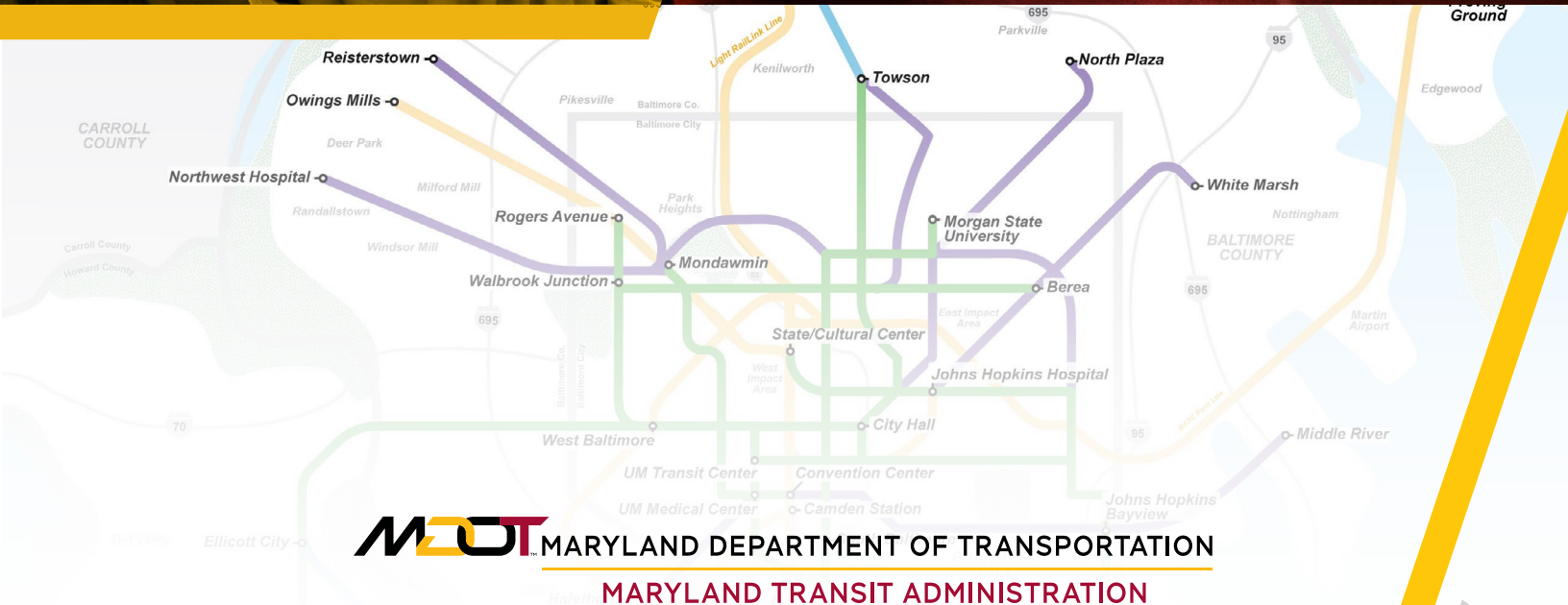




Connecting Our Future

A Regional Transit Plan for Central Maryland

Public Engagement Report





Introduction 4

Background and Context..... 5

Overview 5

Chapter 1 Public Engagement Overview 6

Approach..... 6

Engagement Principles 7

Engagement Methods 8

Chapter 2 Phase One | Analyze 10

Public Survey 10

Open Houses 13

Pop-Up Events & Presentations 16

Key Themes and Outcomes From Phase I Public Engagement..... 17

Chapter 3 Phase Two | Propose 18

Open Houses 18

Pop-Up Events & Presentations 19

Key Themes and Outcomes From Phase II Public Engagement 20

Chapter 4 Phase Three | Publish 22

Web-Based Draft Plan Review..... 23

Virtual Presentations & Targeted Outreach 24

Key Themes and Outcomes From Phase III Public Engagement..... 26

Chapter 5 Looking Ahead to Implementation 30

Appendix 1 Public Engagement Across the Region

Appendix 2 Public Engagement by Jurisdiction

Introduction

Background & Context

Over the past two years, the Maryland Department of Transportation Maryland Transit Administration (MDOT MTA) has worked collaboratively with the Central Maryland Regional Transit Plan Commission, the Baltimore Metropolitan Council, and the public to develop a comprehensive twenty-five-year vision for transit in the Central Maryland Region. We gathered with people in libraries and community centers and reached commuters as they traveled to and from work. We joined with people buying fresh food at farmers' markets and chatted with people in local malls.

When the COVID-19 pandemic began affecting the region, we rapidly shifted our work to digital and alternative forms of engagement. We found new ways to join with Marylanders across the region as they adapted to these unprecedented ways of working and gathering in a safe, responsible manner.

As a result of comprehensive public engagement efforts, the Central Maryland Regional Transit Plan reflects the interests and priorities of those who work and live throughout the region. We've spoken with hundreds of individuals, met with dozens of groups and organizations, and collected thousands of survey submissions.

During the Draft Plan review process, we collected hundreds of comments using a web-based platform, phone calls, letters, emails, and presentations. Throughout these engagement activities, we have listened and learned from the public; this input has shaped the Plan as we refined the objectives, initiatives, and targets that together lay the foundation for progress over the next 25 years.

Overview

The Central Maryland region comprises Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Harford, and Howard Counties, as well as Baltimore City. In 2018, the Maryland state legislature required that MDOT MTA undertake the development of a comprehensive transit plan, convene an 11-member Commission comprising regional representatives, and work with the public and a broad range of partners to complete the Plan by October 2020.

Together with its partners, MDOT MTA developed the Plan in three phases. Throughout the project, the Project Team shared information and analysis, while gathering input from the public to refine the Plan. Each phase had distinct goals with regards to public engagement.

