The Cafritz Property: It is more than Whole Foods
An Introduction to Traffic Issues

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The purpose of this post is to identify the central traffic issues that the citizens, Mayors and Councils of College Park, Hyattsville, Riverdale Park, and others have identified or believe need to be resolved prior to granting a rezoning to the Cafritz Property to engage in Mixed Use development. The central traffic issues appear to be:

a. **Traffic Volume on Route 1**: The latest Cafritz traffic study released on July 27 only includes analysis for the AM and PM peak hours. The study lacks data on Midday Peak and Saturday Peak hours. In discussions with SHA, it appears that while they will install a second left hand-turn on US 1 going north in the summer/fall of 2012, their traffic engineer does not believe that these changes and improvements will lead to a letter grade change in the intersection.[1] Level of service will remain LOS E in the AM and LOS F in the afternoon. Therefore any increase in traffic volume during the AM and PM peak rush hour will tend to make matters worse. The Cafritz development expects to add traffic in both the AM and PM period, particularly after the full build out is concluded.

b. **General access plans for the Cafritz site**: Route 1 is the sole entrance/exit proposed for traffic at the present time. This concentrates traffic on Route 1. It may also pose a safety issue in case of an emergency as a number of individuals have pointed out. Recently Riverdale Park has suggested a link along Maryland Avenue, which runs along the western side of the CSX tracks from the Town Center MARC station in Riverdale Park to the southernmost boundary of the Cafritz property. Currently this street services the 20 acre industrial park north of East-West Highway. The Cafritz development team is also exploring the possibility of constructing an overpass capable of safely carrying vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians across the CSX RR tracks. The difficulty is that until it becomes clear if Riverdale Park will allow private vehicles and trucks to travel along it and CSX grants a vehicular bridge to cross its tracks, it is not possible to assess the impact of the development on traffic loads on Route 1. Unfortunately, it is not feasible to guarantee access across CSX in a timely fashion, raising the possibility that the owners of the Cafritz property would be authorized to build out all the commercial spaces prior to being granted authority to cross the CSX tracks.

[1] Intersections are rated on a Level of Service (LOS) scale ranging from A to F, with an F indicating a so-called failed intersection, i.e. it takes more than a certain amount of time to get through the intersection during the AM and PM peak rush hours.

c. **Route 1/EW Highway Intersection is rated as a LOS of E at the AM peak hour and as a LOS of F at the PM peak hour**. While the creation of a second left turn lane at EW Highway and Route 1 going north might relieve traffic to some degree, once Phase II of the project is finished, any will be lost. This issue needs to be looked at carefully, particularly if other upstream and downstream developments along Route 1 contribute to continuing traffic problems at the intersection.

d. **Van Buren Entrance**: The proposed design at Van Buren would prevent straight through traffic entering University Park. While this will tend to control the flow of cut through traffic into UP via Van Buren, it is unclear whether traffic flows will simply divert elsewhere. This issue will be treated more extensively in a memo on potential traffic impacts on Route 1 as a consequence of developments on the Cafritz property.

e. **Cut-Through Traffic**: This issue is nearly exclusive to University Park at this time, although the communities south and east of the property may also be subject to cut through traffic if the Maryland Avenue option and a CSX vehicular crossover solution fully emerge. Any final agreement will have to include procedures and methods for monitoring and managing traffic in and out of UP as well as traffic passing through UP. It is important to keep in mind that traffic impacts on community residents will not be even. Residents along College Heights Drive, Wells Parkway, Clagett Road, and Queens Chapel Road, for example, are more likely to be impacted by cut-through traffic than, for example, those who live at the 40th Street cul-de-sac or any of the other cul-de-sacs in University Park.

f. **University Park Traffic Studies**: Traffic studies conducted internal to the Town over the last few years, as well as the most recent speed and volume studies carried out this past winter and spring on Route 1 and Adelphi Road remind us that while internal improvements and traffic calming procedures can be effective, without mitigation efforts to calm traffic down on Route 1, EW Highway (410), and Adelphi Road, eventually University Park will be overwhelmed.

g. **Cafritz Traffic Studies**: The Cafritz development team has produced three waves of traffic studies, the first two by The Traffic Group and the last by Wells & Associates. All three studies suffer from the weakness noted above in that none assess mid-day or week end traffic impacts. Traffic studies carried out in Brooklyn, NY (Gowanus area) and Santa Barbara, CA on behalf of Whole Foods and the impacted communities suggest that mid-day and weekend traffic impacts can be significant. It is worth noting that along with the traffic studies, market studies indicate that Whole Foods adds relatively small amounts of traffic as measured by sales to the AM rush hour peak period, primarily as they do not open their stores until 8 AM. Mid-day and Saturday peak hour traffic is significantly greater and can rival PM peak rush hour traffic.

