



Central Maryland Regional Transit Plan Commission Meeting

Baltimore Metropolitan Council

March 27, 2019

9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Meeting Notes

Commission Members in attendance:

Name	Title	Role
Ramond Robinson	Director of Transportation, Anne Arundel County	Anne Arundel County Executive's designee
Michelle Pourciau	Director of Transportation, Baltimore City	Baltimore City Mayor's designee
Elisabeth Sachs	Director of Government Reform & Strategic Initiatives, Baltimore County	Baltimore County Executive's designee
Bradley Killian	Director of Planning & Zoning, Harford County	Harford County Executive's designee
Sameer Sidh	Chief of Staff, Howard County	Howard County Executive's designee
Jim Shea	Chairman Emeritus, Venable LLP	Senate President's appointee
Kirby Fowler	President, Downtown Partnership	Speaker of the House's appointee
Linda Greene	Member, MDOT MTA Citizens Advisory Council	Governor's appointee
Gina Stewart	Executive Director, BWI Partnership	Governor's appointee
J.C. Hendrickson	Member, MDOT MTA MARC Riders Council	Governor's appointee
Katie Collins-Ihrke*	Executive Director, Accessible Resources for Independence	Governor's appointee

*Attended via phone.

PURPOSE

Mike Kelly, Executive Director of the Baltimore Metropolitan Council, convened the meeting and discussed the purpose of the meeting and the legislation overview. He noted that this meeting was the first Regional Transit Plan (RTP) Commission meeting. The purpose of this meeting was to provide an overview of the legislation for the RTP, introduce the members of the RTP Commission, introduce the methodology and approach of the Plan, provide an overview of transit in the Central Maryland region, generate draft goals, hear public comment, and define next steps.



LEGISLATIVE OVERVIEW

Mike Kelly, Executive Director of the Baltimore Metropolitan Council, provided an overview of the legislation.

In April 2018, the Maryland General Assembly passed the Maryland Metro/Transit Funding Act (Maryland HB372), requiring the Maryland Transit Administration to develop a 25-year Regional Transit Plan for Central Maryland to meet the transit needs of the core service area, including Anne Arundel County, Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Harford County and Howard County. The legislation requires the Regional Transit Plan to incorporate several components:

- Define goals for outcomes to be achieved through the provision of public transit
- Identify options for improvements to existing transportation assets
- Identify options for improvements to non-MTA public transportation services
- Identify opportunities for non-transit options, such as scooter-sharing and bike-sharing systems
- Prioritize corridors for the planning of new transit assets
- Ensure consistency with local land use and transportation plans

COMMISSION MEMBER INTRODUCTIONS

Maryland Secretary of Transportation, Pete Rahn, introduced the RTP Commission. The eleven-member Commission comprises:

- Designees from Anne Arundel County Executive, Baltimore City Mayor, Baltimore County Executive, Harford County Executive, Howard County Executive
- Appointees representing a business or transportation organization from the Senate President and House Speaker
- Appointees from the Governor representing Central Maryland business organization, MDOT MTA Citizens Advisory Council, a disabled riders group and the MARC Riders Advisory Council

The Commissioners introduced themselves and provided brief comments. **[See full Commission member bios posted on the RTP website].**

Ramond Robinson, Anne Arundel County Director of Transportation, Designee from Anne Arundel County Executive – Mr. Robinson read a quote emphasizing that transit exists to provide individuals with reliable means of transportation, effective means of moving people to work, home, and centers of learning. Mr. Robinson noted that he prioritizes transportation system performance, preservation, safety and improving transit as a tool for upward economic mobility.

Michelle Pourciau, Director of Baltimore City Department of Transportation, Designee from Baltimore City Mayor – Ms. Pourciau noted that Baltimore City DOT has done a lot in the transportation arena and is currently in the processes of developing the Baltimore City Comprehensive Transportation Plan. This plan and other existing plans will be useful references for the RTP Commission throughout the planning process, particularly in guiding the development of a multi-modal system that provides better and more reliable transit to job centers.



