

WEST BALTIMORE UNITED: A PLAN TO RECONNECT COMMUNITIES

DATE	19 August 2024
TIME	6:00-8:00 pm
VENUE	UMD BioPark Life Science Conference Center
MEETING TITLE	Stakeholder Workgroup Meeting #3

Meeting Summary

1) Overview

- 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 with 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) – support staff with WSP/BCDOT
 - vi. Archer Willauer (AW) – support staff with WSP/BCDOT
 - vii. Carl Williams (CW) – support staff with Remline/BCDOT
 - viii. Anthony Brown (AB) – support staff with Remline/BCDOT
 - ix. Steven Kolarz (SK) – support staff with RK&K/BCDOT
- b. Eleven listening members of the public joined the stakeholder workgroup meeting. This included representatives from the Midtown Edmondson Association, the City of Baltimore, the Mayor's Office, MTA, and other members of the general public.
- c. 12 of the 14 workgroup members were in attendance; two workgroup members were not present.

2) Overall Themes

- a. Ensuring that all affected communities are represented in decision-making
- b. Continuing robust outreach through a variety of methods both online (maybe YouTube) and in person / through the mail. Possibly doing pop – ups, semipermanent kiosks, or farmer markets
- c. Preventing further displacement & helping support legacy residents
- d. How below-grade decisions affect above-grade possibilities
- e. More specific plans should include neighborhood labels
- f. The eastern side of the project corridor should be incorporated into plans (the area around MLK Boulevard)
- g. Next meeting should include the development of a vision statement / values statement for the Stakeholder Workgroup
- h. The relationship of this project with nearby properties / future development / lots
- i. Prioritizing local residents over commuters from out of town

3) Questions (Answers in Blue)

- a. What level of development is possible with each alternative?

WEST BALTIMORE UNITED: A PLAN TO RECONNECT COMMUNITIES



- i. As we are in the early stages of the project this has only been assessed at a high level, as the project continues there will be more specific information will be provided before an alternative is selected.
- b. What is the timeline of this project as it relates to other nearby projects (West Baltimore MARC, Frederick Douglass Tunnel, Red Line, East West RAISE, etc.)?
 - i. As the project is still in the early planning stages, the full project timeline has not been determined, the Project Team is and will continue to coordinate closely with the other projects in the corridor.
- c. What can be done to support the residents and decedents affected by the highway?
 - i. As the project continues, the Project Team will continue to find ways to engage and support residents and decedents affected by the highway. Ideas that have been discussed are developed flier that include resources such as tax credits available to homeowners etc.
- d. How have other communities been affected by the precedent projects that were presented? Would it be possible to hear local testimonies?
 - i. As the project continues, this is something the project could potentially look into.
- e. Will the ramps be removed?
 - i. As the project is still in the early stages, this has not yet been decided.

Minutes

1) Redline Update from Erica Rigby

- First CAC meeting was held in June
- Feedback from the public
 - Breakout section discussed opportunities and challenges of current alignments
 - Concerns about tunneling impacts like vibration and noise
 - Surface running is more appealing in some places, Red Line should be more appealing looking if it is above ground (more visible and accessible)
 - Paper is best for spreading the word
- Fall open houses
 - October and November
 - CAC next meeting is in October

WEST BALTIMORE UNITED: A PLAN TO RECONNECT COMMUNITIES



- Questions from Workgroup Member – when does MTA anticipate choosing alignment?
 - Still in the process, will likely be 2025 before MTA shares something publicly, need to wait for FTA to finalize decision once it is recommended by MTA.
- Question from Workgroup Member
 - All the options for red line seem to have it going below grade along highway to nowhere
 - Questions about whether there should be a heritage crossing station
 - Red Line interfaces with historical precedent + Heritage Crossing station and MLK and Poppleton tunnel and impact if Heritage Crossing station is omitted
 - MLK vs. Fremont alignment
- Question from Workgroup Member – is there coordination with W Baltimore MARC?
 - Erica: there is coordination with all the different projects nearby
- Question from Workgroup Member – where will the Red Line stop be at the W Balt MARC station?
 - Erica – we are still at less than 10% design phase, so we are not at that stage of decision making, once an alternative is chosen and we are close to 30% design, we would have those discussions
- Question from Workgroup Member - Are you utilizing housing around the stops?
 - Erica: Yes, they are looking into TOD and exploring ways with Baltimore City, County, Federal and State housing initiatives and targeting investment around stations to encourage development
 - There will also be station advisory committees
- Question from Workgroup Member – lives in Heritage Crossing, community will need more information about possible red line station. Some community members were not aware of the station discussion. There need to be people from Heritage Crossing included in the discussion
 - Erica – purpose of the CAC is to engage the public, encourages continued participation in public meetings

