Station Area Advisory Committees

VISION PLAN
Security Square
INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the first phase of the Station Area Advisory Committees (SAAC). The SAAC process is part of the Red Line’s public involvement program.

What role did the SAACs fulfill?

SAACs are advisory to the MTA. Each SAAC was extremely helpful and provided input about their community and how the proposed station location would “behave” in their community. The SAACs functioned as a focus group. The SAACs have three major responsibilities:

- Vision Planning
- Station Design and Goals
- Sharing Information

This document summarizes the SAAC’s activities regarding Vision Planning and Station Location. The Vision Plans for each SAAC summarize the first half of the SAAC efforts. The second half of the effort will focus on Station Design and Goals. The meetings for this effort started in October of 2010 and concluded in early spring of 2011. The documentation of the Station Design and Goals efforts will be an addendum to the Vision Plans.

During the Vision Planning process, each SAAC decided on their station area’s boundaries; examined the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for their areas; and reviewed the connectivity elements for the proposed station locations. The SAACs not only examined what existed, but also thought about the potential for their areas. They also reviewed the station locations in relation to the Vision Plan for their station area. In some of the SAAC areas, it was confirmed that the station location was in keeping with the community goals and in other instances station locations were modified. Each Vision Plan explains the elements of the Visioning Process and the Station Location.

Once the SAACs completed their Vision Plan and confirmed their desired Station Location, Open Houses were held for the general public. These Open Houses were extensively advertised and over 400 citizens attended. There were four Open House sessions; each one focused on a different portion of the Red Line corridor. The areas were West – Baltimore County, Route 40 West, Downtown and the Eastside. At these Open Houses, the draft Vision Plans were discussed with the community and feedback was obtained. After this public feedback, the SAAC members revisited their Vision Plans to ensure, “Did we get it right?” The Vision Plans are the result of this effort.
STATION AREA VISION PLAN

Station Area Defined (analysis):
What do we see? What do we know? What is our Vision Area?

Analysis

a) Physical Boundaries

The boundary of the overall Vision Area is slightly larger than a ½ mile radius to the north, west, and south; and slightly smaller to the east. Since I-695 is a major barrier to access to the station, the areas east of I-695 are not considered part of the Vision Area. The Vision Area encompasses the commercial areas near the station and extends outward to include the residential neighborhoods that are adjacent to the commercial areas. Figure 1: Stability/Change shows the boundaries of the Vision Area.

b) Existing Conditions/Context

The Security Square station area is currently a suburban mixed-use center in the sense that various land uses are adjacent to each other, but there is little on-site mixing of different uses.

Along much of Rolling Road, to the west, are residential neighborhoods, such as the Tuscany Gardens/Tuscany Woods Apartments.

East of Rolling Road near Security Boulevard are the Security Square Shopping Center and Security Square Mall, which is one of the largest retail centers in the region. The large 1,040,000 square foot 1970s-style enclosed mall has, in recent years, lost several large anchor stores and now features many discount retail stores. It is served by five bus lines: 15, 20, 40, 44, and 57 and attracts shoppers from the surrounding residential areas and from Baltimore City, which does not have similar shopping facilities.

The land uses north of Security Boulevard are largely strip commercial businesses such as McDonalds, Exxon, a Koons car dealership, and tax services. Some lower intensity uses such as light industrial storage and warehousing are located north of this strip commercial area.

Interstate 70 to the south and I-695 to the east are significant barriers that cut off the land uses on the opposite sides of these major arterials from easy access to the proposed station, even though they are within a ½ mile radius of the station.

SAAC members said that the location is great. You can get to any place in the region easily by getting on the Beltway, I-70, etc.; “You can live in the suburbs and be close to the city.” However, they also said that there is not enough public recreation or open space in the area, and that there needs to be more cultural and community activities/locations, such as a common community space that could also be a cultural center, museum spaces, art spaces, etc.
c) Stabilization Area vs. Redevelopment Area

Almost all surrounding residential areas were considered stable and healthy with no fundamental changes needed or desired. Figure 1: Stability/Change shows the areas the SAAC identified as staying the same and those it would like to see changed.

The main concern of the SAAC members focused on the walkability along the busier roads that connect the neighborhoods to the retail shopping areas. The sidewalks are relatively narrow for people walking adjacent to the high-volume Rolling Road and Security Boulevard. In some cases, there is no sidewalk.

There are few available sites for new development; the only areas identified for possible residential redevelopment were the frontage lots on Rolling Road north of Security Boulevard and along Security Boulevard west of Rolling Road.

