

Council gives support to bus depot

■ But more details are needed, members say

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The County Council voiced general support for building the North County Maintenance Depot in two stages in Clarksburg during a worksession Tuesday, but asked for more information from staff about the project before it takes a final vote on the project.

Councilwoman Nancy M. Floreen (D-At large) of Garrett Park said the project is critical to the expansion of Ride On bus service in the upcounty because there is a lack of space to park buses.

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

"If we don't fund this it will be so much later that we will have the ability to expand," she said.

Councilman Marc Elrich (D-At large) of Takoma Park said he would have liked to have more information about how the county plans to expand the bus service.

"Here we are talking about expanding a depot, but if we don't buy enough buses we are creating capacity without any plan to use this capacity," he said.

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 council's Transportation and Environment Committee staff report.

Design of the depot began last summer.

The estimated cost of the entire project is \$91.7 million.

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

The depot would 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

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replace facilities in Derwood and Poolesville, according to the report.

Clarksburg residents have opposed putting a depot in Clarksburg for years, citing concerns about the environmental impact because the depot site is located in the sensitive Clarksburg Special Protection Area. They also believe the depot will bring too much traffic to the area.

Councilman Michael J. Knapp (D-Dist.2) of Germantown said the county must do a better job of coming up with an explanation as to what benefits the Clarksburg residents would gain from the depot. The depot is needed to help the upcounty, but it is not going to be a very attractive part of Clarksburg, he said.

"The next big thing the county will do up there is a maintenance depot," Knapp said. "It doesn't look like we are doing a lot of great things for Clarksburg."