

Appendix G: Other Voices

What Do Advocacy Organizations Say?



Recommendations from organizations advocating for transit choices in the Baltimore region.



Transportation Alliance

Regional Transit Strategy

Ways to build an effective transit system

The 2002 Baltimore Regional Rail Plan envisioned a \$6 billion investment into a rainbow of rail lines that extended high capacity transit through out the region creating the much needed integrated transit system. This is the vision for many of Baltimore's peer regions, such as Denver, Phoenix, Charlotte, Seattle and Houston. However, 13 years after the adoption of the Regional Rail Plan, Baltimore has not built a single line and after the cancellation of the Red Line no funding is in sight.

This comprehensive plan remains critical but how we move forward changes. The current redeployment of transit funds from the region to rural highways requires the region to look towards ways we can move forward in smaller pieces while advocating for the funding this region needs.

Situation

The Baltimore region ranks higher nationally for transit activity than it does for population (the MTA is the 13th largest public transit system in the U.S., whereas the Baltimore region ranks 20th for population). This is to say that many people depend on or use transit and improved service and efficiency would affect many people. Most area residents, transit users and non-users, give the transit system low scores for convenience, reliability and commute times. Additionally, several new regional growth areas are poorly connected. The transit network has not adjusted to new growth patterns and there remains no integrated transit strategy for the region.

This region has an above average influx of "millennials" and should have good prospects for continued growth. But millennials have high expectations for transit and the retention rate of post college graduates in the region is insufficient. At the same time, growing economic and social disparities pose a central challenge to the long-term sustainability and health of the region. And, of course, road congestion is high. We can only meet the challenges of growth, expectations of college graduates, and growing economic disparities with improved transit.

The Regional Rail Plan Strategy lacked strong regional buy-in. This resulted in limited funding of projects and allowed a major new investment to be toppled based on a single election result. A true regional transit vision needs a broad regional base and needs to be sustained over many election cycles because no vision can be fully achieved in four years. For that to happen it needs broad regional support that comes from a wide geographic spread of benefits such as high frequency, reliable transit access to regional employment centers during peak commute times and shift changes.

We propose a focus on performance and outcomes with user oriented system-wide metrics.

Goals

The following transportation goals from the Regional Plan for Sustainable Development were developed by the Opportunity Collaborative through an extensive multi-stakeholder process that incorporated public involvement. We recommend using them to select and evaluate transportation improvements and measure performance:

- **Create more opportunity for mid-skill workers to commute to family-supporting jobs via public transportation.**
- **Shorten commute times and improve transit reliability to reduce the burden on working families.**
- **Make the region a more attractive place for employers by expanding transit access to more of the region's mid-skill labor pool.**
- **Increase non-car commuting options to reduce our impact on the Chesapeake Bay and reduce carbon emissions.**

Actions

We recommend prioritizing the following action steps to achieve those goals:

1. Implement the **Quick Hits** developed by participants in the Transit Choices coalition.
 - a) Integrate all modes including Amtrak, MARC, subway, light rail, bus, Circulator, shuttles and water taxi through improved schedule-coordination, signage, and design at transit hubs
 - b) Improve intermodal and regional use convenience through single ticket system for all modes over the entire region (chip cards)
 - c) Install maps on all vehicles and at all stops for existing transit systems (metro, light rail, circulator and water taxi) that clearly show how systems interconnect
 - d) Install maps, either print or electronic at each stop for these four systems which show nearby bus stops and the routes of those buses
 - e) Help create a mobile app that would give the user all transit options in their vicinity and next vehicle arrival times
 - f) Wherever possible, install electronic next vehicle arrival signs at every transit stop
 - g) Install bike share and car share at all possible metro, light rail and water taxi stops
 - h) Make bus stops more user friendly by providing benches, shelters, and better lighting where possible and by implementation of shelter and stop partnerships
 - i) Upgrade the water taxi system to a year-round all weather system oriented to commuters and residents, including enhanced bike and pedestrian access and facilities at dock areas
 - j) Implement a stabilization and growth plan for the Charm City Circulator to ensure long-term financial viability
 - k) Identify priority locations for last mile serving transit systems and implement high frequency transit such as circulators or streetcars

