middle School's combined population of approximately 1,400 students and staff?

**Answer:** Traffic patterns for the schools will not need to change. The only change will be the relocation of the entrance to the faculty and staff parking lot farther to the east. This will make access into and out of the lot easier since there will not be a conflict with the cars queuing at the Dale Drive signal.

8. Seems like there is a lot of room for a right-of-way between Dale and Sligo to go along the north side of Wayne, not down the middle. Seems like there would be less traffic interference if it was to be done this way. So, why not?

**Answer:** Light-rail running on the side of a roadway presents a different set of challenges for traffic operations than running in the street. For example, this option would require an additional signal at the SSIMS parking lot driveway which could add delay for traffic. In order for the light rail to operate on

the north side of Wayne Avenue, a traffic signal would be required for the light rail to cross to the north side, then another signal for the light rail to re-enter the media further east, both delaying operations. Shifting the Purple Line alignment east of SSIMS to a dedicated alignment on the north side of Wayne Avenue would require the acquisition of additional property to accommodate a minimum of six lanes (two for the Purple Line and four for Wayne Ave) instead of the current four lanes plus a left turn lane at Sligo Creek Parkway. This shift in alignment would also require adding additional traffic signals to allow the light rail vehicle to cross the westbound lanes of Wayne Avenue.

9. It appears that the widening of Wayne next to Whole Foods is too close to the building to allow for the 13' wide buffer (5') and trail (8'). How wide will the buffer and trail be at the point next to Whole Foods?

**Answer:** MTA plans to maintain the current width of the buffer and trail next to Whole Foods.

10: Given that the light rail tracks – unlike those for Metro – will be unheated, what measures will be needed to keep the rail lines clear during severe winter weather? For example, is it possible that during particularly bad snow and/or ice storms that the Purple Line will need to be run 24 hours to keep the tracks clear?

**Answer:** As Gary Erenrich indicated at the meeting in October 2010, Wayne Avenue is a county-maintained street, so Montgomery County will work with the MTA on what is proper for snow removal procedures. We will look along the whole line as we go along in design. It would be similar to regular snow removal. Regular street plowing (the same as is done for cars) will be sufficient for the street-running sections of light rail. It is possible that extended snow events may require the light rail to run 24 hours a day to keep **off-street trackage** clear. MTA will work to minimize these occurrences, including the study of keeping 24-hour operations to off-street segments only.

11. In MTA's architectural history technical report dated 9/08 (page. 2-40), you discuss the impact of light rail on Montgomery Blair High School at 313 Wayne Ave. (fyi, Montgomery Blair HS moved from this site in 1998). It states that "A small portion of the parcel will be regarded to accommodate the Purple Line." What portion? What additional portion will be taken if a stop is built at Dale and Wayne?

**Answer:** The amount of property taken is approximately 0.13 acre along Wayne Avenue. **This is the same with or without the station.** However, I would note that we are not yet in Preliminary Engineering, and so the number could change.

12. In your socio-economic technical report (page 6-20), you considered adverse impacts to the environmental justice communities on 3 schools. You do not consider the impact on Silver Spring Elementary, which is 45% black or Hispanic; or the SS Int'l MS, which is 68% black or Hispanic. Why?

**Answer:** We do not believe we have adverse impacts to the school.

13. On your travel demand forecasting tech report, you state that route Ride On bus15 will be removed. What impact will the increased walking distance to PL stops have on disadvantaged communities? Would original heavy rail line offer greater benefits and have a higher benefit-cost ratio than this line?

**Answer:** Exclusion of the Dale Drive station will require a longer walk for local transit users. The original heavy rail line did not have a specifically identified alignment so detailed analysis was not developed. Whether it would have provided greater benefits depends on what benefits you are considering.

14. How did you arrive at the projection that this line will carry in 2030 more than twice as many daily riders than the Baltimore light rail now carries? 64,800 is the estimated daily ridership for the Purple Line, which is 16 miles and has 21 stations; 34,700 is the actual ridership for the Baltimore light rail, which is 30 miles long and has 33 stations.

**Answer:** Ridership in Baltimore is not relevant to the Purple Line. Ridership projections are not a function of how long the light rail line is, but of the markets. Ridership projections are developed based on where people are trying to go, the levels of congestion on existing roads, the cost of parking, and how convenient the transit service is (in location, frequency of service, and connecting services).

Note: the new refined ridership numbers are approximately 60,000.

15. Given that the Sligo Creek watershed is located along a flood plain, how will the Purple Line's operations be affected in the (inevitable) event that Sligo Creek flooding makes the Wayne Avenue alignment impassible?

**Answer:** If the roadway is impassable – there will be no traffic on it: no light rail, no cars, no buses.

16. In light of recent metro accidents and a new regime at FTA to increase oversight and safety standards for mass transit, what impact will this have on the layout of the Purple Line (if any) or on the type of trains or safety procedures MTA will follow?

**Answer:** The Purple Line would meet any required safety standards. Since we don't know what these standards would be (if they are developed) we cannot say what the impact would be.