2) Doris: Going over the Meeting Agenda

3) Regularly Scheduled Meeting Times

- 2nd Tuesday of the month, 6-8pm

4) Group Discussion, led by Doris, 2 minutes per person for each question

Question 1: Feedback on initial options shown at the last meeting

- Peer projects didn't have build-over options (cap/fill with full buildings above), would we be able to do that with our project, and would it be supported?
 - At this time, a "build over" or bridge type option is not something the project team is analyzing.
- Concerned about getting information to the surrounding neighborhoods and making sure that community members are engaged. Financing – will there be money available to support the people affected by this?
 - The goal is to use existing federal and state funding options as well as looking into innovative funding strategies but as with any project, future funding is not guaranteed.
- Would love to see map of the geography in west Baltimore and an overlay of all the projects that are going in the area (route of FD tunnel, location of different neighborhoods)
- Environmental impact of each of these projects on the wider footprint. Economic impact for those in the footprint of the project and what will be done to make sure there won't be any more displacement
 - As the project progresses, more information regarding impacts will be shared.
- Concerns about area of Franklin & MLK as a part of how it can be reimaged. Designs were looking at other neighborhoods in Highway to nowhere, but not Franklin & MLK. How will Red Line be affected by what we do.
 - As the two projects progress, the project teams are remaining in close coordination.
- We can't decide what will happen below grade until we decide what will happen above grade. It is importance to have adequate support structures for whatever ends up on top
- Rochester example resonated where the highway was removed, all the other examples that maintained the highway still seemed to cater to the people traveling through. Importance of what is going to be in the neighborhood to be able to build community wealth
- Question about design near MLK (lack thereof). Designs from other cities are helpful, a further examination of precedents would be helpful
- Impressed by all the examples, recommends that there is an agreement similar to SAC for redline to make sure that all of the communities are represented.

WEST BALTIMORE UNITED: A PLAN TO RECONNECT COMMUNITIES



- Economics of changes, thinking about platforms, the settling of materials. UMD has some of the best engineers in the country that could be used. Should be open, not sealed, it is a scar. It needs to be viewed so that people know what happened. People want to go back to colonialism. Be very mindful of the environment (possible water feature)
- Complete deck over was her favorite, but concerned about not being able to build, but concerned about where cars go for partial fill. There is one more parking lot right before the highway starts, we should build over that too
- Opportunity liked the park idea from Dallas because of the amount of public space. Wanted to remind the constraints of the timeline and how long it will take to make changes come to fruition.

Further Comments

- Last month we asked to be able to talk about details of the examples and a chance to say what we wanted to see around the highway to nowhere
 - Stu – we wanted this to be open-ended, but we also don't want to get too into the weeds on the designs since they are just pre-concept designs
- Could we open the questions up to the group, and could we deviate from the agenda?
 - Stu – it would be helpful to the team to go through the questions and hear from everyone, but we can open it up at the end. These questions about process are very important for the team to get Workgroup member's input.
- We were looking at examples from around the country, wanted more time to digest them. Agenda wasn't sent out ahead last time
 - Tabia – Rochester wasn't in original examples

Question 2 – Recommendations for how to keep the community engaged

- The team is doing a good job, but maybe a little more canvassing and paper outreach to engage folks that aren't online
- Direct mail would be good (hard copies)
- It's hard in fractured communities to keep people engaged because of existing trauma. People are concerned about what goes on. For the community, it's about numbers
- Need quadrants for community meetings, four different spaces instead of two, to be more accessible and reach more people, door knocking and getting more people involved

WEST BALTIMORE UNITED: A PLAN TO RECONNECT COMMUNITIES



- Parks or libraries, install a semi-permanent display (kiosk) where people can be engaged, answer questions, vision.
- People without cars need to be represented, engagement needs to be accessible for carless community members. Maybe have installment at w Baltimore MARC. Reach out to MTA and have rider notices about project.
- Mailers and door knocking, paper is the best way to reach people where they are. It would also be helpful to have agendas in advance and notes afterwards
- Volunteering to be YouTube commenter of WBU. There should be outreach on YouTube. QR codes for people to scan and get information.
- In messaging, one way to engage community is to offer them something that will help them right now, how to stabilize them right now. Sharing resources about food, workforce development opportunities, tax credits, estate plans, asset security with regards to the project.
- Distrust comes from the top-down process. Be experts and advocates. Need more information to do so. Need to be able to understand potential, what urban design could look like with each option, so the group could be the best advocates for the community
- Community is confused about the different projects, want to be educated. Town Halls closer to communities within walking distance will be more accessible.
- Community organizations, giving them the information. Provide literature to reach churches, senior citizens, gathering spaces. Spotlight on WYPR.

Further Comments

- Would like virtual options so more people can attend
- Centralizing materials, are there resources for that?
 - Tabia – yes, we have done door-knocking and leaving materials at places like libraries. We will also take any additional recommendations
- 31st – W Baltimore Billie Holiday Music & Arts festival 11am-6pm is an event happening that the Project Team may be able to attend.

Question 3: Are there additional thoughts / ideas?

