



MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION held Wednesday, March 11, 1998, for the purpose of meeting with representatives from the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA).

The meeting began at 7:45pm. It was held in the Multi-Purpose Room of the Greenbelt Community Center.

PRESENT WERE: Council members Edward V.J. Putens, Rodney M. Roberts, Alan Turnbull Thomas X. White and Mayor Judith F. Davis.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael P. McLaughlin, City Manager; David E. Moran, City Clerk; Robert Manzi, City Solicitor and Celia Craze, Director of Planning and Community Development

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Dutch Heinemeyer, David Erion, W. Kevin Bender and Gene Counihan, WMATA; Virginia Beauchamp, Greenbelt News Review; Kerana Todorov, The Gazette Newspaper; Sheldon Goldberg; Leonie Penney; Pearl Siegel; Judy Goldstein and Kap Kapistan, Beltway Plaza

Speeding of Busses

Ms. Siegel reported that at the Senior Forum, several people had mentioned busses not stopping at the stop sign at the Caldor ramp and stop signs in general. Ms. Penney specifically mentioned speeding along Crescent Road particularly at the intersection of Northway. Mr. Erion responded that Metro would notify the route supervisors to monitor the situation more closely and emphasize that drivers follow the rules. He stated that Metro's policy was for bus drivers to follow all rules including speed limits and traffic signs. He also provided a telephone number people could call to report problem drivers. Mr. Putens stressed the unique combination of activities and users along Crescent Road. Mr. White indicated that the city has made reports of problem busses with specific bus and route numbers in the past.

Bus Routes and Size of Busses

Mr. Erion indicated that Metro conducts regular studies of bus routes and ridership information and periodically they make changes. He indicated there were ridership studies for the Greenbelt area taken within the last year. Mr. White asked if smaller busses could be used. Mr. Erion responded that Metro has and is acquiring additional smaller busses. He indicated that Metro would examine use of smaller busses in Greenbelt routes, but noted that very often ridership levels change throughout the route and a bus must accommodate the maximum riders at a given point. Mr. Turnbull stressed the need to make the routes shorter and more user friendly. In response to a

question from Mayor Davis, Mr. Erion indicated that there were no changes planned, but indicated Metro would look into this and work with the city. Mayor Davis suggested an express shuttle between the Greenbelt station and NASA.

Location of Stops

Mr. Putens expressed concern about the bus stop on MD 193 across from Greenway Shopping Center, specifically the lack of crosswalks and the unsafe situation at the stop. Mayor Davis and Mr. Turnbull also raised concern about this location. Mr. Roberts asked about getting a shelter at this location. Mr. Erion indicated that Metro representatives meet with local officials when they locate stops. He indicated that they would review this stop. He indicated that Metro was not currently installing shelters due to funding constraints. Mr. White noted that Greenway management was not allowing the bus to enter the parking lot.

Judy Goldstein, raised concerns about the bus stop at Crescent Road and Centerway on the Centerway side, particularly the lighting and muddy conditions. She also expressed concern about more than one bus stopping at this location.

Mr. White raised concerns about the stop along Cherrywood Lane across from the Giant Food store and indicated it was shabby and in poor condition. Mr. Bender suggested the adopt-a-stop program. Mr. Kapistan suggested this issue be added to the Beltway Plaza work session. Mr. Putens asked about Metro's role in providing shelters. Mr. Erion responded that there were higher budget priorities. Mr. Putens suggested a partnership with Metro to install shelters. Mr. Couhinan noted that Metro recovers about 55% of its revenues through fareboxes. He indicated that the County government was the ultimate decision authority over funding priorities and suggested the city discuss this matter with the County.

Council expressed a desire to meet with the appropriate County representatives (Paul Robey, Jim Raszewski) . Mr. White raised an inequity that parking at the Greenbelt Metro station was often free or a \$1.00 at the most, while bus riders who get on close to the station must pay \$1.10. He suggested that bus riders close to the station be allowed to ride the bus for free. Mr. White

noted that in Europe the bus or the stop and sometimes both have a legend/schematic and suggested Metro adopt this type of system. Mr. Turnbull stressed the need for a map or orientation guide at the bus depot section of the Metro station.

Mr. McLaughlin asked about the use of extended busses. Mr. Erion noted that there was a limited number of these busses. He indicated they use them based on ridership levels. Mr. McLaughlin suggested that a circuit shuttle that might serve Goddard also serve city office parks. Ms. Goldstein noted that failure to observe priority seating, smoking in the bus shelters and lack of handrails on the bus were problems.

Mr. Couhnan noted that Metro was working to resolve issues of inequity and anticipated that parking rates at Greenbelt would go up when the Green line connection was opened. He indicated that Metro was interested in establishing shuttle services to employment centers. Mayor Davis asked that Metro work closely with the city on any shuttle service. Mr. Turnbull asked that a subsidy be granted to all users of the Greenbelt station not just the drivers. Mr. Couhnan indicated there were many subsidy programs and suggested this was another topic that needed to be raised with the County.