17. Where will MTA locate the power traction substation along the Wayne Avenue alignment?

**Answer:** The locations of the TPSSs have not been finalized, but currently the MTA is looking at one on Bonifant Street, near the SSTC, and the next one near the station at Manchester. However, I would note that we are not yet in Preliminary Engineering, and so this may be subject to change.

18. What emergency procedures will be employed to remove non-functioning or broken-down light rail cars from the Wayne Avenue corridor? Given the negative impact on traffic in the event that the Purple Line would break down in the middle of Wayne Avenue, what would be the typical length of time needed to remove a non-functioning light rail car?

**Answer:** Though specific operations have yet to be determined, it is typical for a light rail line to push or pull a disabled train with either the preceding or following train to the nearest maintenance yard, or to a siding. It is important to remember that on Wayne Avenue there are other lanes for traffic. It would be worse for the Purple Line if a car breaks down on the tracks, because that would block the Purple Line.

19. What natural and other hazards (e.g., debris on the rails) can interfere with the proper functioning of the light rail system? What preventive measures will be employed to keep the Purple Line from succumbing to these hazards?

**Answer:** Trees falling on and knocking down the overhead wire system will stop the system. During Fall, wet leaves on the tracks can negatively affect traction. This is a known issue with any rail transit system, and there are numerous approaches to combat it. These would include brushes to wipe the leaves off the tracks, washing the railhead, and applying sand to increase traction.

20. Now that the Purple Line Functional Master Plan has been completed – and revised – what additional studies will MTA produce in order to supplement the Master Plan?

**Answer:** As you note, the Functional Master Plan has been completed, no additional studies have been requested by the County Council.

21. Purple Line costs, when matched against anemic county and state revenues, strongly suggests that cost-cutting measures will almost certainly need to be employed. If so, which ones?

**Answer:** The MTA has not identified any cost-cutting measures.

22. Various Wayne Avenue improvements (lighting, sidewalks, streetscape beautification), as discussed in prior Park Hills Civic Association meetings with the MTA Purple Line project team, will come from county - not state – budgets.. Given the recent severe budget cuts enacted by the County, how likely is it that the County will not be to pay for these improvements?

**Answer:** This is a question for the county. Sidewalks and station amenities are part of the Purple Line project and will not be cut.

23. Widening Wayne Avenue from 48' to 72' will likely require burying utilities (electric, phone, cable TV) given the limited right-of-way remaining in residents' front yard space for erecting utility poles. If, however, utility cables will not be buried, will the county or state then be purchasing right-of-way easements for the placement of utility poles?

**Answer:** Any utility work required for the Purple Line will be the MTA's responsibility, but the County will be working with them. Whether or not the overhead utilities will be relocated underground has not been decided at this time. Easements will be acquired by the MTA, Montgomery County, and/or the utility companies for utilities as needed.

24. To what extent is the MTA in discussion with the Federal Transit Administration over the Purple Line? Given the degree of federal funding, what will the extent of FTA's oversight of the Purple Line? What type of input will the FTA have over the Purple Line Functional Master Plan in order for the state to receive federal funding?

**Answer:** The FTA has extensive oversight of all New Starts projects. We coordinate with them closely. A Project Management Oversight Consultant has already been hired and started working on the project. The Functional Master Plan is complete. FTA will not have any input on the County Master Plan. Federal funding has no bearing on this, or vice versa.

25. The economic and ridership numbers for the proposed Dale Drive station are very different from any other station on the Purple Line: partly because a different ridership model, which more than doubled the catchment area, was used. Will this put the entire project at risk from federal funding? Has the FTA asked any questions about the models you've used to project ridership numbers?

**Answer:** This question reflects a complete misunderstanding of the travel demand modeling. It is unclear to what the question is referring. One model was used – it has been extensively reviewed and vetted by the FTA. All catchment areas are the same size. The model uses employment and housing projections from the approved county zoning.

26. What will the hours of operation of the Purple Line be on weekdays vs. weekends? How often would the trains run peak vs. off-peak hours?

**Answer:** Since the Purple Line would be providing connections to Metrorail, MTA anticipates operating the Purple Line during those same hours. The Purple Line is expected to run every 6 minutes during peak travel hours, every 10-12 minutes during off-peak hours, and every 15 minutes during "off-off" peak hours (with the high likelihood of fewer vehicles during non-peak hours). Erenrich chimed in that Metrorail operates until 3:00 am on Fridays and Saturdays and reminded residents that the County's Ride On buses operate 21 hours each day – a rather high level of transit service. More specifically, Ride On bus begins service each weekday at 4:20 a.m. and ends at 1:05 in the morning (3:05 a.m. on the weekends).

27. How will the fare structure work – will there be free transfer to other buses and/or Metro? Will this light rail have an honor fare system like the light rail in Baltimore? Will it be part of the Smart Card system?