h. **Saturday/Sunday Issue:** As a consequence of the fact that the MNCPPC Planning Board for Prince George's County does not require developers to collect and analyze weekend traffic data, we have no data on vehicular traffic patterns on Saturday and Sunday. The difficulty here is that specialty grocery stores do a disproportionately greater business on weekends, particularly Saturdays, than on the week days. For example, the Whole Foods study for Gowanus Brooklyn estimates that individual sales go up by approximately 30% on Saturdays. Using the daily average of 102 per 1000 square feet for customers to grocery stores, the standard required by the County to be used in traffic impact studies, new vehicular trips to Whole Foods could rise to over 4500 on Saturdays.

Without a careful analysis of this issue, it is difficult to assess the importance or impact of mitigations and traffic control policies extending beyond the week days.

i. **Restaurants draw heavy traffic:** The most recent traffic study conducted for the Cafritz property development team does not break out the retail space into its individual components. As a consequence it is difficult to identify the underlying assumptions concerning the types of retail usage and the space devoted to it. At present, the only data that has been released includes 35,000 square feet for Whole Foods and 45,000 for a Health Spa and Gym. In a number of public comments spokespersons for the Cafritz development team have indicated that between 3 and 5 sit-down/table cloth restaurants are contemplated. Again, these restaurants have the potential for drawing heavy traffic, as anyone who has visited the new "restaurant" corner where Busboys and Poets recently opened in Hyattsville on Route 1 can attest to.

j. **Traffic analysis**:

In this section, the trips generated by the various phases of development are summarized. The data are based on the July 27 traffic study submitted by Wells & Associates on behalf of the Cafritz property owners. The AM and PM trips are drawn from Tables 3 and 4 of the traffic study without modification. The mid-day and Saturday trips are estimated based on the mid-day to PM ratios calculated in the Gowanus, Brooklyn traffic study released in March 2011. Using the Brooklyn data probably underestimates the midday and Saturday trip generation for the Cafritz property for two reasons: (a) Midday traffic will be augmented by trips from Maryland University; and (b) 15 percent of the trips to the Cafritz property are estimated to be by foot and public transit, while between 20 and 30 percent come from the same sources in Brooklyn.

Cafritz Property:
Estimates of New Trips Generated by Site Activity

Phase	AM	Mid-Day*	PM	Saturday*
Phase 1	98	310	515	638
Phase 2	549	543	901	1,117

**** Estimated -- See text for estimation techniques***

Depending on the flow and the origins of the traffic, there is a distinct possibility that at certain times of the day on Saturday, level of service at both the main entrance to the Cafritz property, as well as at the intersection of Route 1 and East-West Highway could degrade to an LOS of either E or F. While a circulator bus connecting the Cafritz property to the Prince George's Plaza or the College Park Metro might reduce some of the pressure, in the long run without a vehicular crossing over the CSX tracks and/or access to Maryland Avenue, it is likely that little can be done to prevent such an outcome.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. University Park should require that a bridge over the CSX tracks be built that can carry pedestrians, bicycles, passenger vehicles, trucks, and emergency vehicles over it; or that commercial and residential density be reduced radically.
2. University Park should require that a Traffic Demand Management (TDM) plan be developed. The plan should incorporate the creation of a pedestrian fabric, hiker-biker pathways, public transit systems and links, and vehicular management plans. As a sub-element, a plan for managing potential cut-through traffic in University Park should be developed.
3. University Park should require that if a signalized intersection at the entrance to the Cafritz property is put in place at Van Buren, it be designed in such a way that cars cannot cross over East to West or West to East. If additional entrances on Route 1 are required, they should be right-turn only. If the State Highway Administration is unwilling to grant a signal warrant and no crossover access at Van Buren, University Park should oppose the construction of any entrance to the Cafritz property at Van Buren. These conditions should be built into the rezoning order.
4. At the Van Buren and Queens Chapel Road and Route 1 intersections, pedestrian and bicycle safety should be of prime concern, and clear efforts should be made to make both crossovers safe for those who wish to cross by foot or bicycle.
5. At a minimum, Maryland Avenue should be opened to emergency vehicles and public transit buses. In light of Riverdale Park's interest in seeing greater "consumer" traffic through the Town Center/Square, consideration should be given as to how passenger traffic could be allowed along Maryland Avenue also. University Park should support the interests and wishes of Riverdale Park in this latter matter.