Phase I – Analyze

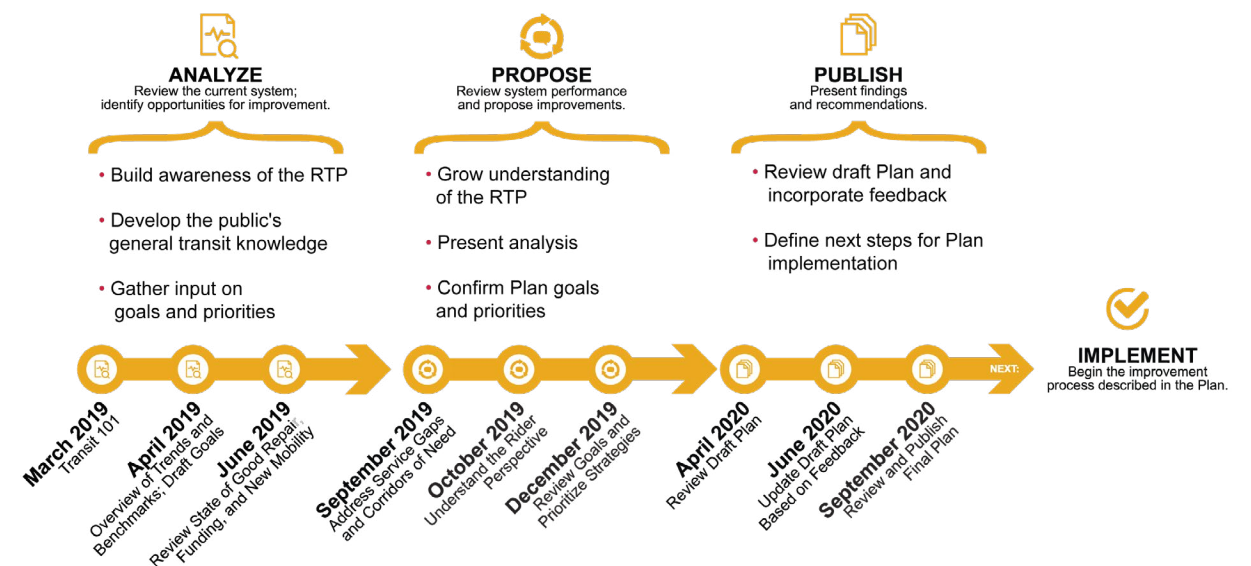
In the first phase, the Project Team conducted analysis that covered existing service in the region, ridership, demographics and comparisons across jurisdictions, and projected changes in these measures over the next 25 years. These results and outcomes were presented to the public through Phase I engagement efforts, with a focus on building a baseline of knowledge about transit and a general awareness of the Plan. During this phase, the Project Team also gathered information through conversations, presentations, and surveys on the goals and priorities residents hold. As the RTP covers a large and diverse geography, engagement in Phase I provided the Project Team with a more nuanced understanding of the differences in priorities and goals that residents and riders may hold.

Phase II – Propose

In the second phase, the Project Team presented the public with potential improvements and proposed investments to create a transit network that better meets the region's needs today and over the next 25 years, including a comprehensive list of potential Regional Transit Corridors. This provided an opportunity to affirm the goals and priorities offered in the Analyze phase in the context of additional – and more detailed – analysis.

Phase III – Publish

In the third phase, the public had the opportunity to review the Draft Plan and provide comments, suggestions, and ask questions. Though the COVID-19 pandemic demanded a transition to virtual and remote engagement, the Project Team was able to gather hundreds of comments from across the region to then revise the draft to produce the final Plan.





Outreach Events

60+

Pop-Ups and Presentations



10

Regional Open Houses



8

Commission Meetings



5

Inter-Agency Meetings



3,426

Survey Responses



APPROACH

The RTP was developed and shaped with valuable input from over 1,500 in-person interactions with members of the public throughout the region, thousands of online survey submissions, and hundreds of comments on the draft Plan. The Project Team also met with a broad array of stakeholders, including student councils, employers and business associations, economic development groups, transit operators, and advocacy groups. Additionally, transit providers in the region consistently provided a rich source of insight and experience. Taken together, the input offered through this extensive engagement effort makes the Regional Transit Plan stronger and more reflective of the diverse perspectives in our region.

Unlike a typical planning project, the RTP establishes a long-term strategy for a large geographic area, rather than specific project in a targeted location. Consequently, the Project Team framed public engagement around gathering broad, strategic, and authentic input across stakeholder groups, carefully considering geographic and demographic coverage throughout the region to strive for fair representation of residents and transportation needs.



Broad
Expand participants' perspectives toward future opportunities



Strategic
Leverage data to create representative samples



Authentic
Present a vision that accurately reflects a wide variety of stakeholders

ENGAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

The Project Team hosted traditional public meetings, but also made a focused effort to meet people where they already were. Whether attending a story time program at the local library, waiting for the train to get to work, or visiting a county fair, MDOT MTA committed to a public involvement process that was founded on three guiding principles:

- **Make It Easy**
- **Make It Interactive**
- **Make It Comprehensive**

Make It Easy

By strategically locating outreach events where people already were in their daily activities, the Project Team reached a broader, more diverse audience. While open houses and public meetings are key avenues to share and gather information from the public, more informal events capture people who may not otherwise have the interest or ability to participate. The RTP Project Team conducted over 50 "pop-up" and community-based events across the region. Project staff targeted locations where they could reliably encounter a diverse group of

people representing a full spectrum of transportation users. These locations included transit stations, shopping malls, libraries, farmers' markets, fairs, and festivals. Depending on the location and event, outreach ranged from simply handing out project flyers to formal tabling events with interactive activities or surveys.

Make It Interactive

The Project Team held two rounds of open houses in the five Central Maryland jurisdictions. These open houses provided members of the public, elected officials, and other stakeholders with opportunities to learn about the project while providing input and posing questions. Project Team members staffing the open houses could respond to attendees' specific questions directly, bringing the necessary technical knowledge to appropriately answer.

Make It Comprehensive

MDOT MTA understands that people obtain and absorb information in different ways. Consequently, the Project Team ensured that information was available and shared using both high-tech and low-tech resources. A comprehensive project [website](http://rtp.mta.maryland.gov)¹ serves as a central repository for all project information and materials. MDOT

¹ The RTP project website can be accessed at the following url: rtp.mta.maryland.gov

MTA social media posts announced upcoming meetings and surveys to thousands more. Members of the public could access presentation materials and boards shown at Commission and public meetings, and team members used email announcements for news. The project's email list reached over 1,500 individuals and served as a key tool for provide regular updates, information about upcoming meetings or pop up events, and links to materials such as the Draft Plan.

The Project Team used participant zip codes to identify which geographic areas were not participating. This information then informed future purchased social media ads that targeted those zip codes which were under-represented, including Title VI communities. However, the Project Team also produced and shared print alternatives to online project materials (e.g., surveys) at events and pop-ups and offered hardcopies of the Draft Plan to be mailed upon request during the review period. Finally, the RTP email address and phone line enabled a broad range of stakeholders to contact the team with questions or concerns.

The Project Team also provided an American Sign Language translator for open houses upon request and translated meeting announcements and other flyers into Spanish. In response to input from our stakeholders, Project Team members worked with partners in the disability community to guide our efforts to produce screen-reader accessible documents and presentations.

ENGAGEMENT METHODS

While members of the public could always review information about the Plan and upcoming activities on the RTP website and reach the Project Team via the dedicated email address and phone number, several other methods were employed to reach a broad cross-section of the public throughout the Plan development. Key methods are detailed below.

Surveys: Surveys enabled the Project Team to gather timely input and topical insight directly from the public. Surveys were available both as hard copies for in-person outreach, as well as online. By actively engaging the public using various formats, the Project Team could obtain a greater sample selection across demographics and geography.