**Answer:** It will be part of the Smart Card system. Fares for the Purple Line will initially replicate existing Metrobus fare structure and policies. Purple Line transfers to Metrobus will be free while transfer to Metrorail would be full distanced-based fares, although if using a SmarTrip or other electronic fare medium, the fare would be calculated as distance-based fare using the trip's origin station on the Purple Line. Transfers to other local services will be equal to existing bus-to-bus transfer policies. To speed up boarding and alighting, a proof-of-purchase payment method is assumed with tickets purchased from ticket vending machines at stations. Passengers would board through multiple doors to speed loading. Roving, on-board fare inspectors would be required to reduce the incidence of fare evasion, as is typical of most light rail systems in the United States.

28. The impression is given that the Purple Line will be integrated with Metro. Does this mean that fares will be tailored to Metro as well - including rate increases? Or will fares be controlled by the state? How much is it predicted to cost to buy a ticket from the Fenton station or the proposed Dale station and travel to either Bethesda or College Park? Would it be cheaper to simply to walk to the Silver Spring Metro and board Metro red/green line trains to get to College Park?

**Answer:** See question 27.

29. Ride On bus 15 appears to be largely used by minorities who transfer to other buses downtown Silver Spring. What will the Purple Line fare structure be, and will those who use RO15 - which will go away if the Purple Line goes down Wayne - be disadvantaged by not being able to transfer for free to other ride on buses and/or metro?

**Answer:** Erenrich responded that the way the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) did its travel analysis and forecasting, it has to make certain assumptions about what level of local bus service remains and how much gets replaced by the Purple Line. I think that, in reality, because the distances between stations, whether the proposed Dale station is in or not, is still at least a half mile or so, we will continue to have and operate local bus service on Wayne Avenue. We are going to see bus service for people, for whom the Purple Line may not serve their needs or have access to. The question is, what is the level of bus service that is needed in support of the Purple Line to get people to and from stations and for transit trips for which the Purple Line does not provide direct routing for. We currently have four bus routes that serve the area, and believe it or not, we currently have 300 riders each day getting on at the Dale and Wayne intersection on those four routes. Bus service at this intersection is reasonably heavily used by the community. The number 15 bus – second busiest Ride On route in the county system – picks up 221 riders daily at the Dale station. This is pretty significant and shows you the impact that having a Purple Line station there would be able to serve a lot of those riders, who might find, in fact, the Purple Line to be quicker and more efficient. Some may not. In any event, I think we need to work very closely, not only in this section of East Silver Spring at this intersection but in the whole corridor, now that we are getting into design and operational questions.

30. Why is there not continuous bus service that follows this route already from Silver Spring to U of MD?

**Answer:** There is – the J4 provides this service, but it is slow and unreliable.

31. The presence of trains at a proposed Dale station and a need for left turns, especially at peak times, would create new traffic issues at the school crossing. How will this be managed?

**Answer:** Pedestrians, including students, will continue to cross Wayne Avenue at the signalized marked pedestrian crossing at the Dale Drive intersection. The station area will actually provide a refuge in the median for pedestrians who are unable to cross the entire street at one time. MTA needs to continue to work with the County traffic and schools on these types of issues during Preliminary Engineering. The MTA is going to work with everyone so that it is safe and that there is access to the Purple Line.

32. I am very concerned about access to the Park Hills neighborhood from westbound Wayne Ave. Specifically heading west on Wayne and attempting to turn left (south) onto Dale Drive. In the past, it was assured to us that left turn only lanes would be added making this turn easier. However, I recently read that they plan to omit the left-turn only lane on Wayne to Dale. Is this true?

**Answer:** N/A.

33. Coming from 495 (inner loop), if I exit onto Georgia Ave, I can't turn left onto Dale during rush hour, so that route won't work. If I exit 495 (inner loop) onto Colesville Rd heading south, it is mayhem to try to turn left at Dale, so I avoid that route. So, I turn left onto Sligo Creek from Colesville, take a right onto Wayne and then a left onto Dale. Now add the Purple Line and more congestion and no dedicated left-turn only lane and I will sit in a bottleneck trying to get home. What does the MTA say about access to the neighborhood from westbound Wayne Ave with a stop at Wayne/Dale and no dedicated left-turn lane? How will the MTA handle traffic in such a way to not create a traffic jam during rush hour for those wanting to turn left onto Dale from southbound Wayne?

**Answer:** N/A.

34. When you did your traffic counts on 4/19/06 (the most recent one posted on the website) of the Dale/Wayne intersection, was there any adjustment made for the large number of vehicles that turn into the parking lot before the intersection and depart going the other way, but interfere with traffic using the intersection?

**Answer:** N/A.

35. [From the floor] What side of Wayne Avenue will be widened? There will be three lanes (in each direction), including a dedicated lane? Will there be catenary wires overhead, as opposed to a catenary-free system [like those that have recently been developed in Europe]?

**Answer:** The north side of Wayne Avenue – that is, the “school” side – will be widened. Yes, three lanes in each direction, but the Purple Line would be utilizing shared lanes, as MTA determined that dedicated transit lanes would be too great an impact on the community. Yes, overhead wires would be used to power the system.

