



WORK SESSION of the Greenbelt City Council held Wednesday, December 12, 2001, for the purpose of receiving briefings on the proposed Metro Purple Line and the proposed Baltimore-Washington MagLev Project.

Mayor Davis started the meeting at 8:10 p.m. It was held in the Senior Classroom of the Community Center.

PRESENT WERE: Council members Edward V.J. Putens, Rodney M. Roberts, Thomas X. White, and Mayor Judith F. Davis. Councilmember Alan Turnbull. arrived at 8:25 p.m.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael P. McLaughlin, City Manager; and Kathleen Gallagher, City Clerk.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Lorenzo Bryant and Suhair Alkhatib, Maryland Transit Administration; George Cardwell, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority; and Sheldon Goldberg, Advisory Planning Board.

Following introductions, Mr. Bryant noted the Governor's recent endorsement of a proposed Purple Line route that would run inside the beltway between Bethesda and New Carrollton. He said the original purpose of the study was to alleviate beltway problems and that MTA looked at a variety of alternatives, including "no build," transit, and non-transit alternatives such as adding an HOV lane. At this point the emphasis is on transit, though they have not eliminated the HOV possibility. The six rail lines proposed include three heavy-rail and three light-rail. They tried to develop the proposed routes with more than moving people in mind: for example, they tried to see where routes might serve to revitalize communities in Maryland and promote economic development.

Mr. Bryant and Mr. Cardwell agreed that at this point there is no real expectation that traffic will be alleviated on the beltway. The hope is to alleviate traffic on arterial roads and provide alternate means of transportation. Mr. Putens asked what would actually get people out of their cars, and Mr. Cardwell responded that this wouldn't happen unless alternative methods of transportation were as convenient as driving.

In response to a question from Mayor Davis, Mr. Cardwell said about a third of the alignment of the favored P6 line is underground, from College Park to Silver Spring.

Mr. Turnbull asked whether MTA or WMATA would take the lead on the project, and the presenters agreed that was still to be decided but that it would probably be WMATA. There was brief discussion of what would happen to the state's commitment to this project if the next governor decides to reopen the issue of the Inter-county Connector. Since the project will depend on shared state-federal funding, if the state blinks on its commitment, the pace of the project will

be substantially reduced. Turnbull also suggested that WMATA look into creative use of express buses to start a "virtual purple line."

Mr. Alkhatib gave a presentation on the proposed Baltimore-Washington MagLev (Magnetic Levitation) Project. The train can reach a speed of 273 mph and is thus intended for long distances, with few stops. The intent for the Baltimore-Washington Project is for the train to run between Penn Station and Union Station with one stop at BWI Airport and a possible fourth stop near the Washington Beltway, most likely at New Carrollton. About 60% of the funding would be private.

Council unanimously protested the potentially devastating impact of this project on environmentally sensitive areas and on established residential communities that would not even benefit from being able to use the train. The route under consideration that follows the Baltimore-Washington Parkway would impact both BARC and the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center. Mr. Alkhatib said this route would not use the median but would build to the side of the Parkway. When Mr. Roberts protested that this would take forest land, Mr. Alkhatib said they could mitigate. Mr. Roberts pointed out that part of the area they would go through was already mitigation area. Mayor Davis expressed Council's disillusionment with mitigation as a solution, since it is often unsuccessful or in a completely different locale.

Mr. Alkhatib pointed out that this train has much less of a footprint and less environmental impact than conventional railroads. There was further discussion of noise levels and the impact—both literal and figurative—on birds. Mayor Davis asked what the public response had been. Mr. Alkhatib said there had been six public meetings to date and that the response had been mixed.

There was also considerable discussion of why MagLev could not use the path of existing train tracks and why it was necessary to build a new railroad rather than upgrade existing infrastructure and technologies. Mr. Alkhatib responded that regardless of whether it would be a new company or Amtrak upgrading to this technology, the existing rights of way would have to be abandoned because the speeds of these trains cannot be handled by the existing curves and banks.

Mayor Davis thanked all the presenters for coming, and Council told Mr. Alkhatib that his office should anticipate serious objections to this plan as currently formulated. Mayor Davis also asked the City Manager to stay informed on the matter so the City could be responsive.

Other Business

Mr. Putens asked for information on what federal transportation funding the state had just lost.

Mr. Roberts asked if there was any update on the incident in the Center involving Alex Barnes. Mr. McLaughlin said a suspect from Lanham had been identified because Mr. Barnes had been able to get a license plate number.

Mayor Davis said she had testified tonight at Maryland National Capital Park & Planning regarding both Senator Green's and Delegate Hubbard's bills on local zoning authority. She

reported that Governor Glendening had appointed Mayor Tawanna Gaines of Berwyn Heights to complete Richard Palumbo's term in the Maryland House of Delegates. She also reported that Berwyn Heights had been awarded a Community Legacy grant.

The meeting ended at 10:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Gallagher

City Clerk

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