

BALTIMORE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION BOARD

April 21, 2023
Baltimore Metropolitan Council
9:27 to 10:12 A.M.

MINUTES

The 352nd meeting was called to order at 9:27 A.M. by the Chair, Mr. Steuart Pittman.

1. CONSIDERATION OF RESOLUTION #23-19

Mr. Todd Lang said that the BRTB is being asked to consider Resolution #23-19 that adopts the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Unified Planning Work Program, also known as the UPWP, the work program for the BRTB. This budget will fund FY 2024 and totals \$10.9M. There was a 30-day comment period with several comments coming in. Next Mr. Lang shared a list of key focus areas that will be supported by consultants.

Mr. Calvin Ball recommended approval of the resolution, and Mr. James Moran seconded the motion. There were no comments from the public. The BRTB voted unanimously to recommend approval of the resolution.

[PowerPoint: FY 2024 – 2025 UPWP]

2. CONSIDERATION OF RESOLUTION #23-20

Mr. Lang then asked the BRTB to consider resolution #23-20 adopting a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Goal for consultant activities undertaken in FY 2024. The goal is set in conjunction with the goal of the MDOT Office of Planning. The goal for consideration is 26.2%. Of note, our last six months achieved 31.5% DBE in our contracts.

Mr. Ball recommended approval of the resolution, and Mr. Moran seconded the motion. One member asked if we pursue breakdowns in categories, we don't due to the nature of the work. Another member asked if we track DBEs. There is six-month reporting and BMC sponsors a Meet-and-Greet for DBE firms. The goal applies to every contract that moves forward. There were no comments from the public. The BRTB voted unanimously to recommend approval of the resolution.

[PowerPoint: Setting the DBE Goal for FY 2024]

3. OPPORTUNITY FOR NEWLY APPOINTED SECRETARIES FOR INTRODUCTION AND OUTLINING PRIORITIES

Mr. Pittman welcomed Secretary Paul Wiedefeld. He started by sharing his strong Baltimore roots. One of his first jobs was with the Regional Planning Council, the predecessor to the BRTB where he worked on the TIP. He worked on a report for a regional transit authority for the then chair, County Executive Nichols. Mr. Wiedefeld described his experience throughout MDOT and in the private sector. The North Star for the state and at MDOT is “leave no one behind.” A history of consensus building to achieve good things. Regarding Baltimore and the central Maryland region. There is a range of transit and highway improvements across the region to drive success. He looks forward to the new Baltimore Region Transit Commission.

Secretary Flora, Maryland Department of Planning, introduced herself next. Most of her work has been on the ground as a project manager or professor, but not in a typical planning office setting. She believes that transportation is a core component in every sector because it connects people. Secretary Flora then described about her background. A lot of her work is in urban redevelopment and community development. She has also taught at Carnegie Melon and worked in the private sector as a project manager. She brings perspective from her time spent living on the Eastern Shore as well as Pittsburgh, PA.

Secretary Flora left the Board with three important factors to her. First of all, she explained the wealth of data that is managed by the Department of Planning, which is key to information sharing with the Governor’s office and following the appropriate priorities and goals. She hopes to grow and expand the Department’s data management to work with all agencies to use data beyond just for projections and analyses. Secondly, she believes we have to adapt the Comprehensive Plan. Adapting the planning process to reflect the changes that occur over time should be precedent, while still allowing the core components and values to be included in the plan. The third and final thing is placemaking. All communities should have access to green spaces and good design principles. Walkability of a space changes depending on how a space is designed.

A member asked about planning and the affordable housing crisis. Secretary Flora alluded to the fact that the way we talk about housing should be reframed to help the public understand more about what affordable housing means. We should have data driven examples and statistics to understand the trends. The other part of that is zoning, and looking into zoning reform and density.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITY

- Mr. Samuel Jordan, President of the Baltimore Transit Equity Coalition (BTEC) shared a number of thoughts about transportation and the decision making process. Mr. Jordan began by saying the coalition supports the development of a Regional Transportation Authority to replace the current MDOT MTA model for transportation policy making and to include BMC/BRTB.

Next, he went on to express concerns and frustrations with the BRTB and BMC for their silence in February 2018 when transit riders experienced a shutdown of the Baltimore Link LightRail. A previous chair of BRTB spoke publicly, in a racist manner, supporting the shutdown. Mr. Jordan emphasized that the light rail is an indisputable asset to the regional economy and that riders are safe on public transit. He went on to express concerns that the BRTB and Maryland Office of Civil Rights did not publicly advise the chairman that his comments were a violation of the duty of BRTB to protect the right to equal access to public transportation is provided in Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Mr. Jordan hopes the BRTB will strengthen its efforts to eliminate structural racism in public transportation.

- Mr. Jimmy Rouse of Transit Choices which is a local group advocating for better public transit. Mr. Rouse stated that there are 4 things the board could do relatively cheaply, and in a short timeframe that would make a huge difference to the transit system. First, he said the current bus system is unreliable due to a shortage of approximately 80 drivers. This is causing many buses to not show up and people are late for work and school. To address this issue, an overall plan and vision is needed and then, when implementing that plan, following up with riders and data on the progress that we're making or not making. He emphasized that a very important part of creating a good transit system is to have people believe that that transit system is going to work.

Second, the light rail Penn Station needs to be connected to the circulator or an automated shuttle so that people aren't left having to walk three and a half blocks in the dark, cold or wet to make the connection.

Third, create a MARC train shuttle from BWI Airport to Martin Airfield that would run through West Baltimore and connect people in West Baltimore to a new station at Bayview. This would connect people to job centers that have living wage jobs. Mr. Rouse said it's not a substitute for the Red Line, but this could be done quickly and at a relatively low cost.