36. [From the floor] Given the Wayne Avenue corridor and absence of any dedicated transit lanes, how is light rail any different or better than buses? Given the considerable investment planned for the Purple Line, why not simply save money by increasing and improving bus service?

**Answer:** The Purple Line segment from Bethesda to downtown Silver Spring would transport riders between the two locations in 9-10 minutes versus 25-60 minutes (depending on time of day) by automobile. Not only would light rail be much faster but it would also, just as important, be more reliable than traveling by car. Aside from the Wayne Avenue corridor and a half-mile segment in Prince George’s County that utilizes shared lanes, the rest of the Purple Line light rail system would travel on dedicated lanes. Thus, the Purple Line would be much faster than buses and, again, more reliable in getting people to and from work – though admittedly not as fast as a Metro-type heavy rail system, since we cannot afford such a project. MTA and the County recognize that the Wayne Avenue segment of the Purple Line would only be able to travel as fast as car traffic, and area residents seeking to travel only a

mile or so would still want to take local buses. But for those traveling more than several miles or longer would find the Purple Line to be a quicker and more reliable mode of transport. Additionally, the plan to add dedicated left-turn lanes along Wayne Avenue will prevent light rail from sitting in traffic waiting for cars to turn left.

## **B. ZONING & LAND USE [Melissa Williams]**

1. The first page of Montgomery County Planning Dept's Zoning Montgomery web link state, "The zoning code sets the framework for how Montgomery County develops. However, the current code was last rewritten in 1977 and has grown outdated. Rewriting the code can set the stage for achieving the County's vision by promoting infill of appropriate scale and creating neighborhoods of mobility, where sustainable design makes great public spaces. This approach can position the county to grow smart with minimal red tape." What does "promoting infill of appropriate scale" mean, and what is meant by "creating neighborhoods of mobility"?

**Answer:** A perfect example of "promoting infill of appropriate scale" and "creating neighborhoods of mobility" is the Takoma-Langley Crossroads community, an area in which the sector plan includes a Purple Line station (Ms. Williams is the Project Manager for this section of work). In that area what we are really looking at is a suburban community that had urbanized over the years. Thus, many of the suburban uses had been retrofitted (for urban uses), and while people had been making them work, they weren't efficient. So when planning and government officials began looking at the heart of the problem – the epicenter being the intersection of University Boulevard and New Hampshire Avenue, where 100,000 cars move through daily – this started out as a bi-county plan, a partnership between Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, along with the City of Takoma Park. The goal of the project was to find solutions that deal effectively with the coming Purple Line, traffic, density, pedestrian safety, and the new transit center, as well as mechanisms for generating economic activity in that area. What we found was a very densely populated community that was largely being served by one-story "strip malls" with attendant urban concerns about impervious surfaces, watershed health, pedestrian safety, and crime, et al. Using the sector plan process, the challenge was to find the most effective corrections, particularly for a community that was profoundly different than what it had been 20-30 years previously. What we did was make suggestions. Our goal was to retain as many of the suburban components that made that community attractive while adapting a number of urban aspects to match the current character of the area. To many people "neighborhoods of mobility" means "transit-oriented development" and mass transit. But that's not the way we looked at this community. Instead we looked at how people move through the community and implemented a multi-modal approach that incorporated a hierarchy, with pedestrians on top of the "food chain" (walkers, bikers, trail hikers), mass transit in the middle, and automobile drivers at the bottom. The existing zoning codes written over 30 years ago do not necessarily work for some of the communities that exist today. As a Planning Board staffer when a development plan comes into my office, I can only analyze the plan with the language in the zoning codes currently in place. The current zoning code rewrite is an ongoing process, and the adoption of the new code is still a long ways off.

2. [Background: Melissa Williams gave a presentation to the Planning Board's Purple Line Functional Master Plan Advisory Group (MPAG) on the Takoma/Langley station and sector plan. One MPAG participant recalled that Ms. Williams said at the time that the Planning Board was working on the Takoma/Langley sector plan, because the Board knew where the station was going to be. Ms. Williams went on to say that as soon as the Planning Board knew where the other stations will be, they would be opening sector plans for those areas as well].

Given the County Council's resolution that they have no desire or intent to rezone the residential area around a possible Dale station, will the Planning Board staff still be doing a sector plan? If so, why - what will they be changing? Zoning? Density?

**Answer:** The Planning Board is not planning to do a sector plan for the proposed Dale station. The density of this community does not warrant such action and probably will not in the future. When the Planning Board reviewed all of the planned Purple Line stops, some of the more prominent stations “jumped out” as transit hubs. The proposed station at Dale and Wayne, by no means, is considered one of these hubs. However, I cannot guarantee that at some point in the future a councilmember might want to re-examine the community surrounding Dale and Wayne.

