

## **TEA-3, Transportation 2030, Red & Green Line Scoping, Fare Hikes, & Bike Paths** By Patrick McMahon

A number of important opportunities are coming up for input on transportation in the Baltimore region, places where we can come out as Sierra Club members and influence the way in which the area will develop over the next several decades. While coming out to a public meeting about transportation planning for the long-term may not seem all that exciting, your input at these forums can have a significant influence on shape the future of transportation in our region.

On the Federal level, the major transportation bill (TEA-21) is up for its six-year reauthorization and will be a major issue in the House and Senate over the next several months. Among other disappointing pieces, the current Bush Administration Bill (SAFTEA) contains a cut in the Federal share of new transit projects costs from 80% to 50% and allows reductions in the time available for completion of environmental reviews and to file law suits challenging environmental studies. Maryland Rep. (R) Roscoe Bartlett, along with Sens. Chuck Grassley & Max Baucus, has gone even further by proposing that no money for transit should come out of the gas tax and all new transit projects should be funded through bonds. For more information on this issue you can go to: <http://www.sierraclub.org/sprawl/tea3/>.

Locally, the longest range of the upcoming issues is the development of Transportation 2030, a 25 year plan for the funding of future transportation projects in the Baltimore region. Any significant transportation project hoping to be funded needs to be included in this plan to be eligible for federal funding. The Baltimore Regional Transportation Board, which develops and approves the plan, is holding an Open House on June 5<sup>th</sup> at the Baltimore Metropolitan Council's offices in Canton. This event will help explain the year and a half long process of developing the plan and to allow individuals to review the materials from the last plan and to meet the policy makers from each jurisdiction in the region that develop the plan. To find out more about Transportation 2030 you can go to: <http://www.baltometro.org/notesarch/BRTBnotes0305.pdf> (not yet posted on their Web site).

On a slightly shorter timeline are a series of "scoping meetings" to discuss the plans for the proposed Red Line and extension of the existing "Green Line" or Metro. During this scoping phase the MTA is determining the possible alternatives, impacts, and issues to be studied in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. At this point there are a variety of modes (Heavy Rail, Light Rail, and Bus Rapid Transit) and alignments being considered for each option. The formal comment period for this portion of the planning ends August 1<sup>st</sup> and I strongly encourage you to

### **Transportation 2030 Events**

**June 5, 6:00 to 8:30 –**

Transportation 2030 Open House at the Baltimore Metropolitan Council (2700 Lighthouse Point East, Suite 310 – Canton)

### **MTA Red Line Meetings**

**June 5, 4:00 to 8:00 p.m. –**  
Rosemont Tower

**June 7, 4:00 to 8:00 p.m. –** Woodlawn Community Center

**June 18, 4:00 to 8:00 p.m. –** St. William of York Parish Hall

### **MTA Green Line Meetings**

**June 12, 4:00 to 8:00 p.m. –** Dunbar High School

**June 14, 4:00 to 8:00 p.m. –** Good Samaritan High School

either attend one of the meetings or to comment on-line at <http://www.baltimoreregiontransitplan.com/>. Public input is essential at this point because of the low commitment that the Ehrlich administration has toward doing this process right. They have already ruled out the use of “heavy” rail for the cross-town Red Line and they are considering extending the existing Subway line via buses, not an intelligent option in my opinion. Baltimore desperately needs an effective network of rapid transit and we will only get it if you come out to push for it.

Amidst all of this, Transportation Secretary Flanagan and the Maryland Transit Administration are proposing to increase the fares to ride transit and to cut service to a number of lines. During the legislative session there had been an agreement to increase the base fares from \$1.35 to \$1.50, in order to meet the 40% farebox recovery rate, but the state has since decided that it will push rates up further to \$1.60 while reducing service. We need to be encouraging the public to use transit, not discouraging them by increasing fares and reducing service. While a coalition of groups will be undoubtedly fighting to reduce or eliminate the farebox recovery rate in the next legislative session, I encourage you to contact the MTA and express your disappointment with the proposed rate hike beyond that agreed upon by our legislators.

Finally but belatedly, Baltimore County and Baltimore City are working on a series of improvements for bicyclists and pedestrians. Baltimore County is currently developing a bicycle and pedestrian plan for the eastern portion of the county and Baltimore City has just unveiled a set of plans for the Jones Falls Greenway and associated on-street bike routes. The Baltimore County planning process has just completed a round of workshops to gather public input on the plan and you can find out more the process contact Kathy Schlabach, Project Manager, at 410-887-3495 or [kschlabach@co.ba.md.us](mailto:kschlabach@co.ba.md.us) or visitng their Web site at [http://www.co.ba.md.us/Agencies/planning/community%20planning/eastern\\_co\\_bikeped/](http://www.co.ba.md.us/Agencies/planning/community%20planning/eastern_co_bikeped/).

