

Central Maryland Regional Transit Plan Commission Meeting

Hein Public Service Building, Glen Burnie, MD

June 18, 2019

9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Draft Meeting Notes

Commission Members in attendance:

Name	Title	Role
Ramond Robinson	Director of Transportation, Anne Arundel County	Anne Arundel County Executive's designee
Frank Murphy	Acting 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
J.C. Hendrickson	Member, MDOT MTA MARC Riders Council	Governor's appointee
Katie Collins-Ihrke	Executive Director, Accessible Resources for Independence	Governor's appointee

**PURPOSE**

Mike Kelly, Executive Director of the Baltimore Metropolitan Council, convened the third Regional Transit Plan Commission meeting. The purpose of this meeting was to update the commission on the progress of the public involvement process, develop goals for the RTP, provide an overview of customer experience and new mobility, provide an overview of transit funding, hear public comment, and define next steps.

**OPENING REMARKS – Stuart Pittman, County Executive for Anne Arundel County**

Stuart Pittman, County Executive for Anne Arundel County, delivered opening remarks. Mr. Pittman emphasized that he was elected in Anne Arundel County because residents care about traffic, overcrowded schools, and the environment. His goal as County Executive is to make improvements in all these areas. Anne Arundel County recently approved a budget that includes a Reserve Fund for Permanent Public Improvements, which dedicates 0.1 percent of county income tax for improvements such as transit. The comment period for the budget ends on June 30.

Anne Arundel County's public transportation plan, Move Anne Arundel, lays out transportation improvements that the county is dedicated to implementing. The plan includes quantifiable measures of success to hold the County Council and the County Executive accountable for implementing the transportation plan.

Mr. Pittman explained that the counties in the Central Maryland region are growing fast; Anne Arundel has grown 10 percent in population every decade. Traffic is the number one issue in the community, but Anne Arundel County can improve options for traveling by implementing ideas like electric buses, which are clean, cool and better for the environment.

Mr. Pittman noted that the thing he loves about the RTP and transit in general is that they deal with the environment, health and economic opportunity, which his county cares about. While Anne Arundel County is a wealthy county, there are still many residents who rely on transit as their only transportation option. However, traveling using transit in Anne Arundel is often challenging, time-consuming, and does not always allow residents to travel to the places they need to go. Mr. Pittman remarked that nothing is more important as a public servant than trying to tackle this problem.

#### APRIL MINUTES REVIEW – Holly Arnold, Deputy Administrator, MDOT MTA

Ms. Arnold provided the Commission members with an opportunity to revise the April Commission meeting minutes. No comments, concerns, or changes were requested.

#### COMMISSION CHAIR

Ms. Arnold shared that Commission members had voiced a desire to select a Commission Chair, whose role is to assist with the agenda, track follow-up on Commission items with MDOT MTA, and facilitate Commissioners' discussion.

Jim Shea moved for Commission members to elect a Chair whose responsibilities are to assist with the Commission meeting agenda, assure prompt follow-up from Commission meetings, facilitate discussion of commissioners, and facilitate communication. The Chair would be elected by a majority of the Commissioners present, nominated and seconded, with a majority run-off between the top two, serve until removed by majority vote and at the discretion of Commissioners.

All Commissioners voted in favor.

Mr. Shea nominated Kirby Fowler. Sameer Sidh seconded the motion. All Commissioners voted in favor.

#### PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT UPDATE – Teddy Krolik, Chief of Engagement, MDOT MTA

Mr. Krolik provided an update of the public engagement activities that have been conducted since the April Commission meeting.

MDOT MTA hosted five open houses in May, with approximately 300 participants. The open houses were designed to promote the exchange of information between MDOT MTA and participants using several public engagement methods. **[See slide deck posted on RTP website]**

Two surveys were administered as part of the RTP public engagement process. The first survey closed in April and the second survey will be closing on June 30. For the second RTP survey,

MDOT MTA is administering both a publicly-accessible online survey and a scientific survey with a representative sample of participants across the Central Maryland region to ensure that the region's demographics are accurately represented in the survey results.

MDOT MTA will compile the results of all outreach and surveys to date in the Phase I Outreach report, which will be distributed this summer. A draft report was already provided to Commissioners.

MDOT MTA is hosting a series of pop-up style outreach events this summer, including at fairs and festivals. All details will be posted on the RTP website and Commissioners will also be notified of events within their area. The Commission is invited to provide input and suggestions for event locations.

Following the presentation, the Commission members asked questions and added comments.

Comment: The turnout for the public workshop in Anne Arundel County was only 15 people. As we move forward, we should focus on locations that will generate better turnout. Ms. Greene will email the Project Team with suggested locations in Anne Arundel County.