Many of the SAAC members would like to see the existing commercial area, especially the Security Square Mall, be redeveloped. The SAAC discussed what types of existing commercial uses should be part of any future land use mix, which ones should not, and which ones may or may not be appropriate. These are uses that are not present today, but would be desirable where identified. SAAC members expressed the desire for:

- More cultural and community facilities;
- More open space of varying kinds (for example, community-wide spaces for such events as farmers’ markets and local spaces such as convenient playgrounds);
- Hotels for visitors and government employees who need to visit Social Security or CMS;
- More sit down, family style restaurants;
- More positive attractions for young adults; and
- More things for seniors to do.

SAAC members did not want more government jobs; liquor stores, bars, and clubs; or anything that affects “our quiet neighborhood.”
Station Area Vision: What changes? What stays the same? What do we value?

Values

This SAAC is an interesting blend of very local members (i.e., persons who live within walking distance of the proposed station) and persons not from the immediate area but who consider Security Square an important place serving many needs of the larger sub-region. The SAAC members bring a variety of perspectives to the issues and concerns in the area.

The Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis is a common planning practice used in the beginning of a project to identify the advantages or disadvantages that the planning work will need to deal with. This SWOT analysis focuses on the general traits of the station area. A more specific list of location specific problems mentioned by SAAC members follows the SWOT list.

a) Strengths

- Residential neighborhoods around the commercial center are stable and very livable.
- Social diversity of the area is healthy.
- Area has excellent road access to larger region.
- Area is already served by a number of transit lines.
- There are some locally useful businesses such as supermarket, banks, etc.

b) Weaknesses

- Commercial development is suburban style. That is, auto oriented, pedestrian unfriendly with lots of underutilized paved areas, and it is hard to, or impossible to, walk to and from different stores or services.
- Mall continues to languish, and it is unclear if it will continue to decline.
- Many existing uses are not neighborhood oriented. For example, there are not any good sit down restaurants, just fast food chains for most part. Auto dealer, mini-storage, and gas stations occupy key sites that are key locations for potential Transit Oriented Development (TOD) uses.
- Pedestrian access to and within the commercial areas is difficult and often dangerous due to lack of adequate sidewalks and barriers to easy movement between stores and services.
- Potential station TOD area is fragmented. The Beltway (I-695) cuts off the station area from nearby land uses to the east and I-70 cuts off the area to south.
- There are few undeveloped sites; change needs to come through redevelopment.
- No provision of activities or amenities for seniors.
- No provision of activities or amenities for young people.
c) Opportunities

• Future Red Line station can be a redevelopment magnet, and its location is key to enticing potential future site redevelopment.

• Area location makes it potentially attractive for TOD style economic development reinvestment.

• Large mall site is very underused and could support other uses.

• Nearby government workforce could be support for nearby stores and services if access to them were better.

• Redevelopment could add number of neighborhood amenities to station area.

d) Threats

• Multiple ownership of mall site makes it harder to plan for comprehensive redevelopment. Owners may have conflicting priorities and different financial abilities to make improvements.

• Declining rents at Mall and other commercial sites could lead to less desirable businesses.

• Expansion of federal activities in area could increase traffic without bringing other benefits such as increased customer base for local businesses.

• Anti-social behavior of young people at Mall.

Goals: What are our Vision Area Goals? What do we want to see for the future?

The Security Square Station is envisioned to be a regional TOD opportunity. This designation is driven in large part by the presence of the Security Square Mall and the hope that the area will revitalize and redevelop into the regional destination it once was.

Its station type is campus station in that it is surrounded by large parcels owned by a relatively small number of owners. The station is envisioned to have some parking – current plans show a parking lot that could accommodate up to 410 vehicles – and it is likely that in the short term many of the neighborhood passengers would drive to the station. However, SAAC members would like to eventually see that land be used for development rather than parking and see more people walking or biking to the station.
Guiding Principles

Through the SAAC’s discussions, it developed the following guiding principles:

General
- Use arrival of Red Line as an opportunity to reorder existing and new land uses on a more livable and sustainable basis.
- Recognize that the Security Square area has both regional and local significance.
- Enhance the good aspects of the station area – replace those not working well or better located elsewhere.

Quality of Life Issues
- Protect the physical integrity, the social and economic diversity and the livability of the residential neighborhoods surrounding the area’s commercial core.
- Provide residential and non-residential areas with high quality pedestrian accommodations—make all links to the station area direct, safe, and attractive.
- Calm and make Security Boulevard and Rolling Road more like urban “streets” or “boulevards.”
- Provide more activities and opportunities for senior citizens.
- Provide more activities and opportunities for young people.

Land Use Issues
- Plan for 20 years from now, not just tomorrow.
- Plan for different outcomes of the station area.
- Bring more locally serving businesses to the area—e.g., sit down family restaurants.
- Use redevelopment to create opportunities for locally run businesses, not just for chain stores.
- Get uses north and south of Security Boulevard to relate better to each other.
- Do not attract uses that potentially foster anti-social behavior.
- Add different types of open space as part of station area redevelopment.
- Treat density and scale issues carefully.