- Vision statement for the workgroup would be helpful
- Values statement / series of values. Honoring history, environmental project to anchor what we do moving forward.
- Coordination with Penn Avenue Black Arts District – QR codes in murals. Not being top down, design should be co-created with community. More sustainable buy-in comes from it being co-created, community gets to say they did it themselves.

WEST BALTIMORE UNITED: A PLAN TO RECONNECT COMMUNITIES



- Video tape the presentations so people can look back and see what happened. QR codes could have surveys. Not sure what we're supposed to tell the community right now. When will the report (grant application) be finished? When will the public see it? Will the public be able to comment?
- Highway remediation has happened, highway removals, caps, etc. Would love to be able to hear from people who have been through this process. How was the community engaged? Was the community pleased? What can we take away from other examples? Can we go on a field trip? Time scales of all the different projects and how they interact.
- Timeline and charrettes, community investment, revitalization
- Areas on Franklin & Mulberry with vacant homes. How can we engage with the city & state. Revitalization needs to go beyond the highway itself. Find the absentee landlords.
- Missing a grand opportunity to do something big with parking lots C & D, get together with the other projects. Once people see something happening, they will get more involved. Bazaar / resource fair. Alternate routes did a festival there but nothing of that scale has been done since.
 - There were a lot of restrictions in that festival. Since the state put that MARC station there, it has only been used as suburban station, needs to be used as urban focus of West Baltimore. It is the anchor of the area.
- How does the timeline relate to Red Line timeline?
 - Stu: Red Line team interaction – our process for both teams is in sync – enormous amounts of work to be done with very specific milestones to be hitting, still figuring out what the project will look like over 6-9 months and Red Line is extremely interested in how our project unfolds over the next year. Red Line can pivot and adjust as deemed necessary
- How will there be financial repair to the folks who have lived in the neighborhoods and those who were displaced (or descendants)? What will sustainably bring that repair? The wealth / opportunities that were taken away with the highway. Reparations / redevelopment around reparations.
 - [As the project develops there will be a better understanding of potential benefits etc. for residents and descendants.](#)
- Psychological preparation of legacy residents with upcoming development. Highline in New York was successful, but it gentrified & displaced. Workgroup Member's work is to stabilize residents and make sure they have long term housing. How can we make sure people can afford increased taxes?
 - [The Workgroup members responsibilities are as follows:](#)
 - [Represent the impacted community's voice by providing direct input and sharing issues or concerns with the Project Team](#)

WEST BALTIMORE UNITED: A PLAN TO RECONNECT COMMUNITIES



- Review outreach materials, messaging, and approach for community engagement.
- Provide design recommendations based on lived experience.
- Provide accountability to the Project Team to ensure the project scheduled is maintained and the public is informed.
- Planning of the project, make sure it includes neighborhoods 4-5 blocks in each direction
- Make sure we incorporate the people who live there currently, coordinate with youth. Pennsylvania Avenue used to be a shining star, need to return to that. Need to have more positive activities for youth. Let off steam / pleasure.
- Establish a "Highway to Nowhere Authority" Something needs to be done to make sure residents can stay in their homes. There are different ways that people can be displaced. How do we address drug problems? Communities are being pushed out. Need more investment in the community. Present day issues of the community.

Further Comments

- Will there be a comment period after project documents are submitted?
 - Stu – possibly. Currently focused on trying to finish everything. Welcome any public comment at any stage, especially during next 6 or so weeks
 - Re: timeline for the grant application –Due September 30.
 - Workgroup Member - can it be shown to the group?
 - [Once the report is complete it is a public document](#)
 - Workgroup Member - what should we be telling the community about project update?
 - [Will huddle with the team and get back to the group](#)
 - Re: timeline with the Red Line – interaction of the two projects is complex. MTA is interested in how this project proceeds
- Grants, are there guidelines that they want the city to include to secure the funding?
 - Stu: yes, the city is trying to meet all the standards laid out
- Is there an update on a traffic study?
 - Stu – yes that will be in the next phase
- Can you speak on the possible deconstruction plans?
 - Stu – there are discussions to remove the ramps

WEST BALTIMORE UNITED: A PLAN TO RECONNECT COMMUNITIES



- Encouraging the group to share data. More traffic on a well-designed street isn't bad for a community. Framing a discussion differently is important

5) Next Steps – Stu

- RFP to hire consulting team closed last week after administrative issues

6) Public Comments

- Homeowners fought the Red Line to stop them from coming through their community. She is excited it is going along the highway to nowhere. Cars go too fast along MLK. There are homeless people there, recent reports of a dead body. Flyers did not reach her community. Residents believe they didn't receive flyers because they fought the redline so that the tunnel wouldn't go under their community. Road signs are not kept up with. Need more playgrounds for children. Her community has HOPE VI residents
- Working with Amtrak to make W Baltimore marc a community friendly station. Fredrick Douglass Tunnel with MARC station is the only project that is funded. W Baltimore MARC is at 70% design and they're doing a bad job, no restrooms, not like the Camden Design.

7) Closing Remarks - Doris