Connecting Our Future

A Regional Transit Plan for Central Maryland

Elisabeth Sachs, Baltimore County Director of Government Reform and Strategic Initiatives, Designee from Baltimore County Executive – Ms. Sachs remarked that improving transportation in Baltimore County is a priority for the County Executive. Baltimore County recognizes the need for a better East-West connection, the need to improve other modes of transportation, including pedestrian infrastructure, and the opportunity to make communities more livable by improving transportation infrastructure.

Brad Killian, Director of Harford County Department of Planning and Zoning, Designee from Harford County Executive – Mr. Killian noted that Harford County recently revised and updated the county's master plan, which highlighted quality of life, and that transit contributes to a high quality of life. Mr. Killian remarked that it is important that Harford County is collaborating with its surrounding counties, particularly Anne Arundel County and Baltimore County.

Sameer Sidh, Howard County Chief of Staff, Designee from Howard County Executive – Mr. Sidh remarked that connectivity is of vital importance to Howard County because it lies between two major metropolitan areas. Mr. Sidh emphasized multimodal connectivity between priority corridors and job centers in Howard County and the region, integrating new technology into the transportation system, and ensuring that transportation funding policy is equitable.

Kirby Fowler, President of the Downtown Partnership of Baltimore, Appointee from the Senate President – Mr. Fowler noted that Downtown Baltimore is the focal point of regional transportation in the state and region. Consequently, the Downtown Partnership has supported various improvements to mobility in Baltimore City, such as improved bus shelters, the launch of the Charm City Circulator, and dedicated bus lanes. Mr. Fowler also serves on the Dockless Mobility Committee helping to shape scooter-share and bike-share policy in the region.

Gina Stewart, Executive Director of the BWI Business Partnership, Appointee from the Governor, Ms. Stewart noted that BWI Business Partnership has developed a shuttle system to help connect the workforce and job seekers to BWI Thurgood Marshall Airport

Linda Greene, MDOT MTA Citizens Advisory Board, Appointee from the Governor – Ms. Greene remarked that the RTP Commission should aim to create a “transformational” plan that is truly regional. The Commission should not be limited by what is currently in place, but instead should be visionary in its recommendations to connect the region.

Katie Collins-Ihrke, Executive Director of Accessible Resources for Independence, Appointee from the Governor – Ms. Collins-Ihrke noted that she is interested in transit planning for purposes of ensuring that people with disabilities have access to transportation. Transportation is key to ensuring that people with disabilities can access employment, healthcare, and opportunities in the community. The RTP presents an opportunity to reduce the barriers to transportation for people with disabilities in the region.

James L. Shea, Chair Emeritus of Venable, LLP, Appointee from the Senate President – Mr. Shea remarked that the RTP is a wonderful opportunity to help the Baltimore metropolitan area and Central Maryland advance. Baltimore's historic roots are as a transportation hub of all modes, but today's transportation system is a mess. The RTP Commission should move with great



strength, precision, understanding, and compromise to achieve the dramatic changes we need. A transformational plan is extraordinarily important.

J.C. Hendrickson, MARC Riders' Advisory Council, Appointee from the Governor – Mr. Hendrickson noted that his focus is on transportation policy and that the RTP presents a timely opportunity to recommend improvements to the quality and reliability of MARC service.

OPENING REMARKS – Secretary of Transportation

Following Commissioner introductions, Mr. Rahn provided remarks.

Mr. Rahn remarked that the RTP is a valuable opportunity for the region to examine transit through the multi-county region and paint a vision of what the region would like for its transportation system. The RTP also has the responsibility to consider how these changes can be funded and implemented.

It is important to recognize the work that MDOT MTA is already performing in the region. MDOT MTA has a 5-year budget of \$4.6 billion (2019-2024), which translates to \$704 million per year in operating budget and \$2.3 billion for capital investments. There is already a lot of work being done and it is important to examine how we can take the investments we are already making and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of these dollars.

The 2017 launch of BaltimoreLink produced significant results with the overhaul of the transit system's operations within the region. MDOT MTA's continued use of data to drive transportation has been transformational. We can use data in ways that have not been possible in the past, and we have seen this in improvements to the bus system's on-time performance (OTP) from 59 percent to 71 percent after the implementation of BaltimoreLink. Customers can now use real-time data to see where their bus is located, and MTA can use real-time data to review where delays are occurring within the transit system. Data will allow us to continue to improve.