Open Houses Open houses were strategically timed to correspond with major project milestones. The opportunity to gather input and comments on the materials, created a valuable bi-directional exchange. Scheduled to provide broad geographic reach across the five jurisdictions, open houses were held at locations that were transit and ADA accessible and convenient. These locations included transit stations, libraries, recreation centers, and community centers.

Instead of a formal presentation at a specific time, the open houses used a “drop-in” format, providing more flexibility for attendee’s schedule. Further, open houses presented display boards that participants could review at their own pace.

Display boards were designed to distill complex data analysis and information into clear presentations that also included interactive questions so that the public could react to this information. Additionally, a large group of Project Team members were available to answer questions and discuss the project. Translators were available upon request for any of the open houses.

Pop-Up Events & Presentations Understanding that many members of the public would be unable to attend a formal open house, the Project Team executed a series of pop-up events throughout the region to reach people during the course of their daily activities or through community groups and other organizations with which they are already involved. With a smaller staffing team consisting of two to three members, pop-ups were held at transit stops and stations or locations that the public is likely to gather, such as libraries.

Targeted presentations reached key groups and organizations, including student governments, business associations, community organizations, advocacy groups, and citizen advisory councils. These presentations included general information about the project, an update on progress to date and current activities, opportunities for further involvement, and question and answer sessions.





Phase I public engagement activities focused on clarifying regional priorities, identifying key themes and goals, and targeting strategies for the Central Maryland Region’s transit over the next 25 years. Engagement concentrated on providing information and gathering feedback on preliminary analysis, which focused on the region’s characteristics and population demographics, how people get around today, and what considerations are important for future travel. The Project Team sought to establish a high-level understanding of goals and priorities in the region related to transportation.

- Three types of engagement occurred during this time period:
1. A **survey** using both a web-based and hardcopy format
 2. A series of interactive **open houses** across the Central Maryland region
 3. Interactive in-person activities at **pop-up events and presentations** to targeted groups and organizations to gather strategies supporting the Plan’s goals

PUBLIC SURVEY

During Phase I, the Project Team administered a survey to gather regional input on transportation goals and priorities. Between February 22 and April 22, 2019, MDOT MTA

administered a survey using both paper surveys and a more interactive, online version. While the online survey included interactive elements, described in further detail below, the paper survey included the same question categories and response options. Participants could select and rank various priorities and potential benefits. In addition, limited demographic data was also obtained showing participants’ residence (county and zip code) and age. This input was synthesized with public input from Commission meetings and outreach events at which members of the public could complete surveys.

- In total, there were 2,844 respondents:
- 2,626 respondents used the MetroQuest online survey
 - 218 respondents provided input using the paper survey

Online Survey

An interactive online survey tool asked respondents to check what subcategories were most important to them under three overarching topics:

1. Benefits of Transit
2. Transit Investment
3. Transit Access

The online survey shared on the project website, MDOT MTA social media, and via QR code at public engagement events throughout the

region. MDOT MTA developed a paid advertising strategy based on weekly analysis of online respondents, which aimed to broaden the geographic reach of the survey throughout the region. MDOT MTA’s paid social media ads specifically targeted counties in the Central Maryland region that had an initial lower response rate.

Paper Survey

The paper survey provided an alternative format to gather input from members of the public with whom the Project Team interacted. While the paper version had to be adapted to remove the interactive elements present in the online version, the same categories, questions, and answer options were provided. MDOT MTA distributed the surveys at a series of pop-up events throughout the Central Maryland region between February and April 2019. Project Team members encouraged members of the public to

use the online tool when possible by directing them to the project website; business cards with the web address were provided. However, if members of the public preferred to take the survey with the paper copy, they were able to do so. If assistance was needed, Project Team members were on hand to read the questions out loud, explain the options, and complete the survey.

Taken together, the web-based and paper surveys provided over 2,000 responses and had a diverse spread across the region’s jurisdictions and respondents’ primary mode of travel.

Notable findings could be identified by cross-referencing respondents’ selections with the jurisdiction within which they lived. Key take-aways by question are highlighted below; the graph summarized all respondents while the bullets examine the cross-tabulation data in more detail.

Figure 1. Survey Respondent's Home Location

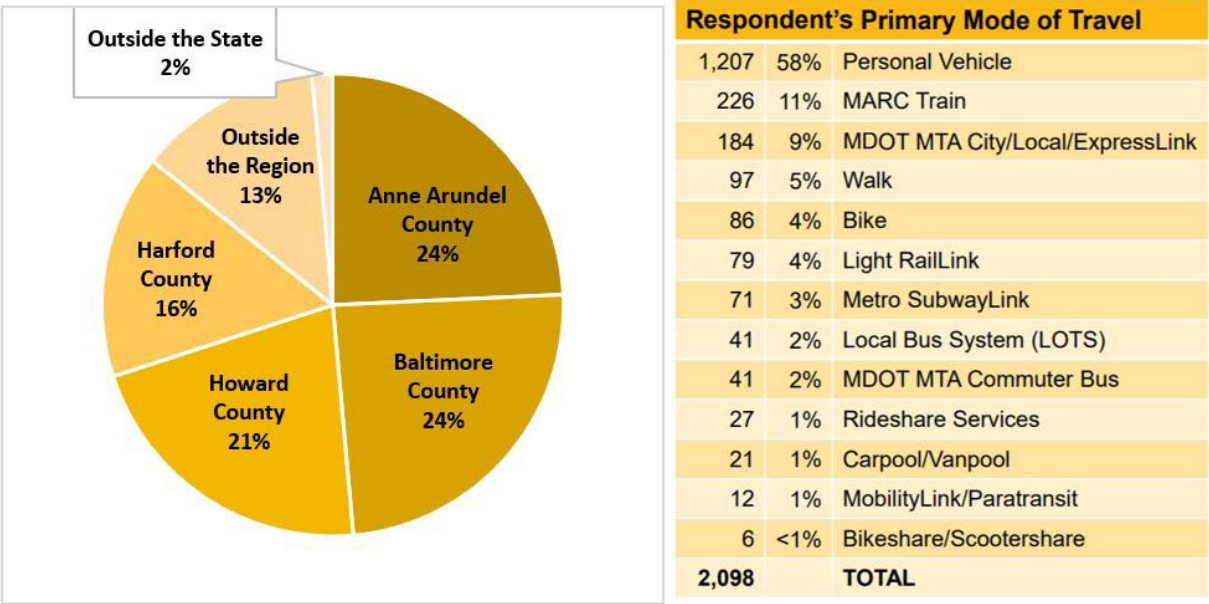
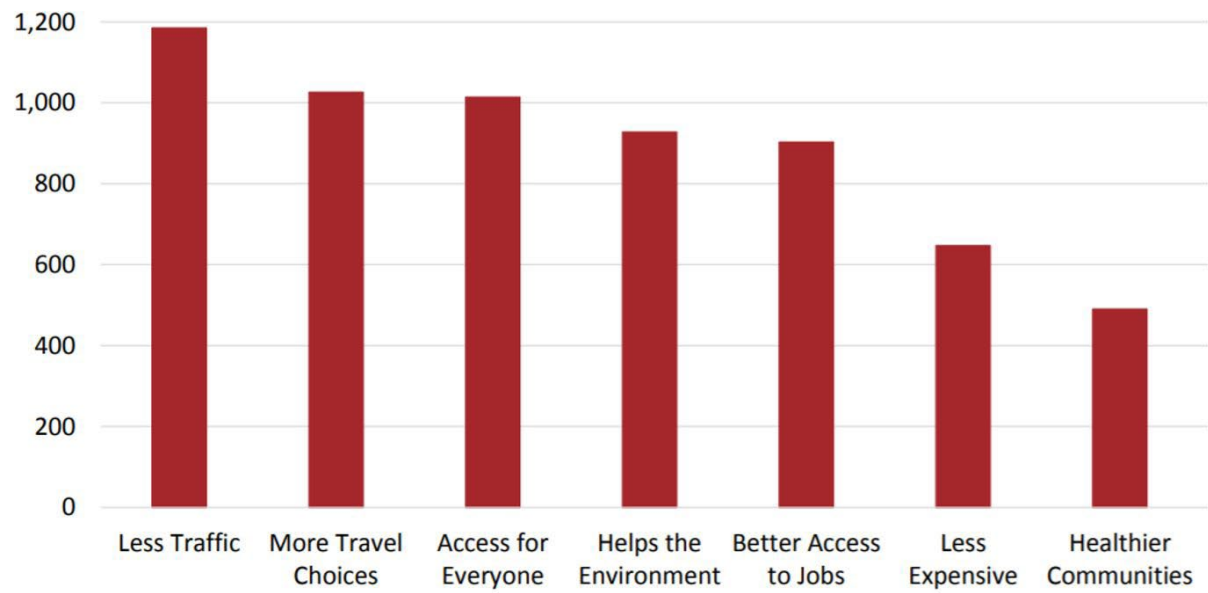