- l) Engage and incentivize private sector participation to solve last mile connectivity issues through van pools and shuttles
2. Do a transformational restructuring of our MTA bus route system to achieve the following:
 - a. elimination of chronic overcrowding on all routes
 - b. access to more of the region's jobs within a reasonable commute time
 - c. reliable on-time service
 - d. higher ridership
3. Improve the effectiveness of the existing MTA services through:
 - a. fewer bus stops
 - b. shorter bus dwell times through increased smart card utilization and multi-door boarding
 - c. sufficient reserves in vehicles and operators to avoid trip cancellations
 - d. signal prioritization for light rail and buses
 - e. dedicated transit lanes and other roadside improvements
4. Preserve rights of way, adopt plans and take other actions to make it as easy as possible to construct an east-west rapid transit line along the Red Line corridor. The need for rapid and reliable east-west transit does not go away because the Red Line was canceled. Nor does the need to create a true interconnected transit network. Since at least the 1960s it has been a regional goal to address these needs with an east-west rapid-transit line and multiple regional plans over the years have reiterated that goal.
5. Build the planned improvements to the West Baltimore MARC station and use zoning, property disposition, sidewalk repairs and other tools to support transit-oriented development (TOD) nearby.

The West Baltimore MARC station is not compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. It lacks a raised platform which requires passengers to use a step stool to board and off load. It lacks elevators, an enclosed waiting area and other station amenities.

Also, years of community participation have resulted in a vision for transit-oriented development around the station. There are vast opportunities for development near the station. The State and local governments can bring about more TOD in the station area by serving it with frequent bus service, building sidewalks, crosswalks, and bicycle facilities, zoning for TOD, and using city-controlled properties and other resources to support implementation of the TOD vision.

6. Construct a Bayview MARC station that could be readily incorporated into future transit along the Red Line corridor.

A new MARC station at Bayview would improve access to the growing employment center at the Bayview medical campus, improving commuting for people northeast of Baltimore City, and, with the inclusion of a planned park and ride lot, provide a key connection between our highway system and our regional rail system.

7. Study extension of the Metro Subway to North Ave and creation of transit hub at this point. Extend the Charm City Circulator (Green Line) to North Ave. from Hopkins in the interim.

This is critical to making the various modes work better together in an interconnected system. Extending the Green Line to Morgan State University was a top priority of the 2002 Regional Rail Plan. Extending the Metro at least as far as North Avenue would allow for a connection with the MARC Penn Line at Madison Park and for an East Baltimore transit hub similar to Mondawmin on the west side.

8. Create a network of transit priority corridors serving high-ridership, high-traffic-volume routes with frequent, rapid transit service. Consider streetcars across North Ave.

The Regional Plan for Sustainable Development released by the multi-jurisdictional, multi-stakeholder Opportunity Collaborative in June 2015 proposes 11 corridors in the region where improvements to transportation in conjunction with housing and workforce development strategies would achieve the region's goals. Also, the MTA's Bus Network Improvement Project has studied which bus runs and which roadways have the highest ridership and traffic volumes, respectively, and which transit stops have the highest number of boardings and alightings. We recommend serving the priority corridors with high-capacity, high-frequency transit service. To address the need that the Red Line was intended to meet we recommend piloting high-frequency transit in three east-west corridors: North Avenue, Edmonson Avenue, and Franklin Avenue.

9. Ensure that the Northeast Corridor Futures plan (think Amtrak and high speed rail from Washington to Boston), the Baltimore & Potomac Tunnels Replacement project, and any MAGLEV plans support this region's goals for transportation and economic development. These projects are just in the scoping and planning stage, but would have major implications for transportation and economic development in the greater Baltimore region. Decisions such as how many tracks the new Baltimore & Potomac Tunnel will have and whether high-speed rail would stop at Penn Station or at a new station downtown could be made by project planners during the next 3-5 years. It is important that state agencies, our regional metropolitan planning organization, local governments and other stakeholders monitor these planning efforts and speak up about regional goals and preferences.
10. Build the 4th track on the Northeast Corridor near BWI and the BWI rail station improvements.

The Northeast Corridor is the rail corridor that runs from Washington, DC through Baltimore to Philadelphia, New York and Boston. There is a 9-mile section near BWI where there are currently three tracks and a fourth track is planned. The fourth track would allow MARC and AMTRAK to more effectively and efficiently serve the BWI rail station and the corridor. There is also a need to improve capacity at the BWI rail station. The improvements to the track and station will help improve commuting for people in the region and make the airport and surrounding business district more competitive.