

# WEST BALTIMORE UNITED: A PLAN TO RECONNECT COMMUNITIES

DATE	15 June 2024
TIME	5:30-7:30 pm
VENUE	MS Teams
MEETING TITLE	Stakeholder Workgroup Meeting #2

## Agenda and Discussion

### **1) Introductions – Workgroup meeting members, project staff, and members of the public**

- a. West Baltimore United Project Team in attendance during the meeting
  - i. Stu Sirota (SS) – deputy director of BCDOT
  - ii. Brendan Lattimer (BL) – PM of this project within BCDOT
  - iii. Tabia Gamble (TG) – supporting PM of this project with WSP/BCDOT
  - iv. Doris Duren (DD) -- support staff, public engagement specialist
  - v. Erik Jacobson (EJ) – supporting staff with WSP/BCDOT
  - vi. Archer Willauer (AW) – supporting staff with WSP/BCDOT
- b. Five listening members of the public joined the stakeholder workgroup meeting. A consultant at Mead and Hunt and future DOT staff member, District 9 City Council Representative, A Real Estate investor, A representative from West North Avenue Development Authority, An individual from LifeBridge Health Grace Medical Center, and a staff member from the Red Line consultant team.
- c. 13 of the 14 workgroup members in attendance, one workgroup member was not present.

### **2) Recurring Meeting Time**

- a. The workgroup has not selected a regular meeting day/time yet, this will be determined by a poll.
- b. If the current meeting location does not work for the date selected, the project team will identify additional locations. A few proposed locations from workgroup members included:
  1. The University of Maryland Community Engagement Center (16 S. Poppleton Street)
  2. Biopark (801 W. Baltimore Street)
  3. Lexington Market

### **3) Roles and Responsibilities**

- a. The facilitator provided a review of the roles and responsibilities of the workgroup focused on aligning as a group throughout the process and using the workgroup meetings as a space to ask questions, flesh out

ideas, and come to understanding prior to going to the public and/or community meetings. Several Workgroup Members provided feedback to this discussion.

- i. Some workgroup members noted the importance of restoratively bringing representation of places and organizations and building trust within the team before going to the public, wanting to ensure information is disseminated to the public clearly but also with one voice from the project team/workgroup.
- ii. Workgroup Member: How should the team move forward based on proposal if the team cannot get into alignment?
  1. The project team understanding there may not be agreeance or alignment on every single element, but the goal of the workgroup is to work through those difference.
- iii. Workgroup Member: Requests that the project team opens up the channel to share information, not blindsiding the workgroup by the information shared during public meeting, ensuring all information is disclosed prior to these meetings (addressing the preliminary reconnection alternatives that were presented to the public on June 12 but not during the first stakeholder workgroup meeting)
  1. The project team agreed, the stakeholder workgroup is the place they would prefer for information the be shared first (when possible and feasible, during this first round of stakeholder workgroup meetings and public meetings timing that was not possible but will work to make that possible for future meetings)

#### **4) June 12th Public Meeting Recap**

- a. The project team provided a quick update from the June 12<sup>th</sup> public meeting and provided a high-level overview of the feedback received.
  - i. Question from the group: Has a grocery store or something similar been something the Project Team is looking into how to address this?
    1. Project team response: Specific development opportunities have not been identified but this is a part of the process, we are at the stage of still looking large-scale at this point in the process.
  - ii. Idea from the workgroup: The team should consider immediately impactful ways that could also be used to spread information. A community Food Bank could serve as a place to inform the community members of the project while providing food to

community members that need it. Is it possible to build a pop-up food market in the short term? They do not do full-service markets here and could create immediate change in the short-term while also working toward long-term improvements.

1. Note: During the original planning of the Red Line, there was a pop-up farmers' market at the West Baltimore MARC parking lot in 2009-2010, addressing community needs while sharing project information.
2. Response from the Project Team: We are currently at just the beginning, as the project progresses, we can identify community tabling events besides Artscape in future
- iii. Question asked from workgroup: Can we bring in youth participation in the community to empower the youth to feel like they are a part of such an important project?
  1. Response: This is an important element to consider, at this stage, we have not as we are early in the project process. One note, we did invite students to apply for the workgroup but were not successful in getting a candidate to complete the application.
- iv. Question asked from the workgroup: Will Red Line CAT and WBU Engagement team ever be in the same space? Hearing two different things from different community meetings and representatives – how to make sure the information is consistent, contradictory information combatant, how to make sure the rail will keep the WBU project in mind.
  1. Response: Not currently scheduled but can establish line of connection with cross over of representatives on both teams. It should be noted that the two project teams have been working and communicating closely including have members of each team present at internal meetings.