3. Is the Planning Board still planning to do a sector plan at the Fenton Library station? If so, how wide an area will it cover? Will the planning department reconfirm the residential zoning for the neighborhoods east and southeast of the station in the new sector plan for the Fenton Station?

**Answer:** The Board is not planning to do a sector plan for the Fenton Library station. There are already – and this is my opinion – appropriate levels of density in this area, so there is no plan by the Board to look at the Fenton area, particularly given the development plans that are already in the pipeline. The Planning Board does not need to do anything to spur development.

4. What mechanisms could be used to protect the neighborhood from the inevitable pressure to increase development, especially if ridership fails to meet projections?

**Answer:** Participation and community engagement in the planning process is really the only mechanism for county residents to protect themselves. Residents need to be at the table when the planning process is happening, since the development plan itself – which lays out the zones and desired community characteristics – is what provides the neighborhood protections. Citizen input is the only way resident comments and concerns can be integrated into the planning process.

5. How can residents obtain a copy of the final Purple Line Functional Master Plan? Does the final Master Plan include a map? Does the April 2010 draft on the Planning Board’s website incorporate all the Master Plan revisions from the July 2010 Council work sessions?

**Answer:** Residents can find a link to the final Purple Line Functional Master Plan on the following web page: [http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/transportation/projects/purple\\_line.shtm](http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/transportation/projects/purple_line.shtm). The current version of the Master Plan posted on the Planning Board website does include the revisions from the July 2010 Council work sessions. The final plan includes 17 maps – but only for the Montgomery County portion of the Purple Line.

### **C. CRIME & COMMUNITY SAFETY [Lt. Bob Carter]**

1. Since the Wheaton Metro was built, crime has increased significantly in the residential areas to the south and east of the station. Some areas have become so dangerous (e.g., Plyers Mill, Amherst, Dayton and Bucknell) that people don't even walk their dogs during the day. Similarly, since downtown Silver Spring was built as a regional draw, crime has significantly increased in the neighborhoods to the south and east of downtown. With a Purple Line station at Fenton drawing even more people to the downtown and closer to the surrounding neighborhoods, it is probable that our current crime level will continue or increase. Addition of a stop at Dale and Wayne will increase access to our neighborhood, and likely the current crime level will increase. How will our neighborhoods be protected, especially with a shortage of police officers?

**Answer:** See answer to question #2 below.

2. I live on Schuyler Road, opposite Sligo Creek Elementary, which is a through street to Sligo Creek Parkway. One of the challenges our block faces is the ever increasing litter from the foot traffic, and the upkeep of the park land that belongs to the school, which has limited resources for these purposes. We also have to deal with loiterers, people who scream obscenities, walk unleashed dogs, and generally disrupt the neighborhood. If a stop is added to the corner of Dale and Wayne, my concern is that the increase in foot traffic is going to compound this problem for the school and the neighborhood. If a stop is put there, will there be additional resources available to the school, which owns most of the surrounding land, to maintain that land, and to patrol the neighborhood for disturbances and crime?

**Answer:** In preparation for this community meeting, Lt. Bob Carter of the Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD), 3<sup>rd</sup> District, analyzed crime statistics for the neighborhood around the Forest Glen Metro station – an area that mostly closely resembles, with respect to the other Metrorail stations, the residential community around Wayne and Dale. While acknowledging the differences between heavy and light rail, Carter nevertheless considers the comparison apt and a reasonable context for beginning a community discussion about crime and safety issues associated with mass transit. Carter consequently went back in time and looked at the crime rates in the area around Forest Glen Metro after it was opened in 1990. Carter pulled crime statistics for two time periods: 1989-1993 and 1997-2003. To Carter’s surprise, crime rates for the Forest Glen area around the Metro station barely changed at all. The rate for auto theft, for example, curiously has gone down. Extrapolating from the Forest Glen crime statistics, Carter thus concludes that the impact for crime based on a stop built at Wayne and Dale would be much the same as if a new bus stop were opened somewhere along Wayne Avenue’s residential area. At the same time, however, Carter acknowledges that Silver Spring, as a result of redevelopment, has become rather cosmopolitan, and at certain times - particularly the weekend - the Downtown Silver Spring (DTSS) district is the most populous area in Montgomery County, second only to the county fair. Statistics clearly show that with mass transit comes a certain amount of blight and crime. By way of illustration, Carter pointed out that on Labor Day weekend 2010 when Metro closed the Red Line (for track maintenance) from Takoma Park north to the end of the line, crime rates in DTSS plummeted. In conclusion, Carter predicts that a light rail station at Wayne and Dale would not bring an appreciable increase in crime. On the other hand, based on Carter’s 20+ years experience serving Silver Spring, a light rail station at the new public library on Fenton, will almost certainly bring an increase in crime to the downtown area.

3. How would MCPD address loitering and panhandling at a station?

**Answer:** MCPD would handle loitering and panhandling at a Purple Line station the same way they handle these behaviors at a bus stop – although Lt. Carter hastened to add that county police very seldom have to deal with loitering and panhandling at bus stops. Based on his experience with the Wayne Avenue corridor, Carter does not foresee a problem with loitering and panhandling at the proposed Wayne and Dale light rail station – but should a problem arise, MCPD would not hesitate to direct resources accordingly.