Figure 2. What Are the Top Benefits of Transit for the Region?



- Regionally, the most frequently selected benefit of transit was Less Traffic. Excluding responses from Baltimore City residents, this number jumps from 19% to 61%.
- Baltimore City respondents identified Access for Everyone and Access to Jobs as transit’s largest benefits.
- Looking only at those who ride transit as their primary mode, More Travel Choices and Access for Everyone are the most selected benefits.

Regarding the prioritization of funds, responses across all respondents suggested three tiers of priorities. Additional detail that considers the jurisdictional cross-tabulation data is included as bullets below:

High	Mid	Low
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Expand the transit areaImprove reliable, on-time serviceMaintain and modernize equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Increase weekday and weekend serviceSupport innovative technologiesImprove access to regional centers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Enhance customer information
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Improve Reliable, On-Time Service is the highest priority for Baltimore City and Anne Arundel County residents.Expand the Area Transit Serves is the priority for all other counties, followed by Improve Reliable, On-Time Service.		

What We Heard in the Surveys

Several key themes emerged from this survey and the surrounding outreach associated with it:

- Improve **efficiency and reliability** of transit in the region
- Increase **access to jobs** and essential destinations
- Address linkages between the modes and service providers for more **efficient transfers**
- Integrate** the existing transit systems in the region
- Improve **first/last** mile connectivity
- Reduce emissions and improve **air quality**
- Connect transit service and **land use decisions**
- Focus on existing users, **disadvantaged and vulnerable populations**
- Explore all **funding** sources
- Maintain** existing assets in a state of good repair
- Create better **connections to schools**
- Approach **new mobility** options as complements to transit

OPEN HOUSES

MDOT MTA hosted five open houses throughout the region between May 13 and May 23, 2019. The Project Team selected the locations based upon geographic spread and transit accessibility, and aligned the times of outreach with peak commute times to maximize the number of people the team could reach:

- Harford County | Bel Air Library
- Baltimore County | Owings Mills Metro SubwayLink Station
- Baltimore City | ImpactHub Baltimore
- Howard County | The Mall in Columbia
- Anne Arundel County | Glen Burnie Regional Library

Open house materials were designed to both provide and receive information – throughout the information boards, there were opportunities for attendees to provide input to the team by using stickers, sticky notes, and comment forms. While the boards provided information about the RTP’s background and timeline, early analysis findings, and proposed public engagement, they also presented participants with ample opportunity to provide comments, input, and ideas related to the content of the boards. Participants identified whether they rode transit at least once a week. Depending upon their answer, they received sticker dots in one of two colors to use throughout the boards to respond to various questions.

The questions and the corresponding responses are presented below, broken out by whether or not the respondent was a regular transit rider.

Figure 3. What Areas Should be Priorities for Transit Service?