## 5) Preliminary Alternative Concepts

- a. The project team provided an overview of the early-stage preliminary concepts for US-40 reconnection.
  - i. Question asked from a workgroup member: Can we see a timeline for each concept presented?
    1. Response: where we are is in the planning stage with the next phase of the grant due in September, so current pilot drawings are more pre-concepts without a specific

timeline, more specific images and timelines are in the works currently.

- b. Complete Trench Fill: This option would use different soil materials to fill the trench back
  - i. Question from workgroup member: Can you put things on top with this option?
    - 1. Response: Yes, with the complete fill there would be the opportunity to put buildings on top however, you may not be able to put buildings on immediately as there may be some settlement.
  - ii. Question from workgroup members: Is it possible to put existing buildings as a place maker within the existing corridor, or a video or animation of what the project area could look like before and after?
    - 1. Response: Yes, as the project progresses, we will be doing that.
  - iii. Question from workgroup member: Why are there no images of MLK and Fremont? They are easy images to show progress being made.
    - 1. Response: These are very early ideas that are only focused on the ditch area (though the project overall will focus on a larger area). As the project team continues work in the fall, the team can consider including that type of view.
  - iv. Question from Workgroup Member: Are buildings over the red line or where are the buildings over the non-fill or filled area?
    - 1. Response: The buildings are over the filled area
  - v. Question from workgroup member: It might be helpful to present the information shown in the drawings in steps. This may help processing what information is being shared.
  - vi. Question from workgroup member: How long would the fill take?
    - 1. Response: That is what we are in the process of determining, it would be over a year, but we do not have the exact timeline as of yet.
- c. Partial Trench Fill - Reducing amount of fill used.
  - i. Question from workgroup member: What are the specific fire needs for this if the limit is every 1,000 feet without fire safety proceedings?
    - 1. Response: We are in the process of determining the specific fire needs, one note, the Red Line team is looking at a station in this area as well.
  - ii. Question from workgroup member: What are the costs associated with safety and could those cost potentially be

covered by the Red Line since they will need to make accommodations for the Light Rail?

1. Response: Electrical and gasoline power are different needs fire-wise so Red Line and WBU solutions may be different; the cost will depend on final design.
- iii. Question from workgroup member: With this option, would traffic still be underneath?
  1. Response: yes, that would be the idea with this option.
- d. Complete Deck Over (Capping): With this option traffic would be maintained in the ditch.
  - i. Question from workgroup member: Still need fire/life safety, is there a limit for length of the deck?
    1. Response: No, but every 1,000 feet fire/safety requirements kick in, city blocks are approximately 800 feet.
- e. Partial Deck Over (Partial Capping) - Every other block, no fire/safety required

## 6) Other Precedents

- a. The Stitch, Atlanta
- b. Klyde Warren Park, Dallas
- c. Central 70, Denver
  - i. Question from Workgroup Member: What is the Timeline? For each one, not just proposed.
    1. Response: We have the timelines for several of the projects, they're not on the slides but we can share those following the meeting.
    2. Is there a comparison to Baltimore's timeline?
      - a. Response: Minneapolis has an estimated timeline of 10-15 yrs. Currently, we do not have an estimated timeline for the Baltimore project as we are just in the beginning stage.
- d. Reconnect Rondo, Minneapolis/St. Paul:
  - i. Question from Workgroup Member: Traffic volume along the US-40 corridor – has there been a study completed as of yet?
    1. Response: Yes, but so much has changed since covid, it is now invalid. We are currently working on updated traffic volume data
  - ii. Question from workgroup member: Is there a timeline currently for Baltimore? The existing funding sunsets in about 2025.
    - a. Response: Currently applying for each grant round, including engineering and construction with a high