Success of the Greenbelt Metro Station

Mr. Couhnan noted that ridership was up and thought the shortcut was a major factor. He also credited the parking buydown and a shuttle service within the parking lot. Mayor Davis asked about special times that the shortcut runs. Mr. Couhnan noted that the shortcut is run after MCI athletic events and on certain holidays. Mr. Evion noted that ridership was up 33% and about 4100 riders per day use the station.

Bike Issues

Mr. Turnbull raised bike concerns and asked that the rush hour prohibition be eliminated. Mr. Couhnan responded that since 1982 Metro had begun a bike-on-rail program and indicated there were significant safety and comfort issues. He noted they were working with Washington Area Bicycle Association (WABA) on new guidelines. Mr. Couhnan indicated that there were staff discussions regarding eliminating the permit and believed that the lifting of permits would be tried. Mr. Turnbull noted that bike lockers at the Greenbelt station are located too far away from the station and asked that they be relocated. Mr. Couhnan responded he would follow-up and get back to staff.

Mr. White was encouraged by WMATA's new user-friendly attitude and hoped it continued. Mr. Roberts asked about the status of a path connecting Metro to the new USDA facility. The Metro officials were unaware of the path proposal but indicated they would investigate the matter. Mayor Davis thanked Metro for the improvements they had made.

Development of Greenbelt Metro Area

Mr. Heinemeyer provided an overview of the joint development process. He noted that the process was revived in 1995 with less input from jurisdictions. He indicated that the site was advertised with many others in March 1996 and one response was received for Greenbelt that didn't make the first cut. Greenbelt was advertised again in November 1997 and one proposal was received. He indicated that there has been an opportunity for Greenbelt to provide input throughout this process. He stressed that any developer selected by Metro would have to go through the same County process as any other developer.

Mr. Heinemeyer stated that Metro was anxious to move forward with development of this site. He indicated Metro was receiving pressure from the State and County to develop the Prince George's County Metro sites. He stated the current proposal was viable and lucrative. Mr. White stated that the city was not aware that they could provide written comments and indicated that the city should do that. Mr. Turnbull asked when the city's deadline was. Mr. Heinemeyer responded that Metro would be communicating its concerns to the developer in two or three weeks and the city should provide comments before that time. He stressed that when Metro decides, they are deciding on a developer, not a specific proposal. He noted that if the developer cannot get County approval then the contract becomes void.

He stressed that any development would have to replace all Metro facilities, which on this site would be quite costly. There are also environmental constraints on this site. Mr. Roberts stated that the process should be much more open to the public and there shouldn't be so much secrecy.

Mr. Heinemeyer believed a Sector Map Amendment process would take 2-2.5 years. Mr. White noted that the process could be completed in 1-1.5 years. There was disagreement and considerable discussion about this aspect and which process should be utilized. Mr. Turnbull expressed concern about rushing into this process. He asked if WMATA would be taking a position on the text amendment. Mr. Heinemeyer noted that WMATA was considering taking a position on the pending legislation. Mr. Turnbull asked what WMATA was procuring.

Mr. Heinemeyer responded that they were selecting a developer and then would execute a contract which would contain specific density amounts which the developer then has to get approved through the normal County process. Mr. Turnbull indicated that there was an acceptable level of density, but the city didn't want density for density's sake. Mr. Roberts stressed that the study group had produced a good product and Metro should support their efforts.

Mr. Heinemeyer stressed that in this situation Metro needed to move faster than the normal process. Mayor Davis noted that Greenbelt had worked with many developers and developers always want a speedy process and threaten to walk out. Mr. Putens stressed that rushing this process may end up killing it. Mr. Heinemeyer stated that a text amendment was a legal option for the developer to use. Mr. White believed that the public would be better served by a comprehensive planning mechanism for this site. He stressed that Greenbelt had a good track record of working with developers to create quality development and referenced Capital Office Park, Golden Triangle and Greenway/Maryland Trade Center as examples.

Mr. Roberts asked how people would get to this densely developed site. Mr. Heinemeyer admitted there were transportation and wetland constraints. Mr. Manzi indicated that there were various ways to do a text amendment. Mr. Putens stressed that the Council has not been kept informed about this project and indicated he was willing to work with WMATA, but there needed to be a public process with public input.

Mr. Kapistan stated that he had participated in the study process and it was a good process. He reported that the PZED Committee had approved an SMA bill and stressed that it needed to move quickly.

Mayor Davis thanked the representatives from Metro for attending the meeting. Mr. Couhinan expressed an interest in working with the City.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:40pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

David E. Moran
City Clerk