Within Baltimore City, the middle section of the Jones Falls Trail has just started construction and the middle section of the Gwynns Falls Trail has just been completed, with a grand opening on June 15<sup>th</sup> at Carroll Park. For information about the planning for the upper and lower portions of the Jones Falls and the final, lower portion of the Gwynns Falls contact Beth Strommen at the Baltimore City Planning Department, 410-396-8360 or [beth.strommen@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:beth.strommen@baltimorecity.gov).

In all of these important transportation issues we need your voices to be heard. It isn't enough for be to say that our members support transit, bicycle, and pedestrian options, the public officials need to hear directly from you. If you have any questions about these or any other transportation issues, please contact me at [patrick@mcmahon.com](mailto:patrick@mcmahon.com) or 410-235-1512.

### **Fairwell To Cathy Disbrow, A Great Webmaster**

By Richard Klein

If you've visited our Group website then you've no doubt been impressed by it's quality and ease of use. The credit for our great website goes to Cathy Disbrow who has been our webmaster for the past three years. Cathy not only maintains our website, but designed it as well.

That our Group website is great is not merely boast. I've visited every Sierra Club website. Yes, that's right. All 50+ Chapter websites and the 300-400 Group websites. I can say without fear of contradiction that the website Cathy designed for us is among the best in the nation.

Well, all good things must end and the same is true for the time Cathy has volunteered on our behalf. She and her fiancée are moving to Toronto where Cathy will continue her career as a free-lance web designer. She will also find many opportunities to pursue her favorite Sierra Club activity - hiking.

So with deepest gratitude we say farewell and best wishes to Cathy while we welcome our new webmaster, Doug Gaede.

### **Should We Save Sensitive Waters?**

#### **Your Vote Needed**

The Greater Baltimore Group urgently needs to initiate a project to preserve the most sensitive waters in our area from the impact of poorly planned growth. Though this project holds the potential for tremendous environmental benefits, it will also require a substantial commitment from you and our other members. Before initiating this project we need a showing of support from you. After reading the following description please vote on whether we should proceed with the *Sensitive Waters Project* by: calling 410-654-3021, e-mailing us at GBSierra@ceds.org, faxing us at 410-654-3028, or mailing in the ballot accompanying this article.

Baltimore and Harford counties have more sensitive waters than the rest of Maryland combined. These waters include streams so clean and cold trout can reproduce and thrive, dozens of wetlands supporting threatened and endangered species, water supply reservoirs serving a million Marylanders, and more than 400 miles of shoreline fronting on the Chesapeake Bay and tidal creeks.

All of these waters are threatened by the needless loss of open space (farm and forestland) occurring throughout our region. In fact, by 2020 we'll lose nearly 24,000 acres of open space. This sprawl will degrade another 60 miles of our waterways.

Fortunately, a solution is at hand. Over the past decade a number of new approaches have emerged for accommodating a reasonable amount of growth with far less environmental impact. Baltimore County has implemented many of these approaches, but not all. Harford County has far more ground to make up, but is making a good start.

We believe that with your help the Greater Baltimore Sierra Club can accelerate the full implementation of *Smart Growth* techniques for preserving farmland, such as purchasing development rights, and other approaches, such as the recommendations which emerged from the recently completed Harford County Roundtable on *Better Site Design* (to minimize water quality impacts) - a committee on which Sierran Tim Niblett represented our Group.

But accelerating implementation of these stream, wetland and Bay protection measures will take the active participation of many of our 3,500 members. What we need is for you and other Sierrans to register your interest today in making a call, writing a letter or attending a hearing. To become part of this solution call 410-654-3021, send an e-mail to [GBSierra@ceds.org](mailto:GBSierra@ceds.org), fax us at 410-654-3028, or mail in the ballot accompanying this article.

**SENSITIVE WATERS PROJECT BALLOT**

**G** Yes, I think the Greater Baltimore Group should pursue the Sensitive Waters Project.

**G** No, I don't think the Greater Baltimore Group should pursue the Sensitive Waters Project.

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to: **GREATER BALTIMORE GROUP SIERRA CLUB**  
8100 Greenspring Valley Road  
Owings Mills, Maryland 21117