New mobility options are also helping to connect riders, such as a partnership with ZipCar at stations throughout the Central Maryland region and bike racks at stations and on the MARC Penn Line. MTA continues to work with Locally-Operated Transit Systems (LOTS) in Central Maryland to add funds for operating assistance, vehicle purchases and equipment. This is an exciting time to be in the transportation business.

Modes are changing and an important role of the RTP Commission is to plan for these changes in advance. RTP has the opportunity to integrate innovative solutions, increase safety, reduce congestion, spur economic development and increase access.

PLAN METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

Holly Arnold, Deputy Administrator of MDOT MTA, presented the RTP methodology and approach. **[See slide deck posted on the RTP website].**

OVERVIEW OF TRANSIT IN THE REGION



Kevin Quinn, Administrator of MDOT MTA, presented an overview of transit in Central Maryland, including data, characteristics, transit providers, and trends in transit. **[See slide deck posted on the RTP website].**

Following the presentation, the Commission members asked questions:

- A. Why is transit ridership dropping?

Mr. Quinn: Ride hailing companies such as Uber and Lyft are shifting riders away from transit and gas prices are low. Other transit agencies are trying to improve reliability in bus service to bring back riders who have shifted to Uber and Lyft. We need to provide a strong, reliable product that people can count on.

- B. Are there cities with growing ridership?

Mr. Quinn: Houston restructured its bus service and Seattle introduced a new rail line, and both have bucked the trend with transit ridership. However, most increases in ridership are in other modes (rail) and not bus.

- C. Will you be providing demographic data and information to see the unmet need and predicted need for transit?

Mr. Quinn: For most services, we have completed an origin-destination survey that covered all modes. We can provide additional data to the commission. National data is also available to show comparisons between systems.

- D. Fixed-route isn't meeting the needs of many riders. What are the limitations of fixed-route transit and how can a more universal demand-response services can balance costs?

Mr. Quinn: We do need to look at the responsiveness of fixed routes to paratransit demand.

- E. 50 percent of jobs in the region don't have access to transit and there are issues with residential access to transit as well. How have transit numbers changed over the years?

Mr. Quinn: BaltimoreLink increased access to high frequency transit within a quarter mile, but we have not made great expansions with rail services in the last 30 years, so access to rail has not changed. However, land use plays key role in transit access. Job centers that are outside of the Downtown core and placed in places that are not accessible cause the percentage of jobs with transit access to decrease. Local counties and municipalities play a role from a land use perspective in building and approving land uses with or without access to transit. We will provide in-depth discussion on this topic in a later commission meeting. BMC has a great project on getting to job centers and the use of transit.

- F. Water transit is an untapped resource. We should include ferry options in the Commission discussions. Were most LOTS developed in the past 10 years?

Mr. Quinn: Many LOTS have been around for decades. Many started under Departments of Aging and grew into fixed-route systems.

- G. It would be beneficial to the group to look at how regions are starting to develop the areas around MARC and Light Rail stations to make them accessible to transit. The RTP needs to reflect this.

Mr. Quinn: The RTP will take that into consideration.

- H. Are there deficiencies in transit that have led to the rise of ride hailing and private services for transit?

Mr. Quinn: Let us research this and report back. Fixed-route services can't go everywhere. you have fixed routes that are built to serve a lot of folks (CityLink and high frequency routes), but other areas without fixed-route services. The ability to use smart phone and quickly get Uber or Lyft to come right to house and pick you up is very convenient. The transit industry is grappling with what to do with that. Should fixed-route be focused on high-frequency corridors to provide reliable and frequent service? Should transit agency partner with Uber or Lyft to give people access to demand response?

- I. Do we have a good sense of what people who do not currently use transit want in a transit system?

Mr. Quinn: We have a sense of the need to get to job centers from outlying counties. We want to be as responsive as possible to get people access. We need fixed-route, commuter bus, and shuttle options to get people to where they need to go.

- J. How will you use the information from the Opportunity Collaborative report to grow connections that are not currently well served by transit?

Mr. Quinn: A great goal for this Commission is to look at how to best serve those areas that are not currently served by transit. We will dive deep into these topics in the September and October Commission meetings.