Fourth, Mr. Rouse said the Harbor Connector needs to be extended and create connected routes running around Port Covington.

- Mr. Eric Norton, Director of Policy and Programs with the Central Maryland Transportation Alliance began by thanking the group for their work to advance the idea of a regional transportation authority and bills put forth by Delegate Bridges. CMTA sees the Baltimore Regional Transit Commission as a step towards the full authority, and encouraged the board to keep moving forward until we get a full RTA.

Next, Mr. Norton stated that for the last few years a coalition of nearly 20 transportation and environmental advocacy organizations have submitted letters to the BRTB about the Transportation Improvement Program and asking you to prioritize state of good repair maintenance, as well as transit, biking, and walking. He expressed frustration that the plans have gone unchanged. For example, Mr. Norton stated that last year's TIP had over \$900 million for highway capacity and \$0 for transit or commuter rail capacity and while 9 new highway capacity projects were introduced, no new projects were introduced for transit. Mr. Norton stated that a shift away from business as usual is needed and investments in safe streets and transit oriented development is needed as well. He went on to say that

new money is available through the IIJA and this new money should go towards transit. Mr. Norton stated that Maryland has exercised some of that flexibility in the past and encouraged members to invest up to 50% and ensure that this year's TIP prioritizes a fix it first approach and then flexing those dollars to invest in projects that make it easier for constituents to bike, walk, and use transit.

Lastly, Mr. Norton thanked Administrator Arnold for bringing back full light rail service by hiring new operators. CMTA would like to see bus service be brought back to full service with the hiring of operators to address the shortage.

- Ms. Lindsay Mendelson, transportation representative with the Maryland Sierra Club, shared that for decades there's been a spending imbalance where we've been spending far more on increasing high weekend capacity and underspending on transit projects. She cited last year's TIP which included \$900 million spent on increasing high capacity and \$0 on expanding commuter rail and transit. She asked the BRTB to evaluate each project in this year's TIP for its impact on climate change and how it's addressing racial inequities.

Second, she stated she wanted to further underscore the opportunity to flex these Federal funding dollars. When Congress passed the IIJA a couple of years ago they increased the funding allocations that go to the States, and they also issued new guidance that 50% of these funds can be flexed from these traditional highway formulas to public transit, cycling, pedestrian infrastructure, and transportation electrification. She said it's really important that the BRTB look at utilizing the flexibility of those Federal dollars.

She went on to say that the state recently passed the most ambitious climate goals in the country to slow climate pollution, 60% by 2031, and we cannot meet our climate goals if we're continuing in this current pattern. The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments and its Transportation Planning Board indicated that they would need to reduce vehicle miles traveled 20% per capita under current levels, even with ambitious electrification policies in place. She encouraged the BRTB to also establish a climate reduction goal like the DC region did and also undertake a climate mitigation study to look at the different projects and policies that can help meet climate goals. This is especially important since the Baltimore region is not in air quality attainment for the 2015 ozone standard.

5. OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

Members

Holly Arnold, Administrator for MDOT Maryland Transit Administration (MDOT MTA)

Calvin Ball, Howard County Executive

Gavin Buckley, City of Annapolis Mayor

Brandon Buckner, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Maryland Division

Bob Cassilly, Harford County Executive

Kwaku Duah, Annapolis Transit
Rebecca Flora, Secretary Maryland Department of Planning
Chris Hoagland (for Serena McIlwain), Secretary Maryland Department of the Environment
Mike Kelly, Director Baltimore Metropolitan Council (BMC)
James J. Moran, Queen Anne's County Commissioner
Steuart Pittman, Anne Arundel County Executive
Ed Rothstein, Carroll County Commissioner
Brandon Scott, Baltimore City Mayor
D'Andrea Walker (for John Olszewski, Jr.), Baltimore County Executive
Paul Wiedefeld, Secretary Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT)

Staff and Guests

Regina Aris, Baltimore Metropolitan Council (BMC)
Tony Bridges, Maryland Delegate
David Broughton, MDOT
Robin Budish, Transit Choices
Tyson Byrne, MDOT
Debra Carr, Job Opportunities Task Force
Jasmine Champion, FHWA Maryland Division
Zach Chissell, WSP
Steve Cohoon, Queen Anne's County Department of Public Works
Angelica Daniels, Baltimore County Department of Public Works & Transportation (DPW&T)
Kimiya Darrell, WSP
Rebecca Deibel, BMC
Lynda Eisenberg, Carroll County Department of Planning
Blake Fisher, BMC
Bruce Gartner, Howard County Office of Transportation
Elizabeth Gordon, MDOT MTA
Monica Haines Benkhedda, BMC
Don Halligan, BMC
Erin Henson, MDOT
Dan Janousek, MDOT
Samuel Jordan, Baltimore Transit Equity Coalition
Zach Kaufman, BMC
Liz Koontz, Community and Economic Development for the City of Baltimore
Keith Kucharek, BMC
Todd Lang, BMC
Eric Leshinsky, City of Annapolis
Sheila Mahoney, BMC
Lindsey Mendelson, Maryland Sierra Club
Heather Murphy, Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT)
Theo Ngongang, Baltimore City Department of Transportation

Eric Norton, Central Maryland Transportation Alliance
Alex Rawls, Harford County, Department of Planning
Kathy Renzi, BMC
Jimmy Rouse, Transit Choices
Anthony Russell, Baltimore County DPW&T
Eileen Singleton, BMC
Sam Snead, Anne Arundel Office of Transportation
D'Andrea Walker, Baltimore County DPW&T
Lamin Williams, FHWA (MD Division)
Roberta Windham, Carroll County Commissioners Office
Bihui Xu, Maryland Department of Planning (MDP)

Respectfully submitted,

Todd R. Lang, Secretary
Baltimore Regional Transportation Board