

## Maintenance depot and Ride On service moving upcounty

■ Council will vote on  
Clarksburg bus yard next week

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The County Council's Transportation and Environment Committee last week approved a recommendation to build the North County Maintenance Depot in Clarksburg in two stages to get the project started a year earlier.

"[The bus depot] allows us to gear up toward increasing bus service in the upcounty," Councilwoman Nancy M. Floreen (D-At large) of Garrett Park said in a phone interview Monday. "Right now, we can't add a single additional Ride On bus. We have no place to park them, much less maintain them. This is a

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## DEPOT

top priority. We can afford to do it and we can do it."

The 200,000-square-foot facility is planned for a site on Whelan Lane near the Montgomery County Correctional Facility. It would service 250 Ride On buses. No other sites are under consideration.

So far only \$16 million of the project is funded, which will cover the cost of design and land acquisition, according to the committee staff report.

Design of the depot began last summer and will continue through June 2009. The estimated cost of the entire project is \$91.7 million.

The first stage of the project, expected to cost \$74.5 million, includes the \$16 million for design and land acquisition, as well as site preparation and construction of facilities needed to maintain 150 buses.

The second stage will include facilities for 100 more buses. Planning for stage two would begin in mid-2014 and cost \$17.2 million.

The staging will allow the project to move forward sooner without need to fund the entire project at one time, Floreen said.

The two-pronged approach will allow Ride On to expand service in late 2010, according to the staff report. The project would be held off completely until 2012 if it were approved in one stage, according to the report.

There are currently no bus depots in the upcounty for Ride On buses.

The depot will have three

parts, a Ride On depot for up to 250 buses, a fleet services depot to maintain the buses and a highway maintenance depot to replace facilities in Derwood and Poolesville, according to the staff report. The fleet services depot will house 90 pieces of heavy highway maintenance equipment.

Kathie Hulley, the president of the Clarksburg Civic Association, said she feels misled because she did not know a new highway maintenance depot would be part of the bus depot or that 90 pieces of heavy equipment would be housed there.

She said her organization has opposed the whole idea of putting a depot in Clarksburg for years. She is concerned about the environmental impact because the depot site is located in the sensitive Clarksburg Special Protection Area.

The county should be focusing on planning for other forms of mass transit instead of

spending all of its time providing for Ride On bus transportation, Hulley said.

"If they want to approve development upcounty, which should be transit oriented, they better get transit up here soon," she said.

Another concern is that the depot will bring too much traffic to Clarksburg, Hulley said.

The civic association should have been better informed about plans for the depot as they developed, she said, adding she did not think the concept of a depot included overnight stays for buses.

Engineers are in the process of designing the site and will submit plans to the county Planning Board within the next seven months. Four months later, the plans would be submitted to the Department of Permitting Services.

The County Council is scheduled to vote on the two-stage approach to the bus depot next Tuesday.