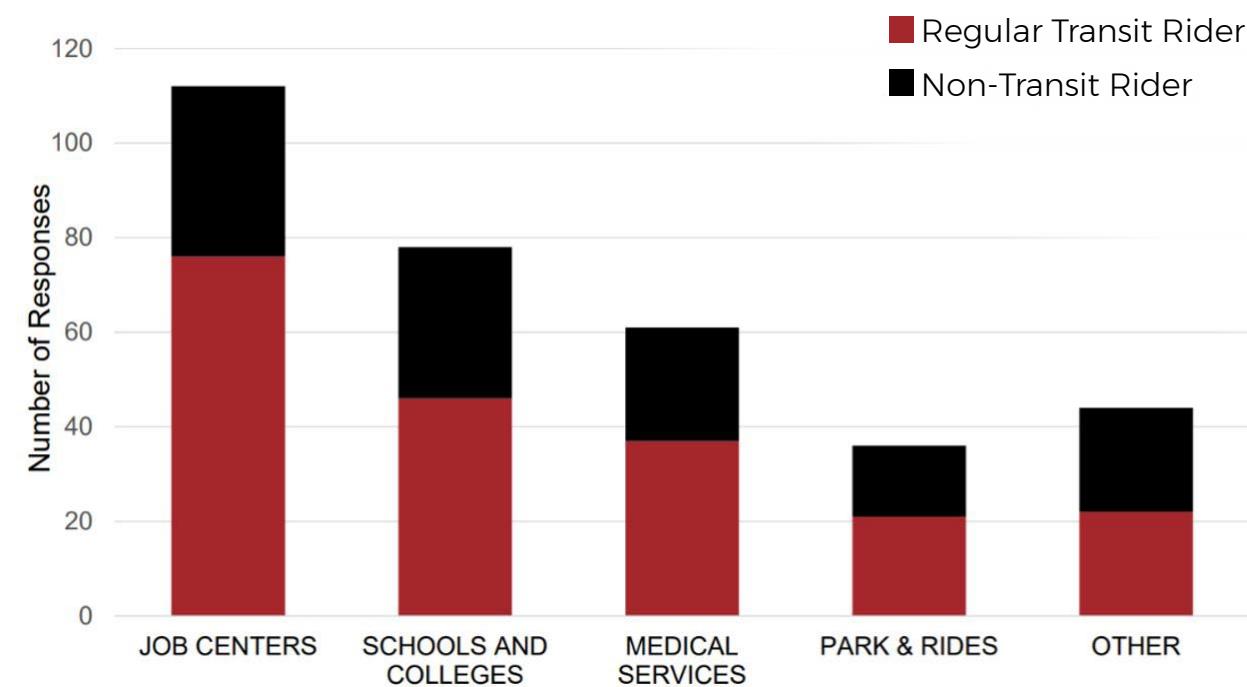


Figure 4. What Would Encourage You to Ride Transit More?

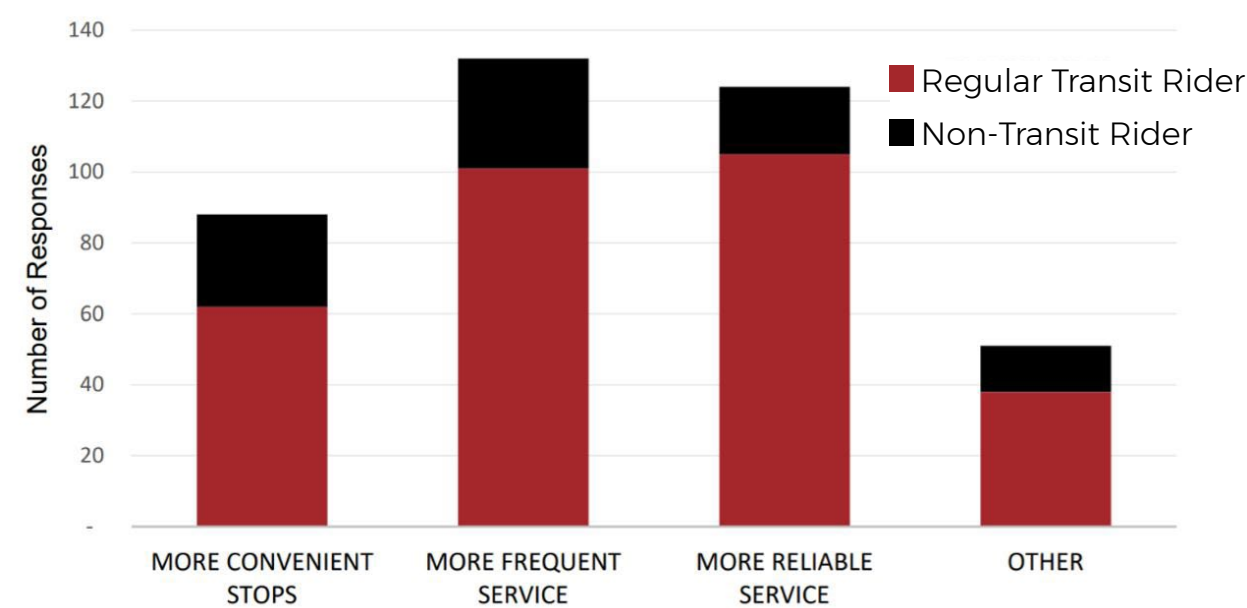


Figure 5. Should Transit Follow Development or Vice Versa?

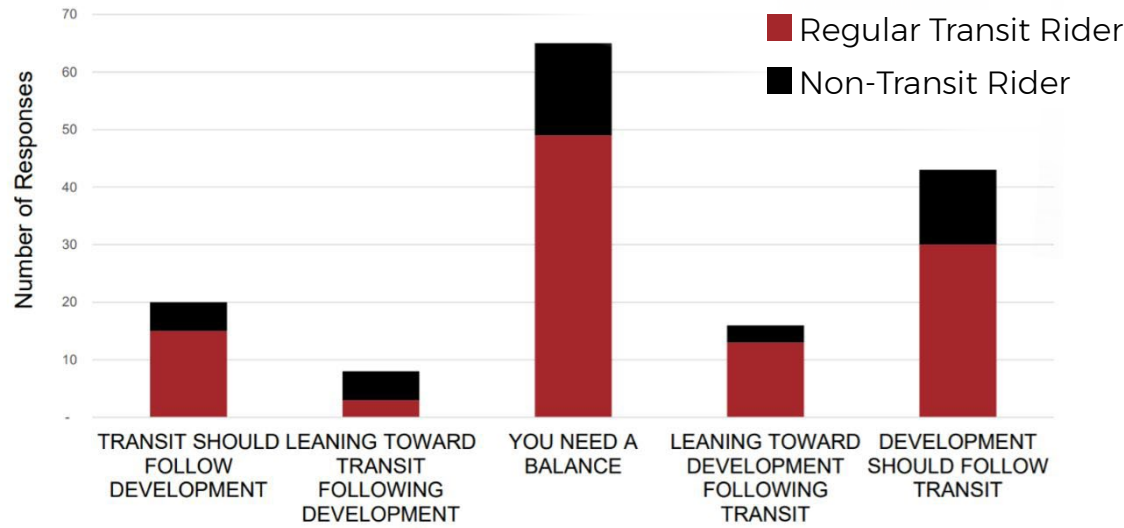


Figure 6. What Would You Prioritize Improving?

