

Comments
From the CAC Public Forum on Light Rail in Anacostia
April 28, 2004

Comment: Tracks should not be too close to houses and should minimize noise and vibration impacts on neighborhoods.

Response: The project is being built on an existing commercial rail corridor. These impacts were modeled as a part of the Environmental Assessment. There were no detectable noise or vibration impacts on any housing structures. The new tracks are continuously welded, eliminating the “click-clack” of trains on traditional, segmented tracks. The trains are almost too quiet, creating a safety concern that people may not hear them coming. Other systems have added bells to alert pedestrians and motorists.

Comment: Will Pennsylvania Avenue, NW be re-opened in front of the White House?

Response: There is disagreement between local and federal agencies, and a solution has not been reached at this time.

Comment: What can the District do to combat sprawl in suburban jurisdictions?

Response: By providing better transportation alternatives, the District can proactively compete with those jurisdictions by offering an improved quality of life.

Comment: Does WMATA plan to redistribute the new Metrorail cars recently added to the Red Line?

Response: This issue is being discussed by the WMATA Board and some redistribution will likely occur.

Comment: How fast can the proposed street cars travel?

Response: The new street cars are expected to travel at an average speed of 12 miles per hour, compared to buses that currently travel at an average speed of between 8 and 10 miles per hour.

Comment: Will the street cars cause congestion on Suitland Parkway?

Response: The streetcars will obey the same traffic signals as automobiles and should not block traffic or add to congestion.

Comment: Will the tracks be grade-separated?

Response: In an attempt to keep costs minimized, most track will be at-grade. There will be instances where some tracks may need to be grade-separated.

Comment: Is there a plan to implement street cars on K Street?

Response: Yes, K Street has been identified as a priority corridor.

Comment: How is parking being addressed?

Response: The light-rail system is not predicted to create a significant impact on parking. The system is not a suburb-to-core commuter line, so “park and ride” lots are not expected to be necessary. The impacts on parking will be observed once the system is open and any necessary measures may be implemented at that time.

Comment: What will the hours of service be for the light rail system?

Response: The hours of operation will be similar to the bus system; 5:30 a.m. until midnight.

Comment: Will buffer walls be built to protect neighborhoods from noise?

Response: The engineering phase has not begun yet, and the need for these would not be determined until that phase.

Comment: What is being done to address safety concerns?

Response: DDOT has taken the lead on implementing a number of safety features similar to those introduced in the area around Barry Farms.

Comment: Why does the initial project not go all the way to Minnesota Avenue?

Response: The cost to extend the system that far would be prohibitive at this time.

Comment: What amount of local match is required for funding the project?

Response: The Federal Transit Administration’s New Start program originally provided up to 80% federal funding. Now, due to increasingly competitive applications from around the country New Start projects are typically funded with about 50% federal funds.

Comment: Will the system be single or double-tracked?

Response: Approximately two-thirds of the system will be single tracked. The remaining one-third will be double-tracked where passing areas are required.

Comment: Given the difficulties that WMATA has experienced with purchasing new Metro Rail cars, what is the likelihood that vehicle production for the new system would be on schedule?

Response: The system would use the same vehicles that are in operation in several other metropolitan areas. The vehicle building facility is already in operation and WMATA would be buying “off the shelf” rather than custom vehicles.

Comment: What will the frequency of service be on the starter line?

Response: The street cars will run on a 15-minute headway during peak hours and a 30-minute headway during non-peak hours.

Comment: What is DDOT’s responsibility under the Clean Air Act Amendments and the Clean Water Act and the funding associated with those requirements?

Response: The District contributes its projects to a regional planning level where those projects are modeled in conjunction with other jurisdictions and a number of emissions mitigation measures. This modeling process determines if the region has achieved “conformity” under an air quality budget. DDOT must also meet all the requirements set forth in the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) and similar legislation pertaining specifically to the District of Columbia.

Comment: Is the CSX railway corridor considered a “brownfield” area?

Response: The initial Environmental Assessment did not indicate any significant sources of contamination. The contract for the system includes a complete clean-up of the Right-of-Way property.

Comment: Will the Right-of-Way be cleaned up to Minnesota Avenue?

Response: WMATA intends to acquire the full Right-of-Way to Minnesota Avenue and as part of the contract, will insist on a full clean-up of the property.

Comment: The Anacostia River is severely polluted. No further damage should be caused by construction of this system.

Response: There are no predicted impacts on the Anacostia River.

Comment: Why is such a short system being built that doesn't even take people towards the downtown area?

Response: Most residents in the areas using this are not going downtown. This segment is only the first installment of a much bigger system. It is being built as a demonstration of and enticement for a larger system.

Comment: Economic redevelopment can be spurred by new transit.

Comment: Anything that takes traffic off of the Souza Bridge is welcome.

Comment: As a priority, WMATA needs to work very closely with the community in and around Anacostia. The residents and workers at Bolling Air Force Base should also be considered, but they will have different concerns.

Comment: The community needs to be aware of the inherent advantages of rail technology over buses. People find rail more attractive and easy to use than buses and people can read on rail where it is more difficult to read on the bus. The construction of a rail line represents a significant commitment to economic development in a neighborhood.

Comment: 30 to 40% of people parking at the Anacostia Park and Ride lot are residents of Bolling Air Force Base.

Comment: Is there a plan to remove Barry Farms?

Response: There has been no confirmation of this rumor from any District agency.

Comment: Traffic controls need to be implemented to slow speeds on nearby roads.

Comment: How will people cross Pennsylvania Avenue to reach the station?

Response: This may continue to be an issue until the system is extended north towards Minnesota Avenue. However, people are currently crossing the road to get to the existing bus stop, so it is not impossible.

Comment: Do not exclude the CSX alignment near Minnesota Avenue. This alignment can easily serve that neighborhood and Minnesota Avenue is too narrow at that point to carry street cars.

Response: WMATA is still in the analyzing alternatives and will consider this input.

Comment: Can residents expect the same degree of economic revitalization around this system that occurred around the U Street/Cardozo Metro Station?

Response: The amount of development is hard to predict. The research done to date does not indicate a strong market at this point in time, but that can change. WMATA is working with the District of Columbia Office of Planning to redevelop the Anacostia Metro Rail Station from a "terminal" station to more of a neighborhood station. There are also a number of development projects including the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative, the South Capitol Gateway, and the Middle Anacostia Bridges project that DDOT project managers meet monthly on for coordination.

Comment: DDOT and WMATA should have dedicated community outreach offices. More outreach is required for this community. A CAC member suggested that the CAC might play a further role in such outreach.

Response: Steven Del Guidice is in charge of community outreach for this project. He will be conducting a series of outreach meetings in May and June of 2004.