Vision Statement

The SAAC did not develop a specific vision statement for the area.
STATION CONCEPT

Station Location

Platform Location/ Behavior

The station location identified in the Locally Preferred Alternative was deep in the Security Square Mall’s parking lot. At the time of the inception of the SAAC process, the SAAC was asked to consider a revised station location. This alignment showed the Red Line station had been moved to Security Boulevard and the station was shown in the northeast corner of the mall area between Belmont Avenue and the on-ramp for I-695. (see Figure 2.)

The SAAC recommended that the station be located between Lord Baltimore Drive and Belmont Avenue. (see Figure 3.) This is where the current main bus stop is located, and people are used to accessing transit in this location. It was also felt that this location would be better able to support or “fit into” a future TOD plan for the mall site or for the area on the north side of Security Boulevard.

Once the SAAC identified their preferred station location and once the engineers began to explore this option, the SAAC provided input on two additional issues – how to accommodate the grade change between Security Boulevard and the existing parking area and the location of the bus drop off. Figure 4 highlights the grade difference between Security Boulevard and existing parking area. Figure 5 shows how the station would function if level with the parking, and Figure 6 shows how the station would function if level with Security Boulevard. Figure 7 shows the bus drop-off occurring within the Red Line parking area, and Figure 8 shows the bus drop-off on Security Boulevard.

The SAAC recommended that bus drop-offs occur within the Red Line parking area rather than off of Security Boulevard. The SAAC felt that this would be safer for passengers because they would be removed from the roadway and that it would be better for the traffic on Security Boulevard because buses wouldn’t be pulling into and out of traffic. The SAAC also recommended that the station platform be raised to meet the grade of the parking lot rather than have passengers step down to the platform level from the parking area. With the bus drop-off occurring at the parking area, this keeps all of the activities at the same level.

Platform Type

The SAAC recommends that a center platform be constructed at the Security Square station. Members felt that the center platform would provide passengers with more safety and security, reduce rider confusion, and produce platform amenity efficiencies (e.g., seating, trashcans, ticket machines, etc). SAAC members wanted to buffer outbound passengers from the automobile traffic on Security Boulevard and reduce potential conflict between inbound passengers and users of the proposed hiker/biker trail that is proposed to be adjacent to the Red Line between the CMS and Security Square stations.

One disadvantage of the center platform that was raised is that it is more difficult to expand a center platform’s width than a side platform’s width. The SAAC is worried that demand at the station will dramatically increase if
the desired development patterns occur and that platforms sized for current demand will be too narrow and will require widening in the future. However, the SAAC members felt that the benefits of the center platform were important to retain and request that future demand be considered when sizing the platform.

**Alignment Issues**

SAAC members expressed concern about the impact that the light rail will have at intersections along Security Boulevard, particularly at Rolling Road. Free rights (allowing right turns on red) will be prohibited across the tracks, so a signal or no turn on red will have to be considered. The SAAC also wondered about strategies to calm traffic on Security Boulevard so that it is easier for passengers to go between the station and the north side of Security Boulevard and to create a more transit-friendly environment. Security Boulevard’s maintenance responsibilities are split between Baltimore County and Maryland State Highway Administration at Rolling Road. The SAAC hopes that the County and State will work together to develop and implement plans to enhance the safety and walkability along Security Boulevard.

**Station Performance & Station Image – Neighborhood Identity**

This document summarizes the Vision Plan and Station Location efforts of the SAAC. This concludes the first phase of the SAAC efforts.

The second phase of the SAAC efforts begins in October of 2011 and is anticipated to run through early spring of 2012. During this second half the SAACs will focus on Station Performance and Station Image. The discussions will include elements such as:

- **Urban Design and Site Planning:** This will cover the functional relationship of the station to the neighborhood. The SAAC will review station orientation, accessibility, landscape/hardscape opportunities, and visual and physical connectivity (pedestrian, bicycle and auto/intermodal).
- **Station Programming:** This will include discussions on system-wide standard elements and elements that may be more “customized” per neighborhood station.
- **Station Image – Neighborhood Identity:** The SAAC will discuss special neighborhood features, art in transit and recommend station names.

The outcome of the second phase of SAAC efforts will be documented as an addendum to the Vision Plan.
Fig. 3

Security Square Platform Options

Security Square

Platform Options

BETWEEN LORD BALTIMORE HT AND BEUKEMAN AVE
CENTER PLATFORM CONFIGURATION

DATE: APR 15, 2011
SCALE: 1" = 100'
Security Mall Station — Existing Bus Drop-Off
Security Mall Station – Center Platform

Fig. 5

[Diagram of Security Mall Station – Center Platform]
Security Mall Station – Side Platforms

Fig. 6

Security Square
Security Mall Station – Possible Layout 2
Fig. 8

Security Mall Station – Possible Layout 3