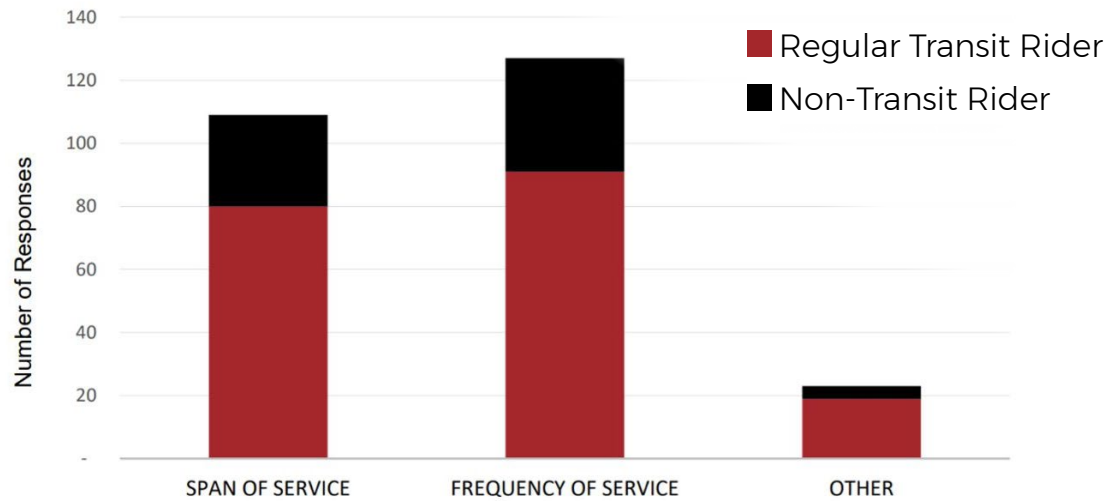
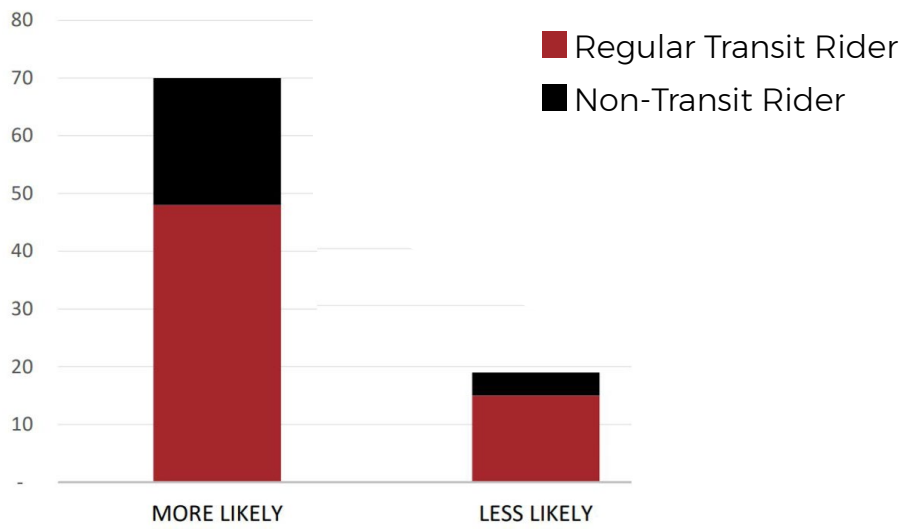


Figure 7. Does New Mobility Make You More or Less Likely to Take Transit Today?



What We Heard at Open Houses

- Key themes we heard from the approximately 300 open house attendees were:
- Better regional **connectivity**
 - Improving service **frequency and reliability**
 - Installing bus stop **amenities** (e.g., shelters, benches)
 - Concerns about personal **safety**
 - Improving the **cleanliness and condition** of stations, stops, and vehicles
 - Access challenges for **senior and minority** customers
 - Opportunities to improve **customer service**
 - Access to more **real-time data**

POP-UP EVENTS & PRESENTATIONS

Throughout the first phase, the Project Team executed 39 pop-up events and presentations across the region at libraries, fairs, transit stops and stations, and other events. Beyond educating the public about the Regional Transit Plan and providing information about how to stay involved, the Project Team also encouraged members of the public to add sticky-notes to a display board to share specific strategies and projects under three draft goals developed by the RTP Commission:

- Improving connectivity and the seamlessness of transit services
- Optimizing the quality and safety of existing transit services
- Maintaining fiscal sustainability

The board presented these draft goals and provided respondents with an opportunity to suggest strategies that fit within the goal areas using post it notes. The interactive board was used at pop-up events including fairs, libraries, and festivals, as well for "in-reach" to MDOT MTA operators and employees. In addition to this active engagement, pop-ups were staffed by members of the Project Team who could answer questions and provide additional information. A three-sided "kiosk" board also provided the public with a project overview and highlights of analysis and input to date.

What We Heard at Pop-Ups & Presentations

- Members of the public contributed over 130 suggested strategies on the interactive board. Proposed strategies fell into four broad areas:
- Improve **regional connectivity** by integrating transit modes and system to better serve job centers, including those with non-traditional hours/shifts.
 - Invest in transit **vehicles, stops, and stations** to maintain cleanliness and provide customer amenities, such as shelters, wayfinding, and lighting.
 - Provide more **fare payment** options, exploring options to improve boarding efficiency and connect service providers.
 - Improve customers' comfort by addressing perceptions and concerns around **safety and security**

KEY THEMES AND OUTCOMES FROM PHASE I PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Phase I Engagement provided a rich stream of both quantitative and qualitative information regarding residents' goals, priorities, and visions for transit in the future. This input informed several key foundational elements of the Regional Transit Plan.

Regional Transit Plan Goals
What We Heard

- A review of all inputs during this period of public engagement highlighted 10 topic areas that garnered further discussion and refinement as the Project Team prepared the Regional Transit Plan.
- **Expand transit service** throughout the Central Maryland Region
 - Establish a **multi-modal** approach to mobility
 - Prioritize **customer service** and the customer journey
 - Improve **reliability, efficiency, and frequency** of existing transit service to attract and retain riders
 - Assure **equitable** decision making in design
 - Address **safety and security** concerns both onboard and waiting for transit
 - Maintain the **affordability** of transit
 - Consider transit's role in the region's **environmental sustainability**

- Capitalize on opportunities for **Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)**
- **Maintain** and **upgrade** facilities and transit vehicles.

How We Responded
The Project Team and Commission members used the feedback from the public throughout Phase I to develop three overarching goals for the Plan that encapsulated many of the key themes we heard:

- Improve connectivity and integration of existing and future transit services
- Optimize existing transit services
- Enhance fiscal sustainability.

Regional Transit Corridors
What We Heard

Engagement activities throughout the region provided the Project Team with a more nuanced understanding of where people are living, working, and traveling. The conversations, surveys, and comments throughout Phase I complemented and validated the extensive data analysis performed during this period.

How We Responded
The Project Team identified 29 Regional Transit Corridors across the five jurisdictions that reflected analysis and engagement outcomes. Discussions with the public also informed the proposed prioritization methodology presented to the Commission at the September 2019 Commission meeting.

3

Phase Two / Propose

September 2019 – March 2020

In this second phase of the Project, the Project Team synthesized the extensive input gathered in the first phase and presented preliminary proposals to enhance mobility in the region to the public. Through this iterative process of meaningful dialogue, the Project Team was able to refine the proposed strategies and projects.

Two types of engagement occurred during this time period:

1. A second series of interactive **open houses** across the Central Maryland region
2. Targeted **pop-up events and presentations to groups** and organizations to solicit feedback on the proposed Regional Transit Corridors and strategies

OPEN HOUSES

MDOT MTA hosted five public open houses throughout the region between October 21 and October 29, 2019. The RTP Project Team selected the locations based on feedback from local jurisdictions and Commission members, to reflect geographic distribution, and to ensure transit accessibility. Potential transit routes for attendees were identified on flyers and printed materials along with social media and the website.