Q: What has the response been to the survey on the web?

Mr. Krolik: We received over 2600 responses to the first survey. The second survey has not received as many responses, but we are pushing it on Facebook using zip code-targeted ad-based searches. It is also available on the RTP website and the MDOT MTA Facebook page.

Q: Is the scientific survey separate from the second survey?

Mr. Krolik: The second survey includes two pools of respondents (open to the general public and selected to create a scientifically rigorous sample), but the two surveys generally use the same questions.

Q: Have you conducted the survey on the transit vehicles themselves?

Mr. Krolik: We have not administered surveys on transit vehicles but are hosting pop-ups at stops and stations.

Comment: Every county has a TDM Coordinator who can help distribute the survey.

## GOALS

Mr. Stephen Stansbery, RTP Project Team, facilitated a discussion with the Commission focused on goals development for the RTP. The RTP legislation states that the Commission must participate in the development of goals and strategies for meaningful engagement.

Mr. Stansbery provided an overview of the rational planning process and the role of goals in guiding the process. Goals are *general* guidelines that explain what you want to achieve. Strategies define the methods or implementation steps to attain identified goals. Unlike goals, strategies are specific, measurable and achievable given known constraints.

The legislation states that the duration of the Regional Transit Plan is 25 years but will be updated every 5 years. While the goals and strategies should speak to the entire 25-year period, there will be opportunities to update them to reflect changing conditions and technologies.

Mr. Stansbery presented a list of themes from peer cities' regional transportation plans and themes from previous public and Commission input. **[See slide deck and handouts posted on RTP website]**

The Commissioners began the process of drafting goals at previous Commission meetings. The purpose of the exercise led by Mr. Stansbery at the third Commission meeting was to help the Commissioners craft and refine goals that best match the needs and priorities of the Central Maryland region.

The Commission agreed to discuss the themes of the goals at the Commission meeting, allow Mr. Stansbery to draft the specific language of the goals, and go through an iterative process of review and comment over email. The Commission agreed that the goals should be crafted as high-level goal statements with supportive statements following each goal to add specificity.

Mr. Stansbery asked the Commission if they have sufficient information from the public to be confident about the content of their goals. The Commissioners commented that the themes included in the presentation sufficiently represent public input and that the public engagement report details the results of the public outreach process. These are valuable inputs for the goal-setting process. However, Mr. Sidh commented that the Commissioners do not have access to raw data that might be helpful in assessing the region's needs. The Project Team could build on the Baltimore Metropolitan Council Long-Range Transportation Plan's existing data warehouse.

The Commissioners discussed concerns regarding including State of Good Repair in the RTP goals. Mr. Shea asked why State of Good Repair (SGR) is part of the planning process. Ms. Arnold explained that the agency's ability to provide reliable, safe, clean, on-time service – all key priorities voiced by the public – are outcomes of SGR. Further, the FTA requires that agencies keep their assets in a State of Good Repair, federally defined as all assets operate with no known safety risks that are unacceptable, have all reinvestment needs met on time and operate fit to purpose as they were designed.

Mr. Stansbery added that the percentage of transit agencies' budgets spent on maintenance is growing for every agency across the United States. This is due in large part to deferred maintenance. This impacts reliability, and thus user experience. Using a familiar analogy of our own homes, should we build an addition on our house or fix a leaking roof first? These are difficult choices that every agency must make. When we leave SGR out of the conversation, we end up with plans that are not actionable as we have a lot of standards that we need to meet related to maintenance.

Mr. Sidh offered a framework for organizing the RTP goals, noting that all the goals can fit under one of three broad categories:

1. Funding and funding policy
2. Optimization of existing service (e.g. SGR, technology, last-mile solutions)
3. Corridor expansion (e.g. Access to jobs, serving disadvantaged populations, traffic and congestion)

The Commission discussed created a fourth bucket encompassing "economic development and sustainable development." One Commissioner noted that this could be included under corridor expansion. However, another Commissioner commented that putting economic development under "corridors" is too limiting because corridors are defined linearly. Charlotte's transportation

plan calls for supporting economic development in centers, corridors, and wedges, which is a more holistic view than limiting the conversation to corridors.

The Commission discussed the draft goals that were presented in the April RTP meeting and voiced a desire to rework and reword them. Mr. Fowler noted that the Commission should be looking more at questions such as: “Are we connecting people to the right places in 25 years?”

