

Maybe it's time for Roland Park version of Hampden shuttle bus

Hudson's Corner

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At the June Roland Park Civic League meeting, an idea for an early morning collector bus, similar to the Hampden Shuttle Bug, came up.

It would be great for north Baltimore residents with children in Roland Park Elementary/Middle School, Poly, Western, Roland Park Country, Bryn Mawr, Gilman, Friends, Cathedral and Boys' Latin schools.

According to one Civic League representative, a study once showed 10,000 coming into Roland Park each day because of the area schools. No wonder traffic is terrifying in the early morning. Something must be done to decrease the number of cars speeding through the neighborhood on the wide streets, such as Cold Spring Lane and Roland Avenue, and the narrow side streets used as short cuts.

Hardly a week goes by in the school year when a fender-bender, or worse, does not happen during school hours on Charles Street, Roland Avenue, Falls Road, Cold Spring Lane, Northern Parkway or the side streets.

The proposed speed cameras in school districts may help with the speed on weekdays, but something must also be done about congestion, particularly in the morning drop-off times.

The early Roland Park covenants restricted the stabling of horses at residences. Horses were kept at community stables. With the proliferation of automobiles, community garages replaced the stables. A trolley ran down the middle of Roland Avenue and trains along Falls Road and Stony Run connecting the area to downtown.

While I do not want the Japanese zelkovas cut down on Roland Avenue for a trolley, I wish that public transportation was better. The 61 bus does not run on weekends. The nearest light rail station, on Cold Spring Lane, has no parking and is too far for pedestrian use by many in north Baltimore.

MTA officials at the Civic League's June meeting seemed eager to steer community interest in a shuttle to the private sector, suggesting that the private schools organize one like the Hopkins shuttle.

Residents, however, persisted in their interest in publicly-operated, early-morning MTA service.

To increase public transportation in the area, the MTA must see that there would be riders. Ride-the-bus days, with heavy neighborhood promotion, were suggested to help boost those numbers.

I wonder if, on school mornings, the Hampden Shuttle Bug might be extended north and east to make a loop to include the Charles Street corridor, Falls Road and the Poly-Western parking lot.

The underused Poly-Western lot might then become a morning parent dropoff point for students to pick up the shuttle to area schools on Lake Avenue, Roland Avenue, Northern Parkway and Charles Street.

Maybe smaller, jitney-size buses, similar to those the private schools use for sports teams, could be used. Maybe, if the MTA could not provide morning buses, the private schools would consider picking up their own students at several collection points on their small buses.

As one resident at the Civic League meeting pointed out, a mindset change is necessary before ridership will increase on any bus. Shuttle buses, public or private, might be one way to begin to change old habits.

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