4. Would MCPD be responsible for responding to crimes or disorderliness on the PL trains and at the stations? Or would there be a separate entity like the Metro Police?

**Answer:** A light rail in Montgomery County would present a new and unique situation for the county. Consequently, two police entities, MCPD and MTA Police Force, would need to work in consort (i.e., “concurrent jurisdiction”) to address crime issues related to the Purple Line. As with the Intercounty Connector, Carter supposes that MTA will need to enter a Memorandum of Understanding with the county’s police department over the Purple Line.

5. [From the floor] Lt. Carter, have you looked at statistics pertaining to pedestrian accidents around the Forest Glen Metro area?

**Answer:** Lt. Carter did not have a chance to examine these statistics prior to tonight's meeting, but on a related note, Gary Erenrich informed the audience that Montgomery County is working with Washington Metro (WMATA) and the State Highway Administration – in response to advocacy efforts by Forest Glen area residents – to help improve pedestrian safety by constructing an underpass at the intersection of Georgia Avenue and Forest Glen Road. WMATA has finished a study of this particular issue and concluded that an underpass at this location is, indeed, feasible.

#### **D. NOISE & VIBRATION [Mike Staiano]**

1. How would you compare the noise of a light rail vehicle stopping and starting at the Wayne Dale intersection compared to the Ride-On buses which stop and start at the intersection today. Better? The same? Worse?

**Written answer:** Bus noise is primarily from the diesel engine, especially at low speeds, with the tires contributing with increasing speed. Light rail vehicle noise is primarily from the wheels on the rails and is low at low speeds and increases with speed. Therefore, the light rail would be quieter.

**More info from the meeting:** Diesel buses have been found to be particularly noisy when coming to a stop, as well as when having to accelerate from standstill, whereas light rail is considerably quieter when accelerating from a stop.

2. Will there be announcements of the incoming train to the stop? How often and how far away can those announcements be heard?

**Written answer:** If audible announcements are made, they are likely to be heard by nearby residents, possibly at times in their homes. However, the magnitudes of the sounds probably would be unlikely to be annoying to people of normal sensitivity—especially after a period of adjustment.

**More info from the meeting:** There is a likelihood of audible announcements – depending on what type of “live visual data” is provided by MTA – due to ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) requirements. However, the loudspeakers would be directed at the train platforms and not the surrounding neighborhood. Gary Erenrich, from the County's Department of Transportation, added that if he were a member of the Park Hills community he would ask for the type of announcements you normally hear on Metrorail platforms – reports of service outages, information about transit security, and other reports that are only on an as-needed basis – and not general systemwide announcements (e.g. about MARC trains or escalators that are out of order).

3. The presence of a station would mean that every train would have to decelerate, stop, and accelerate leading to a significant increase in vibration and noise. If a station were not present, what percentage of trains would simply move through the intersection on a green light, thus limiting any projected sound increase to that associated with proximity to a moving train?

**Written answer:** Because of decreased train speeds, the presence of a station would reduce sound levels.

**More info from the meeting:** Again, the faster the light rail, the greater the noise – noise being a function of speed. Slowing the train down would necessarily reduce noise.

4. Is a train moving through an intersection on a green light required to announce its crossing, e.g. with a bell, horn, etc?

**Written answer:** Probably not in a neighborhood such as yours with frequent intersections.

**More info from the meeting:** Sounding the horn in these more “urbanized” environments generally would not happen unless the light rail encounters unusual circumstances, such as a person or animal in the tracks.

5. How loud – in terms of decibels – will wheel squeal likely be in the curvy parts of Wayne Avenue between Dale Drive and Sligo Creek? To what extent will wheel squeal increase in volume over time due to aging vehicles?

**Written answer:** Magnitude is less an issue than the presence and persistence of squeal, which depends upon the geometry of the tracks and the vehicle. A location east of Mansfield Road was identified by MTA; a possible other location is at Cloverfield Road. The squeal would probably not be severe—perhaps occasional chirping – but at the same time MTA’s follow-up was not clear. Continued community attention is reasonable.

**More info from the meeting:** Wheel squeal is caused by circumstances that inhibit the rail wheels from spinning freely. The likelihood of wheel squeal increases with the size of the vehicle, the shape of the “truck,” and the amount of curvature on the rail line. Madden added that MTA did identify 2-3 areas during the Preliminary Engineering phase where there is a potential for wheel squeal. These areas will be re-checked, and if it is determined that wheel squeal will occur, MTA will look at measures to reduce, if not eliminate, the problem (e.g., straightening out the curve, lubrication of the tracks). At the meeting, Staiano added one caveat that lubrication for problem areas only works if applied rigorously and regularly. Staiano elaborated further, stating that there are a couple different systems – lubricating mechanisms that are actuated when the train rolls by, as well lubricating devices built into the rail cars themselves. Erenrich, however, qualified these statements by adding that, from the County’s perspective, it is unlikely that lubricating systems will be utilized on road surfaces that involve mixed traffic on a grade. Therefore, it is doubtful that any of these lubricating methods would be used on Wayne Avenue. Finally, Staiano concluded that if wheel squeal is properly addressed in the design process and maintained when the system is in operation, wheel squeal is a solvable problem.