Mr. Stansbery suggested that “Ensure financial stewardship” could be reworded as “fiscal sustainability,” which would speak to aligning financial resources with identified needs, which is something that the member jurisdictions have the greatest amount of influence over. Ms. Greene commented that there are ways to create new funding streams, as shown in Anne Arundel’s new revenue stream for public transportation. Mr. Kelly noted that the Commission was created by the legislature, so there is political interest in pushing these projects forward. Mr. Killian commented that finances should be the last item decided in the process of analysis, assessment and evaluation. Mr. Sidh noted that they should be careful about how “known constraints” is defined in the plan. Policy decisions at the discretion of decisionmakers are not constraints.

The Commission discussed regional collaboration and equity. Ms. Sachs noted that the jurisdictions in the Central Maryland Region should collaborate and align funding streams. Implementing the RTP would be more efficient if the funding sources in the region all contribute. Mr. Sidh commented that funding considerations should stress equity between modes and regions. The highway and transit split should be more equal and the split of funds for transit between the DC Metro and Baltimore regions should be more equitable. Part of the Commission’s charge is to think creatively about what kind of funding mechanisms we might recommend.

Mr. Stansbery asked the Commission who they would be optimizing transit to serve. Will transit be optimized to strengthen access to workforce, job training and education, and healthcare? The Commissioners affirmed this assessment, reiterating that transit should be optimized for those who are underserved, with focus on job training, healthcare, education and workforce development, high school students, social services, services such as energy assistance and other human services. Mr. Stansbery noted that these goals cannot be achieved if the Commission is looking only at transportation supply, since it does not control where people live or where the jobs are. If the RTP seeks to optimize transit, it should collaborate and integrate local and regional strategies, look at nodes where employment is clustered and places where more affordability and housing choices are needed.

Commissioners suggested additional considerations for goals, including technology, fare collection, last mile connectivity, environmental sustainability, safety, expanded ridership, access to jobs, and economic growth. Mr. Robinson and Ms. Collins-Ihrke noted that it should also be looking at equitability of access to the system, particularly for paratransit users. People with disabilities often opt for paratransit over fixed route, as the latter can feel intimidating.

The Commission discussed the idea of corridor expansion. Mr. Sidh noted that the purpose of this is to identify specific areas that are at the top of the list for expanding access to transit. The RTP legislation specifically emphasizes prioritizing corridors for new public transportation assets. Ms. Greene said that the plan should also define employment corridors where we need to provide transit service as growth occurs. Ms. Sachs commented that the plan should ensure that the corridors identified connect and are not simply isolated corridors within individual counties.

Ms. Arnold noted that the legislation called for the RTP to prioritize corridors based on the goals established in the plan. The goals themselves do not need to speak directly to specific corridors; rather, the corridors are meant to be measured against the goals. Mr. Stansbery suggested that the Commission consider adopting “connectivity” as a theme and identifying corridors under this theme. This respects the process and speaks to the legislation.

Corridors will be the topic of the September Commission meeting. Commissioners were encouraged to email Ms. Arnold and Mr. Fowler for corridor suggestions.

Mr. Stansbery explained that he will email out the themes discussed in the Commission meeting, receive comment from the Commissioners and move forward with adopting goals.

*Due to time constraints, Mr. Fowler asked if the Commission would be open to moving the Customer Experience listed in the agenda to a future RTP Commission meeting. Commissioners agreed with that recommendation.*

## **TRANSIT FUNDING OVERVIEW**

Jodie Misiak, RTP Project Team, presented an overview of transit funding for MDOT MTA. The presentation covered the key cost drivers for transit, MDOT MTA operating cost trends, capital cost drivers, funding for SGR, existing sources of funding, and alternative financing options. The key takeaways from this presentation are that MDOT MTA has an aging system, requires reinvestment in addition to operational funding needs, and alternative financing could help on a project-specific basis.

### **[See slide deck posted on RTP website]**

The Commission asked several questions during the presentation, summarized below.

Q: How do MDOT MTA’s labor costs compare to other cities’?

Ms. Misiak: We are mostly aligned with our peers. Different parts of the country have different labor costs. We can look at the data and provide more information to the Commission.

Q: How much funding will go to the LOTS [Locally Operated Transit Systems] category?

Ms. Arnold: LOTS funding is based on the amount allocated in the previous year. MTA calculated the allocation more than ten years ago based on density and population and is in the process of updating but has not recently.

Q: Why do the charts show a major spending increase in FY19 and FY24?

Ms. Arnold: These expenditures are in the current CTP and are primarily driven by \$400 million investment in the Baltimore City Metro vehicle and signal system. MARC’s lumpiness in capital costs are also vehicle-driven.