GOALS EXERCISE

Kimiya Darrell, RTP Project Team, led the goals exercise to generate ideas for potential goals to include in the RTP.

In advance of the Commission meeting, the Project Team reviewed and distributed the existing state, regional, and local plans covering the Central Maryland region. These plans were used to identify six broad themes used to frame the RTP goals exercise:

- Regional economic competitiveness
- Customer service and rider experience
- Financial sustainability
- New technologies
- Equitable Access
- Safety and Sustainability
- Other



The goals exercise was structured as an interactive session in which Commission members independently generated goals, wrote these goals on sticky notes and posted them on large pads of paper representing each of the six themes. Each commissioner was given 10 colored dots to vote on the 10 goals that they most strongly support.

While the Commission members participated in this exercise, the members of the public in the audience were given worksheets to perform a similar goals exercise. They wrote down their goals within each theme and circled the highest-priority goal for each.

DISCUSSION OF GOALS

The Commission members discussed the exercise and posed questions to the project team. Key questions and responses are summarized below:

- Should the Commission and RTP mirror other existing and forthcoming plans, such as the Baltimore Metro Council Regional Transportation Board (BRTB) regional framework for transit and transportation and the Baltimore City CTP?
 - The RTP effort work with the BRTB as they move into 2045 long-range plan and make sure we are complimentary.
 - While the RTP's goals could be the same, it may include additional goals that aren't part of BRTB's goals.
 - Notably, the other plans do change significantly every five years, but are illustrative of we've been and where we are going.
- Ms. Greene noted that some goals don't fall under the existing themes, including financial sustainability, as she felt that "sustainability" is a limiting word because she believes you need to invest first and then sustain the system.
- Ms. Sachs noted that, in future meetings she would want to learn how to leverage private and public-sector funding for regional approaches. This was one of the topics that didn't fit. She would want to talk particularly more about the private sector funding side.
- Ms. Darrell explained that the RTP Team will take all information on the boards and the surveys by members of the public, online survey, pop-up events, comments from the public and the Commission members to create draft goals for review and revision. The Team will also review other transportation plans and regional plans to ensure that the goals are complimentary, not conflicting. The Commission will continue to revisit and revise these draft goals through December.
- Mr. Robinson suggested that there are a lot of technology aids that could be used to help the group facilitate some of the public information about transit. *All Transit* is one that is unique and warrants further exploration.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The public comment session was facilitated by Simon Taylor, RTP Project Team. Members of the public were given three minutes to testify; those representing an organization were given five minutes. Fourteen individuals signed up to testify.

- A. Chris Yoder: The RTP Commission has accepted an important mission. Maryland and Central Maryland face a couple of very dramatic challenges: Economic challenges and global warming. Maryland is going to, by law, have to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions and transportation is now the largest sources of greenhouse gas pollution in the state. Transportation is going to have to change dramatically and you are charged to come up with a way for this region to meet that goal.
- B. Don Fry, representing Greater Baltimore Committee: GBC is a regional business advocacy organization that advocates for investment in the region's transportation infrastructure. GBC has played role in plans and has advocated for regional transit system for more than 50 years. Mr. Fry sent testimony. The 2002 Regional Transit Plan is very similar to the 1968 report that the GBC released, even though they were 34 years apart. We are now looking at another regional transit plan, although little has been done for the first two. One of the primary goals of the Metro Transit Funding Act is to address disparate funding in transit systems in MD. Deliberate and direct disinvestment in Baltimore is inconsistent with state law and threatens economic viability and competitiveness. The Commission should ensure that this plan contains actionable recommendations with immediate, mid and long-term recommendations, detailed plans for preservation expansion and connectivity with timelines, capital budget integration. Overall, GBC looks forward to monitoring and commenting on the work of RTP commission and will serve as a resource for the Commission.
- C. Joe McAndrew, Director of Transportation Policy, Greater Washington Partnership: The Greater Washington Partnership is focused on transforming and overcoming regional barriers in region. CEOs consider the region's #1 challenge to be transportation. Our transportation system creates challenges for employees to access jobs and enter the economy. Transit in the region is somewhat unreliable and lacks key rapid transit connectivity. Getting this right is the responsibility of the Commissioners and MTA to deliver. MTA needs to operate an efficient system, expand where appropriate and make space for the bus. Each employer and developer have the responsibility to invest around the transit system, so we have economic productivity. This requires an actionable plan, which highlights key issues around funding, near-term and long-term goals, and transportation strategies for the region to thrive and compete against global competition.
- D. Brian O'Malley, representing the Central Maryland Transportation Alliance: One of the most critical issues in our region is poverty. A study from 2015 found that of the 100 largest counties in the country, Baltimore City is where children face the worst odds of escaping poverty. The factor that most highly correlates with poverty is the percentage of workers from the neighborhood who spend 45 minutes or more commuting to jobs. Some neighborhoods in Baltimore are cut off from economic opportunity. A strong, effective plan