6. In MTA’s technical report on Noise & Vibration, the “Project-Generated Noise Impact Assessment” for the area of Wayne Avenue between Mansfield Road and Sligo Creek Parkway was deemed “moderate impact” – what does this mean in terms of decibels? Also, does the noise/vibration increase with the proposed Dale station, and if so, to what extent?

**Written answer:** FTA “Severe” criterion at the local ambient sound levels is more restrictive than the commonly accepted 65-dBA[Ldn] goal. “Moderate” indicates some change noticeable, but not sufficient for a severe adverse reaction. At *local* existing ambient sound levels, the FTA “Severe” criterion corresponds to 62 dBA[Ldn] and “Moderate” to 56 dBA[Ldn]. The predicted project sound levels are 49–51 dBA[Ldn] — therefore, No Impact. Sound levels in the immediate vicinity of the Dale station may be quieter with the station. However, the MTA analysis contains a highly *questionable assumed benefit from vehicle skirts*—such that predictions may be up to 8-dBA too low—resulting in exposures in the “Moderate” range. Furthermore, their predictions also contain a common assumption of like-new railcars. Keep in mind that over time, wheels can get “flat” and tracks can become rough due to “rolling contact fatigue.” Thus, without rigorous maintenance (e.g., wheel “truing” and rail “grinding”), light rail noise can increase 5–10 dBA. Continued community attention is reasonable.

**More info from the meeting:** The Federal Transit Administration has more elaborate noise assessment criteria – elaborate with respect to the use of the land being influenced, as well as the existing sound levels in the influenced area – than most other federal agencies, such as the Federal Aviation Administration and Federal Highway Administration.

## E. ENVIRONMENTAL & WATERSHED [Doug Redmond]

1. How many trees will be taken down on Wayne for current Purple Line plans? How many additional trees will be lost if there is a stop at Dale and Wayne? What is the environmental impact of the loss of those trees?

**Answer:** According to Mike Madden, MTA has not yet counted the number of trees along the Wayne Avenue corridor – this is something that will happen during the Preliminary Engineering phase. MTA follows State of Maryland conservation requirements that determine how many trees need to be planted and where. According to Doug Redmond, the environmental impact of mature tree loss can be significant. Fortunately, the Purple Line will be going down an existing road and not through a forest, and this helps mitigate the tree loss. Nevertheless, the road will be widened, and trees will be taken down along the edges. The county does expect a lot of trees to be planted; unfortunately, in these situations trees of comparable size to the ones removed cannot be planted for reasons of expense and practicality. Mature trees will have to be replaced by thinner trees. The county expects, however, that additional trees – collectively equal in diameter to those taken down – will be planted as replacements (e.g., four 5-inch trees to replace one 20-inch tree). Loss of shade from the mature trees – shade that helps keep temperatures cooler – will be one important environmental impact. From a watershed standpoint, mature tree canopy helps slow down rainfall, as well as runoff onto the ground and impervious surfaces. As the Purple Line detail design progresses, we will have to examine this issue – “avoidance, minimization & mitigation measures” – to keep as many trees as possible, and if any trees have to be removed, there will need to be an “inch-per-inch replacement” as indicated in the county’s Department of Parks guidelines. A number of stormwater management systems that are used incorporate trees, so there should be a number of opportunities during the design process to factor in trees.

2. If a stop is added, what effect will the increase in people using the stop, development around the stop, and the resulting pollution have on Sligo Creek, wildlife, and the surrounding environment?

**Answer:** Fortunately, the proposed station is far enough from the creek, the stream valley park and its already-developed area, so that the impact of this additional human activity will be relatively minimal. Keep in mind this is, by no means, a “pristine” area where, for instance, a hole has suddenly appeared in an intact forest. Wildlife in the Sligo Creek area are very used to people, and the additional movements and activity caused by the Purple Line along the Wayne Avenue corridor should have minimal impacts on the watershed’s fauna. Since development is not being planned for the Dale and Wayne area, again, Redmond does not expect a significant environmental impact.

3. Given (a) the increase in impervious road surface as a result of widening Wayne Avenue from 48’ to 72’ and (b) Wayne’s steep angle of descent leading toward the Sligo Creek watershed, what measures can be taken to mitigate the additional stormwater runoff so as not to worsen the scouring effect that has only increased in recent years?

**Answer:** See answer to question #4 below.

4. How will the loss of green space and the addition of impermeable pavement caused by the inclusion of a station impact water quality in the already threatened Sligo Creek?