Ms. Misiak: These charts show capital expenses just for the Central Region, rather than capital costs in other parts of Maryland. However, it is more difficult to isolate the Central Region from the entire state when looking at operating funding.

Q: How much is the CTP?

Ms. Arnold: The CTP’s total is around \$3.3 billion for the entire state of Maryland. 98% is for SGR and 2% for system enhancement in the Central Maryland region This is the entire budget,

including federal funds. “Systems” include things like Metro systems, catenary. “Vehicles” encompasses all revenue vehicles, everything used to provide service to passengers- buses, train cars. “Enhancement” are things that improve the passenger experience, such as signage, shelters, etc.

Comment: It is interesting to see the cost per year for different transit modes. A cheap bus is more expensive than the subway when looking at per-year costs. It is less expensive than light rail, but not by much. We should add the cost of maintaining roadways to the costs of bus.

Q: Why are costs so high in 2019 [referring to slide 66 in the slide deck posted on the RTP website]?

Ms. Arnold: This chart doesn’t show costs but shows needs. FY19 is high because this shows the backlog of maintenance needs. This assumes that all needs are funded in FY19, but funding needs will continue to shift forward if we don’t fund them all this year.

Q: Is there a sense of how much we need and how much we’re spending historically?

Ms. Arnold: We don’t have historic data for SGR. This is a new way of tracking from our asset management program. 98% of our budget in Central Maryland is allocated to tackling our backlog of SGR. These charts assume that federal funding will stay flat or increase slightly

Q: Could we see regional comparisons in funding? With structures being different, this might not be easy, but we would like to see a comparison of the Central Maryland region to the Washington region.

Ms. Misiak: We can take a look at that. It will be easier to compare for capital funding than operating funding.

Q: It would be helpful to separate operating from capital and see what the trend looks like over time. Could we see an operating cost analysis as a stacked bar chart with proportion of spending over time by TBU?

Ms. Misiak: Over time, MDOT MTA has represented about 30 percent of MDOT spending.

Q: The chart in MDOT Funding by TBU is hard to read. Can we see the percentage broken out by MTA and the modes?

Q: Is Central Maryland currently applying for any BUILD grants?

Ms. Arnold: MDOT MTA is coordinating with Baltimore County for a BUILD grant for pedestrian access at Martin State Airport.

## 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. Three individuals signed up to testify.

- A. Brian O’Malley, representing the Central Maryland Transportation Alliance: Mr. O’Malley commented that he appreciated the discussion of what connectivity means. At the second Commission meeting, the Project Team presented a map that showed projected job growth in the region at the census tract level. Consequently, the maps may be

misconstrued to suggest that job growth will happen more in exurban places than centrally-located places because those census blocks are geographically larger. Conversely, denser urban areas have smaller geographic area than exurban low-density areas. Mr. O'Malley suggested asking the Project Team for maps that show transit-supportive land use, job and pop density, walkability. This data will help prioritize areas where transit will succeed because these are the ingredients that make transit work. Regarding optimizing service: riders care about frequency, reliability and speed. The capital funding for MTA goes down in the years 2022-2023 because no projects for service expansion are in the development phase anymore. The Commission should look at how to grow and improve the system; if not, we will see the decline continue.

- B. Lindsey Mendelson, representing the Maryland Sierra Club: Ms. Mendelson applauded the Commission for focusing on specific and measurable goals. When looking at priorities for corridors, the Commission should look at over-burdened communities that are underserved in transit system. Maryland is falling behind on goals to reduce pollution in transportation by 40% by 2030. We need measurements to ensure that state reduce pollution. Ms. Mendelson noted that she did not see any public notice for this meeting today. The Commission should host listening sessions itself to get feedback from the public.
- C. Joe McAndrew, representing the Greater Washington Partnership: The Greater Washington Partnership will release a case study on Richmond's transit revolution, which looks at expanded service frequencies to allow greater transit reliability. Richmond has seen a great increase in ridership with expansion of frequency of service. Looking at how to improve efficiency and effectiveness of Baltimore Transit service is important. The RTP should also look at optimizing land uses and real estate development around stations to drive ridership. This is important for tax base and revenue generation. Looking at how to drive TOD is critically important. We should look at strategic plans and look at how our local governments can improve their own economic development strategies going forward.

### NEXT STEPS – Holly Arnold

Ms. Arnold presented next steps in the RTP planning process.

- The September Commission meeting will focus on corridors.
- The RTP Project Team will conduct outreach over the summer focusing on corridors.
- Ms. Arnold will coordinate with Mr. Fowler on the agenda for the next meeting, which will be held in Howard County at Howard County Community College.
- The October meeting will be held in Baltimore County.