



**MARYLAND TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION**

**MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

Martin O'Malley, Governor • Anthony G. Brown, Lt. Governor  
James T. Smith, Jr., Secretary • Robert L. Smith, Administrator

December 9, 2014

Ms. Lisa Cline  
420 Upshire Circle  
Gaithersburg MD 20878

RE: Letter of October 22, 2014 - Request for Washingtonian Woods Impact Study

Dear Ms. Cline:

This letter is in response to your letter to Mr. Rick Kiegel signed by you, Mr. Russ Dalin, Ms. Alyson Meiselman, Mr. Martin Deutsch, and Mr. Jeff Jex regarding impacts of the Corridor Cities Transitway project (CCT) on the Washingtonian Woods community. Mr. Kiegel and I considered your comments very carefully and have prepared this response which addresses each topic raised in your correspondence.

For the CCT, MTA is adhering to Federal Transit Administration requirements for conducting the project in conformance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and other Federal Transit Administration and MTA requirements. Under the NEPA process the MTA is developing an Environmental Assessment and 11 supporting technical reports. The Environmental Assessment and technical reports will document the assessment of impacts for the entire project, including impacts in the Washingtonian Woods area. Impacts to specific neighborhoods will be discussed in the Socioeconomic Technical Report. The technical reports will be attached to the Environmental Assessment and posted on the project website once they are published in early 2015.

As the Environmental Assessment and technical reports will provide an assessment of impacts, MTA will not be preparing a separate study of impacts to Washingtonian Woods. This letter contains responses to the various points raised in your correspondence.

Muddy Branch Road Segment

Concern A: Additional Traffic Signals

Traffic signals have been proposed on Muddy Branch at the intersections of Midsummer Drive/Mission Drive and at Midsummer Drive/Belward Campus Drive to provide safe vehicular and pedestrian crossings of the transitway. As part of this project, our team studied the existing traffic along Muddy Branch Road and the Great Seneca Highway corridor in the field and modeled traffic in the year 2035 in a detailed traffic simulation model called "VISSIM" to assess

the present and future quality of operations of general motorists and the CCT bus. We are confident that the addition of these two signals along Muddy Branch Road can create good progression along the corridor and will provide safe ingress and egress to the neighborhoods of Washingtonian Woods and Mission Hills. The proposed signals will protect turning movements from being in conflict with the CCT bus, will provide protected pedestrian movements across Muddy Branch Road which has been a major concern of the communities and will eliminate the stacking of turning vehicles in the median which has also been voiced as an existing unsafe condition. The Federal Highway Administration guidelines referred to in your letter are relative to access management guidelines and are not applicable to the situation along Muddy Branch Road.

#### Concern B: Non-Car Transportation Void

The CCT supports pedestrian and bicycle mobility and access and seeks to provide connections for all modes to the proposed transitway and stations. The project would not require permanent closure of any existing pedestrian or bicycle facilities. The CCT would include new sidewalks and shared use paths throughout the study area corridor, in accordance with the 2010 "Great Seneca Science Corridor Master Plan," where applicable. The Environmental Assessment will discuss the pedestrian and bicycle facilities and potential long and short term effects to those facilities from the project. We are also closely coordinating pedestrian and bicycle considerations with the Maryland State Highway Administration, Montgomery County, Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, and the cities of Rockville and Gaithersburg.

#### Concern C: Aesthetic Decline

The Environmental Assessment will discuss visual resources and potential visual impacts from the CCT, as well as possible mitigation strategies. Specific mitigation strategies will be developed as the project progresses and the MTA will seek community input regarding aesthetic treatments to address visual impacts. The current design for the CCT results in no roadway change west of the existing southbound curb line nearest Washingtonian Woods.

#### Concern D: Noise Pollution

Noise analysis performed as part of the CCT indicates that no noise mitigation is required along Muddy Branch Road. The Environmental Assessment and supporting Noise and Vibration Technical Report will include a noise analysis of long term and short term effects from the CCT.

#### Great Seneca Highway Segment

#### Concern A: Noise Pollution

As was presented at the September 30, 2014 CCT meeting held with the Washingtonian Woods community, the CCT generates a moderate noise impact to some homes along Upshire Circle

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and to some homes in the Vistas development along Great Seneca Highway. Noise mitigation will be considered in these areas. MTA will work with affected residents in determining the mitigation.

#### Concern B: Air Pollution

An air quality analysis has been performed for the CCT. The Environmental Assessment and supporting Air Quality Technical Report include a regional and micro-scale air quality analysis. The results of the air quality analysis will be presented in the Environmental Assessment. It is worth noting that the CCT project is planning to utilize diesel-electric hybrid buses, which result in less emissions than conventional diesel buses.

#### Concern C: Greenery

The Environmental Assessment and Natural Resources Technical Report present the impacts to street trees and forests. A general mitigation discussion will be included based on State and local requirements. Specific mitigation strategies will be developed as the project progresses and the MTA continues to work with communities.

#### Concern D: Diminished Property Values

Although the construction of a rapid transit station is generally believed to increase property values and create economic opportunities, the extent to which this is true depends on the local situation, proximity to a station, and the nature of the transit line itself. A report on the subject prepared by the Transit Cooperative Research Program noted the following:

Research findings on the effects of proximity to transit on land values are not very consistent in part because impacts vary depending on severity of traffic congestion, local real-estate market conditions, swings in business cycles, and other factors.<sup>1</sup>

With regard to the CCT and Washingtonian Woods, because the community is not immediately adjacent to a station any impacts to property values would correspond with the nature and extent of impacts identified in the Environmental Assessment. Based on our current understanding of impacts to Washingtonian Woods we do not see the need to conduct any further analysis of impacts to property values.

We appreciate the opportunity to respond to your letter and looking forward to sharing the Environmental Assessment with you. We would appreciate it if you could share this response

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.tcrponline.org/PDFDocuments/TCRP\\_RPT\\_102.pdf](http://www.tcrponline.org/PDFDocuments/TCRP_RPT_102.pdf)

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with the other signatories. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact Mr. Kiegel at 410-767-1380 or by email at [rkiegel@mta.maryland.gov](mailto:rkiegel@mta.maryland.gov).

Sincerely,



Henry M. Kay  
Executive Director for Transit Development and Delivery

cc: Mr. Gary Erenrich, Special Assistant to the Director for WMATA Affairs, Montgomery  
County Department of Transportation  
Mr. Rick Kiegel, CCT Project Manager, MTA  
Ms. Melinda Peters, Administrator, SHIA  
Mr. Robert Smith, Administrator, MTA