- Howard County | Elkridge Library
- Baltimore County | Towson Library
- Baltimore City | Mondawmin Mall
- Harford County | Edgewood Recreation & Community Center
- Anne Arundel County | Severna Park Community Center

As with the first round of open houses, the display boards coupled information for the public with opportunities to gather input from the public. By this point in the project, the RTP Commission had finalized the three high-level goals, with supporting bullets beneath each. Additionally, the Project Team had worked with the Commission to identify 30 potential Regional Transit Corridors. Phase II open houses both provided more

detailed information and solicited more detailed input from the public regarding specific ways to improve existing transit in the region at the modal level. Questions focused on gathering input on where people need better transit connections, and how the complete transit trip can be more convenient, comfortable, and safe. Participants provided comments related to service, ranging from specific geographic suggestions (e.g., adding a bus stop in a location) as well as regional policies (e.g., better collaboration of local jurisdictions).

What We Heard at Open Houses

Members of the public generally supported the proposed Regional Transit Corridors and areas for more localized Transit Network Improvement. While there were many specific questions related to specific alignments, geographic boundaries, and modal types, these touch upon decisions that will be made in the future following detailed feasibility analysis and study.

The following common priorities and key themes emerged through attendees' comments and conversations:

- **Expand transit service** throughout the Central Maryland Region
- **Maintain and upgrade** facilities and transit vehicles
- Improve local/regional **connectivity**
- Add **microtransit** and **express** services
- Increase service **span** to cover more hours
- Address **ADA accessibility** and **paratransit** service gaps and challenges
- Improve **communications** to customers and the public



POP-UP EVENTS & PRESENTATIONS

Many of the pop-ups and presentations in Phase II targeted business groups and advocacy organizations. Engagement activities and presentations provided information on the project to date, focusing in on the RTP goals and the Regional Transit Corridors, including the methodology by which these corridors were selected.

Some of the groups to which the Project Team presented included:

- Greater Baltimore Black Chamber of Commerce
- Baltimore Metropolitan Council’s (BMC) Housing Committee
- Baltimore Regional Transportation Board (BRTB)
- Downtown Partnership of Baltimore
- MARC Riders Advisory Council
- Baltimore County Public Schools Associated Student Congress
- Baltimore City Public Schools Student Council Executive Board
- Howard County Transportation Forum
- Greater Severna Park Council Executive Board
- Transit Choices
- BWI Partnership Transportation Think Tank (T3)

What We Heard at Pop-Up Events & Presentations

Input and comments from the presentations reiterated frequent comments heard earlier in the project. Namely, organizations, groups, and individuals focused on the following key themes:

- Enhance **regional connectivity**
- Increase service **frequency** and **reliability**, including off-peak service across the region to connect to jobs
- Invest in bus stop **amenities** (e.g., shelters and benches)
- Address concerns around personal **safety and security**
- Customer service as well as facility condition and cleanliness matter
- Resolve **access** challenges for senior and minority customers
- Expand **fare payment options**

KEY THEMES AND OUTCOMES FROM PHASE II PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Phase II public engagement activities focused on affirming the Regional Transit Corridors and gathering specific input on ways to improve transit in the region across modes and providers. While this phase included a second round of open houses, it also included a targeted campaign to gather input from business organizations, a key stakeholder group from which we had not gathered substantive input in the

earlier outreach. With two stated focus areas on “prioritizing connections to economic opportunities and services” and “advancing equitable access to jobs education, and services,” reaching business groups provided the Project Team with opportunities to review, refine, and revise the initiatives and strategies under development.

The Project Team concluded outreach efforts in Phase II with a better understanding of the types of improvements that current riders, residents in the region, business entities, advocacy groups, and students hoped to see in the region. With analysis substantively complete, the Project Team could synthesize those findings with the comments from the public to then prepare the draft Regional Transit Plan.

Objectives & Strategies

What We Heard

Comments and conversations with members of the public highlighted many opportunities to improve transit in the region today and into the future that were beyond the Regional Transit Corridors proposed during Phase I. A review of all inputs during this period of public engagement reiterated the earlier key themes, with particular focus on the following areas.

- Expand service, including service span and express options to better serve job centers
- Improve paratransit services
- Improve local and regional connectivity
- Address concerns around safety and security

- Consider the different needs of diverse populations
- Elevate environmental considerations to address sustainability challenges
- Affirm general agreement about and high interest in the Regional Transit Corridors

How We Responded

With a growing list of strategies and initiatives to improve transit in the region, the Project Team identified six objectives that captured the common concerns, themes, and priorities voiced during public engagement:

- Provide faster, more reliable service
- Grow ridership
- Increase access to jobs and opportunities
- Improve the customer experience
- Be equitable
- Prepare for the future

The Project team used these objectives to organize the many strategies presented within the RTP around areas the public highlighted as most important to long-term positive outcomes for the region.



In this third and final phase of the project, the Project Team released the draft Plan for review and comment. Having synthesized the broad analysis and participation in the earlier phases, this final phase provided an opportunity to confirm what we heard, clarify as needed, and revise with this additional input.

Due to the COVID-19 public health crisis impacting the region during the same period in which extensive on-the-ground outreach had been planned, digital engagement became the primary method with which to reach the public. The Project Team presented to organizations and groups over conference calls and web platforms, applying new strategies to meaningfully reach people without the ability to join them in-person.

During this phase, the Project Team focused on identifying and implementing ways to equitably engage hard-to-reach communities. Partnerships with advocacy and community groups were critical to spreading the word further than the project email list and social media might otherwise reach. By engaging with groups such as Centers for Independent Living (CILs) and National Federation of the Blind, the Project Team could leverage their stakeholders' contacts to extend the

reach of communication. Further, COVID-19 has forged new partnerships between MDOT MTA and regional hospitals; these new relationships provided an additional line of communication to reach essential employees to communicate about RTP.

Understanding that some people would not be able to engage using online tools, the Project Team also used more traditional avenues to reach people by mailing hardcopies of the draft Plan as requested, taking comments over phone calls and emails, and advertising information about the draft Plan and upcoming Commission meeting in newspaper ads.

Two types of engagement focused on gathering comments and input on the draft Plan occurred during this time period:

1. **Digital engagement** across the Central Maryland region, including a Live Chat function and interactive commenting platform on the RTP website
2. **Virtual presentations and targeted outreach** to solicit feedback on the draft Regional Transit Plan

WEB-BASED DRAFT PLAN REVIEW

Interactive Commenting Platform

In late April, the Project Team shared the draft Plan materials online for public review and comment. While the Project Team had initially planned to engage the public through a robust series of in-person outreach events, the COVID-19 pandemic demanded a substantial pivot to digital engagement. The RTP Team selected a web-based platform that allowed people to navigate the document, place "sticky notes" onto the document, and to see others' comments. On the back end, this platform allowed the RTP Team to sort, summarize, and export comments. The Project Team was also able to respond publicly back to questions when clarifying information was needed. The tool enabled commenters to reply to each other creating a public discourse that highlighted the different viewpoints and priorities that must be balanced.