- confidence of success, and the team will be able to better define a timeline as funding is acquired and the design and pre-engineering concepts continue.
- b. Clarification from workgroup member: Mentioning of a "private partnership" can you explain further?
  - c. Response: There has been precedent for a public-private partnership, our project is still in early pre-concept stages so that has not been determined for Baltimore yet.
2. Question from workgroup member: Has the funding been allocated are you still looking for additional funding?
    - a. Response: Currently in planning grant stage, but we only have a guesstimate of financing and then funding strategies will be developed.
  3. Question from workgroup member: If there is a change in administration, does it put this project at risk?
    - a. Response: Potentially yes, this is the case with most federal grant programs.
  4. Question from workgroup member: Any examples of removing/complete fill of the roadway that do not allocate space for vehicles?
    - a. Response from workgroup member: Rochester NY (also worth checking out Detroit turning interstate into a street)
  5. Comment/Question from workgroup member: Regarding options – has there been an investigation into how to maintain and build buildings on either side and looking at urban development on both sides for uses and zoning alongside the capping/filling? I live on the 500 block of North Carrollton in the project area, construction will have an impact of quality of life and lived experience, it will be very helpful to understand what type of development is being proposed.
    - a. Response: yes, and whichever option is chosen will be coupled with development we have just not gotten to that phase yet.

## 7) Next Steps

- a. Action Item
  - i. The Project Team will share previous meeting minutes

- ii. The Project Team will send two polls, one to determine the August meeting and one for the regularly scheduled meeting day/times
- iii. The Project Team will send out meeting minutes from tonight's meeting, the presentation, as well as additional resources on the other examples.
- iv. If workgroup members have not done so already, please send your documents for payment as soon as possible.
  - 1. Question from workgroup members: Is there a way for us to protect sensitive information to ensure people have their information private?
    - a. Response: Yes, in person and encrypted
- b. Next meeting:
  - i. Based on the new poll, the August meeting will be decided.
    - 1. Recommendation from workgroup member: Even if the project team or individuals cannot hold an official meeting, available workgroup members should be able to outline questions and specific concerns in a small, internal discussion group to bring to the next full project meeting. This will help iron out any questions, since many questions were skipped by the team due to time constraints.
  - ii. Recommendation from workgroup member: Next meeting location could take place at Lexington Market, note the market will be closed.

## **8) General Feedback and or questions:**

- a. It would be helpful to have clear information as to how conceptual design will happen – better explanation on what people is seeing on the screen – the workgroup expressed that it would be helpful to have concepts rolled out in a phased approach with examples of specific locations along the corridor and what they might look like as well as showing short, mid, and long-term improvements.
  - i. Recommendation from workgroup member: Labeling the streets on different design plans to better orient the workgroup members and the public.
    - 1. Response: We will take this into consideration as the project moves forward, it was purposely not done at this stage because we are so early in the design process that we did not want anyone to be associating improvements with a specific street etc.

- b. Question/comment from workgroup member: Impact on the climate and climate resilience by the project construction?
  - i. Response: Environmental impact is one of the important parts of the NEPA process and will be investigated by the project team in order to mitigate impacts
- c. Comment from workgroup member: This project should be coordinated with the planning department as they are developing various plans including some comprehensive plans. From what he has heard, food companies are not coming to Baltimore because there is a lack of parking, if that is true this project in conjunction with that DOP is doing could work to address that.
- d. Question from workgroup member regarding the grant application: Are the concepts included in the grant going to be permanent? In her experience, there have been grants that were supposed to include preliminary or placeholder designs and those designs ended up being the final design.
  - i. Response: Still very early in pre-concepts so there will be notification and communication of any change or proposed changes to come to the project scope or design
- e. Recommendation from workgroup member: Building off other team engagement, there should be a cross-section of different groups and new guests from these adjoining projects such as the social security administration – as well as the ramps at Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.
- f. Recommendation from workgroup member: Red-line and WBU representative cross over
- g. Recommendation from workgroup: It is helpful when team members point things out on the board etc.
- h. Recommendation from workgroup: If Bon Secours is used again, we should put the shades down to help with visibility of the screen