will design measures and set priorities to move the needle and better serve those neighborhoods. Transit reliability is critically important and can be a deal breaker for people who try transit. Employers need reliable transit for employees to get to work. MTA could use better, more transparent and dynamic data to help the RTP Commission design strong plan and evaluate performance. A strong plan should develop goals and outcomes for travel time and reliability. Seattle succeeded in increasing transit ridership despite declining national trends by creating bus priority corridors, better bus stop design and improved intersection design to prioritize buses on the roadway. These things can help this plan succeed.

- E. Lindsay Mendleson, Member of Get MD Moving Coalition: Ms. Mendleson reiterated that this plan needs to be transformative. The region needs a bold, transformative plan to get around while protecting health, climate, and giving people access. We currently face funding constraints, so we need innovative ways to fund the challenges that our region faces. Transportation is the number one source of climate change pollution. Baltimore City ranked one of the top cities with largest rate of emissions-related mortalities. A transformative transit system will protect our health. December 2018, MD joined 8 other states and DC for multi-state pollution reduction program. Invest more in transit alternatives, walking and biking. A June 2018 poll of MD voters found that three-quarters of Marylanders support more investment in transit, walking and biking. As we transition to more transit, we should transition to electric buses. Los Angeles is transitioning to a 100% electric bus fleet. Regarding public engagement, RTP Commission meetings should be held during evening hours and at locations accessible by transit so the public can attend. Regarding the online survey, the goals cannot be ranked because they are equally important. Additionally, the public should have opportunity to comment and inform public engagement strategy.
- F. Samuel Jordan, President of the Baltimore Transit Equity Coalition: The RTP should prioritize an equitable, reliable, multi-modal reliable transportation system. Mr. Jordan spoke about actions taken by the Maryland General Assembly in the 2018 legislative session and what they mean for the RTP. In March 2018, the Chairs of the Senate Committee on Budget and Taxation and the House of Delegates Committee on Appropriations submitted the Joint Chairmen’s Report to Assembly leadership, which called for MDOT MTA to report on the feasibility of either restarting the Red Line project or developing alternative projects to improve east-west transit capabilities in Baltimore City. In April 2018, SB277/HB372 were signed into law, requiring MDOT MTA to prepare a Central Maryland Regional Transit Plan for a 25-year time frame. MDOT MTA released a report in November 2018 stating that, “It is inappropriate to begin an east-west transit solution before completing the plan to evaluate the entire system”. Mr. Jordan stated that MDOT MTA’s report indicates that the RTP must not include any proposal to construct an east-west light rail crossing from Baltimore City to Baltimore County, which truncates the Commission’s visionary range. Mr. Jordan urged the Commission to read the Red Line report. He stated that MDOT MTA misrepresented the funding success of the Red Line project in this report. The Baltimore Transit Equity Coalition challenges MDOT MTA to permit the Commissioners to act without constraints in addressing the needs of the

Baltimore region, including the lack of east-west crossing. The Baltimore Transit Equity Coalition also encourages the Coalition to consider introducing a regional transportation authority (RTA) to bind regional jurisdictions in a voluntary compact. The Commission must address the crisis of equity in transportation and should not be timid in its suggestions. Mr. Jordan quoted Goethe: “Be bold, for in boldness there is genius, magic and power.”