**Answer:** Sligo Creek has had a lot of work done over the last 20 years – Redmond has been involved with much of this work over the last 18 years. Conditions in the creek have certainly improved during that time with respect to the number and variety of species of wildlife. In that time the number of fish species have increased from 3 to approximately 12-15 that are fairly pollution-tolerant. Despite the improvements to the conditions within the Sligo Creek system, there are still limitations with respect to

health. Sligo Creek, for instance, is not a trout system and never will be. Within the watershed there is approximately 35% imperviousness. Because there is so much imperviousness, the additional impermeable surface as a result of the Purple Line project will be minimal compared to what's already there. The bad news is that imperviousness is probably the biggest single negative impact on an urban watershed: rainfall tends to run off into the stream with the water being warm and dirty. The good news is that, under Maryland's Stormwater Management Act of 2007, the requirement for stormwater management for projects has changed its focus. The environmental site design is now the approach, and this includes a lot of smaller facilities rather than big ponds. Infiltration of water is now very strongly encouraged. The mantra at the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) is now "ESD to the MEP": environmental site design to the maximum extent practical. There is a chance in this case that this road project could result in a small but measurable improvement. Currently, stormwater on Wayne Avenue is not being dealt with well. As a result of the Purple Line project, there will be an opportunity to implement stormwater management practices that are presently absent. Rather than seeing degradation, there is at least a chance to see some improvement in the Wayne Avenue portion of the Sligo Creek watershed.

5. [From the floor] Will the track bed of the rail line be permeable or will it be impervious asphalt?  
**Answer:** Mike Madden responded that MTA will be building the tracks so that they can accommodate shared lanes with traffic. Thus, the surface required for this type of activity will need to be asphalt.

## **F. SCHOOL OPERATIONS & PEDESTRIAN SAFETY [Sean Gallagher]**

1. How will the Purple Line light rail traveling along Wayne Avenue affect operations at Sligo Creek Elementary School and Silver Spring International Middle School?

**Answer:** The Wayne Avenue entrance to the Silver Spring International Middle School will need to be relocated roughly 400 feet east (toward Sligo Creek). This option was considered preferable to either an entrance off Dale Drive or Schuyler Road, as it was important to keep the school bus movements separate from the Wayne Avenue traffic. As a result of this change, MTA will work with the schools to reconfigure parking, hopefully adding more spaces per the schools' request. Madden added that the current parking lot entrance, which is very close to Dale Drive, contributes to congestion at the Dale & Wayne intersection. Thus, moving the school entrance away from the intersection should help improve traffic flow along Wayne Avenue.

2. How much property will be taken from the school to accommodate the Purple Line?

**Answer:** .13 acres (i.e., a little more than a tenth of an acre) will need to be taken in the course of constructing the Purple Line. MTA points out that these proposed changes would take place with or without a station at Dale Drive.

3. What measures will be implemented to help ensure pedestrian safety, particularly for school children?

**Answer:** There is a particular strip of land along Wayne Avenue where there will need to be a retaining wall built in order to construct the Silver Spring Green Trail, as well as the right-of-way for the Purple Line. Additionally, serious consideration will be given to constructing barriers that prevent mid-street pedestrian crossings away from crosswalks and signaled intersections. Also, given the challenge of having to cross the Purple Line, the Green Trail, local buses, and Dale Drive traffic, Montgomery County Public Schools [MCPS] recommends consideration of a controlled signal intersection. With respect to foot traffic and pedestrian safety issues, additional resources for mitigating this challenging

intersection will have to come from MCPS and should not be expected from other sources. Madden added that MTA, in conjunction with Park & Planning and the County Department of Transportation, has developed a very good working relationship with MCPS and has already convened a number of meetings with representatives from both schools to work out various planning challenges related to the Purple Line – such as bus movements before and after school, automobile traffic at drop-off/pick-up times, and parking space for school staff.

4. [From the floor] Will there be any change to the Sligo Creek Elementary School (SCES) facilities, parking, or otherwise if the Purple Line is built as proposed? Also, is the pedestrian barrier or “fence” (as mentioned in question 3 above) formally in the Purple Line plan?

**Answer:** No, there will be no changes to the Sligo Creek Elementary School facilities or parking. Yes, MTA will need to build a retaining wall along Wayne Avenue to facilitate the construction of the Silver Spring Green Trail. MTA is currently in discussion with MCPS to determine if an additional fence will need to be built on top of the retaining wall. MTA will need to ensure that such a fence would be safe and that, for example, schoolchildren would not be able to climb on or jump off such a structure. These discussions MCPS will continue.

5. [From the floor] How can SCES’s Parent Teacher Association (PTA) participate in further Purple Line planning discussions? Can the PTA join the MTA community work group for the proposed Dale Drive station?

**Answer:** Yes, the SCES PTA can join the MTA community work group. Additionally, MTA met with the elementary school PTA in March of 2010 and would be happy to meet with them again in the future.

## **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 pm.

Respectively submitted.

Chris Richardson, PHCA Secretary