

May ____, 2025

Secretary Paul J. Wiedefeld
Maryland Department of Transportation
7201 Corporate Center Drive
Hanover, MD 21076

RE: Priorities for Baltimore Region's Transit Network in FY 2026-2031 CTP

Dear Secretary Wiedefeld:

On behalf of the Baltimore Regional Transit Commission (BRTC), first let me thank you and especially Governor Moore for your successful efforts to secure and preserve new transportation revenue sources in the final FY 2025–FY 2030 Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP). Your leadership and commitment to addressing critical transit infrastructure needs represents a significant and essential step toward creating a more equitable and efficient transit system in the Baltimore region and throughout the State. In view of the BRTC's statutory charge, we particularly appreciate how these commitments will enable long-overdue investments in our region's transit infrastructure, though we recognize – and know you agree – that full restoration of our system to a sustainable State of Good Repair, let alone enhancement and expansion, will require continued financial commitments in future budgets. We look forward to working with you on that mission-critical goal.

We also appreciate MDOT's inclusion of the BRTC in its CTP "tour" and your welcoming of a "priority letter" as more typically submitted by local jurisdictions before the tour commences. Accordingly, following are some BRTC priorities for your consideration:

1. **Regional Transit Connectivity:** The Baltimore region strongly supports developing comprehensive inter-jurisdictional transit corridors as outlined in the Central Maryland Regional Transit Plan. The bus system serves as the backbone of our public transportation network. As you know, the Baltimore region depends heavily on its bus service as the fundamental backbone of public transportation. This dependency runs deep throughout the community fabric, particularly in historically underserved neighborhoods. The bus system serves as the primary transit mode for residents, functioning as the essential framework upon which the broader transportation network operates. The ridership demographics tell a



compelling story of reliance and necessity. With 87% of core bus users identifying as non-white and 84% specifically as African American, the system plays a crucial role in serving minority communities. This isn't simply about preference – for approximately one-third of riders who have no access to personal vehicles, these bus routes represent their only viable means of reaching jobs, healthcare facilities, and educational institutions.

Beyond basic transportation, the bus network functions as a genuine economic lifeline. For countless Baltimore residents, particularly those in economically disadvantaged areas, these routes provide the critical connection to employment centers that would otherwise remain inaccessible. The system attempts to bridge the geographical divides that characterize the region, working to address persistent east-west and north-south connectivity gaps across jurisdictional boundaries in greater Baltimore, though significant challenges remain.

Perhaps most fundamentally, the bus system serves as a vital component of the region's social equity infrastructure. The disproportionate representation of lower-income and minority riders underscores that public transit in Baltimore isn't merely a convenience or alternative – it's an essential service that enables economic participation and access to opportunities that would otherwise remain out of reach for many residents.

Needed investment to improve and expand the core service area's bus system remains a high priority for our region. This includes needed staff support, bus facility replacements and upgrades, and vehicles.

2. **State of Good Repair:** Maintaining our existing transit infrastructure in a state of good repair is essential for system reliability and safety. We urge prioritization of funding to address the substantial maintenance backlog identified in the 2022 Capital Needs Inventory. Investments in preventative maintenance will reduce long-term costs while improving service quality for the thousands of residents who depend on transit daily.
3. **Locally Operated Transit Services:** We respectfully request enhanced support for LOTS funding to expand fixed-route services and microtransit options that improve last-mile connectivity. Our local governments have consistently demonstrated commitment through significant matching funds.
4. **Transit-Oriented Development:** Our jurisdictions remain committed to expanding TOD initiatives that integrate land use planning with transportation infrastructure. Strategic investments around existing and future transit nodes will maximize economic returns and support sustainable growth patterns.
5. **Sustainable Transit Infrastructure:** We share Maryland's environmental goals and support accelerating the transition to zero-emission vehicle fleets. Investments in electric transit vehicles and charging infrastructure will significantly reduce transportation-related emissions while advancing our shared climate objectives.



6. **Red Line:** The Red Line represents far more than infrastructure—it is a transformative investment in Baltimore's future. This high-frequency, high-capacity east-west corridor will fundamentally reshape mobility, opportunity, and economic growth throughout the region. This transit line will serve as a critical transportation backbone, connecting previously isolated communities to the broader transit network by dramatically improve access to employment centers and, job opportunities, educational opportunities, healthcare, social services, and cultural, recreational, and commercial districts that enhance quality of life for all. Unlike piecemeal solutions, this comprehensive east-west connection will integrate with existing north-south lines to create a true regional network that serves the diverse needs of all Baltimore residents. By investing in the Red Line today, we make a commitment to future generations of Baltimoreans. This project represents a forward-thinking approach to urban development that prioritizes sustainability, equity, and economic vitality. Despite federal pressures and perils, the Red Line remains a high priority.

As you know, per our letter to you and Administrator Arnold of April 8, 2025, the BRTC looks forward to establishing a more structured process for information sharing regarding both capital and operating budgets so it can effectively fulfill its statutory responsibilities.

We appreciate your consideration of these regional priorities and look forward to our continued partnership in creating a more connected, accessible, and sustainable Baltimore region.

Respectfully,

cc: BRTC Commissioners