- G. Jim Lorpro, representing himself: As a resident of Anne Arundel County, Mr. Lorpro has observed that mobility is not always a priority for residents, but publicity can help to solve this. The RTP should invest in publicizing its objectives. Buy-in from leadership in the region is a critical component of the success of this plan. The Greater Baltimore Partnership brings a huge amount of weight and a lot of champions in his organization can bring a champion base in the Baltimore region. Rail transit is vital to our region and can provide risk, so we should find a way to avoid that risk.
- H. Sasha Tidwell, Student at University of Maryland: Maryland cannot invest in expanding highways because of environmental and health injustices. Maryland needs more equitable policies and the state should move away from auto-centric development to save vulnerable populations from air pollution damage. In FY 2019-2024, SHA will receive 40% more funding than MTA.
- I. Nikita Sanjay, UMD student: Baltimore is a growing city with growing job opportunities. Young people need transit to access these job opportunities if Baltimore is to retain and attract strong talent. A transit plan could have a significant impact on environmental and public health concerns published in the IPPC report.
- J. Josh Tolkein, Director of MD Chapter of Sierra Club: After advocating for an increase in Metro funding in the Washington, D.C. region, the Sierra Club is now dedicated to supporting more transit mobility in Central MD. We need a strong, ambitious plan. If we tie this plan to current funding and progress, we are setting a wholly unsatisfactory trajectory. Maryland is farthest behind in reducing greenhouse gas pollution when it comes to transportation. The state needs to reduce from 30 million metric tons of greenhouse gas to 18 million metric tons. We cannot meet these goals if we don’t have an aggressive, robust transportation plan for Central MD. Our region has been in non-attainment for ozone and other pollutants in Clean Air Act for many years and asthma in Baltimore City is twice the national average. The transportation sector is highest contributor of these pollutants and low-income communities are the most impacted. This plan should look at all benefits of transit and multi-modal- improve air quality, quality of life for both region and entire state.
- K. Eric Norton, Central MD Transportation Alliance: The RTP should bring a new transit vision for the region. Research shows that agencies can grow ridership by providing better service that is fast, frequent, and reliable and provides service where population centers are. MTA should invest in priority centers and connect more people to more jobs in reasonable amount of time. A Baltimore College Town Network survey of students asked, “What is Baltimore missing that you wish it had?” “Better transportation” has been the answer since 2003.

- L. Arjan Van Andel- BTV: This is a time of transformation. If you offer transportation options comparable to car, more people will use it. Convenience and cost are top factors. Can analysis be done irrespective of current routes and consider commuter traffic to DC and Montgomery County? In 2045, transit system will look different. How can transit become the mobility operator in this region? Who will use autonomous vehicles? Are autonomous vehicles going to replace all buses and cars and what percentage will be operated by transit, what is the premium service of transit? Bring Central Maryland forward as most attractive places in world to live and work.
- M. Jan Mulicknutsen, Get Maryland Moving, BRTB Pact: For entrepreneurs, finding a place to locate a business always includes the consideration of proximity to public transportation. A pivotal issue in revitalization is transportation. Rebuilding our communities relies on transportation.
- N. Claudia Wilson Randall, Community Development Network of Maryland: The Community Development Network of Maryland is a state-wide network of 150 organizations working in affordable housing, community development, and workforce development. Transportation is an issue that always rises to the top of their work list. For the Baltimore region to be a global competitor, we must have a global transportation system competitive with global market. We need to mobilize across sectors- UMD, Northrop Grumman, counties and the state may all have to collaborate to attract workforce and students and may need to go outside box to achieve their goals. The WHO reports more people with disabilities and aging, and a key question is how to get the disabled population around the region effectively. We don't want to build a transportation system of last resort, which is what we have today. We need to build a first-class transportation system that everyone in this room would be willing to take to flow around the region. If the transportation ridership looked more like this room, the transportation system would be better.

NEXT STEPS

Holly Arnold provided an overview of next steps:

- The next Commission meeting is April 25 and will once again be held at BMC.
- The next meeting will include a presentation of the full public outreach plan, in addition to presentations of the data and information that has been collected and analyzed.
- Public outreach has already begun and will continue in the next few months with outreach in all five Central Maryland counties. Transit riders and non-transit riders should both be engaged as part of the public.
- Commissioners will be sent a link to the RTP website, which includes all information related to the RTP planning process.