Live Chat

The Project Team hosted three "live chat" sessions through the RTP website, which provided the public with an opportunity to communicate directly with members of the Project Team about specific questions or comments they might have. The web-based tool used a chat box for the parties to communicate with each other in a more conversational style than the interactive commenting platform might provide. The sessions

were held on different days and times to reach the broadest audience possible. They were advertised in advance, through social media, the website, and a series of "e-blasts" to the project email list.

What We Heard from the Web-Based Plan Review

The interactive commenting tool and live chat solicited over 700 comments. This tool allowed for participants to read others' comments and engage in discussion, which lent itself to a more thorough dialogue. Additionally, members of the public could submit comments via telephone, email, and letters, with approximately 300 comments received through these alternative means.

VIRTUAL PRESENTATIONS & TARGETED OUTREACH

The Project Team actively identified opportunities to engage with community organizations and citizens across the region despite not being able to meet in person. Virtual presentations and conference calls were used to provide opportunities for public participation. The Project Team reached out to community groups to ask for an opportunity to present at existing or standing meetings, and in some instances, scheduled presentations at the request of organizations.

A draft Plan Overview provided a quick introduction to the project to garner attention and interest in reviewing and commenting on the draft Plan, which organizations could quickly and easily share with their constituencies.

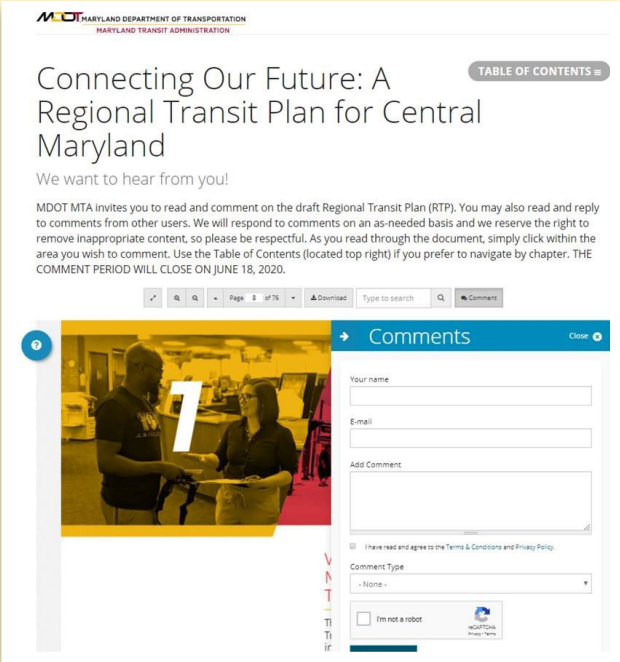
Throughout the spring following the release of the draft Plan in late April, the Project Team made presentations to various organizations and groups, including:

- Accessible Resources for Independence/The IMAGE Center
- Baltimore City Sustainability Commission
- Baltimore Regional Transportation Board (BRTB)
- Get Maryland Moving
- Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC)
- Howard County Multimodal Transportation Board
- Inclusive Transportation Planning Steering Committee
- Maryland Department of Disabilities
- MDOT MTA Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)
- MDOT MTA Citizens Advisory Committee for Accessible Transportation (CACAT)
- MDOT MTA MARC Riders Advisory Council
- National Federation of the Blind - Maryland Chapter
- The IMAGE Center

Other methods of targeted outreach were also employed to reach populations from whom engagement was lower. While many residents in the region were predominantly in their homes during this period due to the “safer in place” policy, many others were still commuting to their essential jobs. To reach these important riders, the MDOT MTA places “car cards” in transit vehicles alerting riders about the Draft Plan and telling them how to review and comment on it.

The Project Team monitored the zip codes of who was clicking on RTP ads, visiting the project website, and submitting comments to identify areas in which engagement was successful. The Project Team then purchased geo-targeted social media ads to reach the areas that were not participating at the same rates as others.

Finally, through the course of public engagement, the Project Team learned new ways to reach diverse populations. One request was to produce screen-reader accessible documents as well as Spanish-language translations. When the web-based commenting tool was found to have minor challenges with nonvisual participation, the Team quickly responded by providing alternative formats, including a Plain-Text Word version with descriptive text wherever images or charts were included, and a tagged, accessible PDF document.



KEY THEMES AND OUTCOMES FROM PHASE III PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Through the various avenues of public engagement, we heard strong support for many parts of the Draft Plan, including many initiatives, strategies, and actions. Several areas of the Plan that garnered the greatest enthusiasm were:

- **Creating better connectivity** between modes and across transit providers in the region
- **Advancing sustainability efforts**, such as transitioning to zero-emission transit vehicles
- Including an Implementation Plan with **measures and targets** to track progress
- Expanding the high-frequency transit network with proposed **Regional Transit Corridors**

There were other areas that the public noted warranted further development, refinement, or expansion. With suggestions ranging from word changes to clarify meaning, structural changes to improve readability, or expanding upon the strategies within an Objective, public input provided insightful feedback that prepared the Project Team to improve the draft Plan.

After sorting through these hundreds of comments and conversations, the Project Team identified several themes into which changes could be grouped:

- Plan structure
- Impacts of COVID-19
- Equity
- Strategies to grow ridership
- Connections beyond Central Maryland
- Funding information
- Targets
- Transit Network Improvements
- Regional Transit Corridors

Each of these change areas are detailed below, followed by the outcomes of this input, detailing the ways in which the Project Team responded to improve the Plan.

Plan Structure

What We Heard:

The Plan would be clearer and more reader-friendly if it included some additional context, clarifications, and explanation of terminology; as well as more emphasis on what the Plan can achieve.

How We Responded:

- Included an Executive Summary focused on why the Plan is important and what it can help to achieve
- Added a glossary of common terms used throughout the Plan
- Rephrased and modified language throughout where commenters noted confusion
- Focused on Plan outcomes

Impacts of COVID-19

What We Heard:

COVID-19 is dramatically impacting transit agencies across the country. The Plan should identify immediate and long-term responses to mitigate impacts and prepare for the future.

How We Responded:

- Identified immediate responses with new and modified strategies
- Include long-term strategies with new and modified strategies

Equity

What We Heard:

The Plan needs to focus on and address equity more holistically with additional context, emphasis, and focus on race and socio-economic issues. Strategies in the draft Plan were too narrowly focused on ADA and additional or modified strategies that focus on lower-income, minority, and/or vulnerable populations were needed. Finally, The Plan should include targets that specifically measure and monitor progress toward better serving low-income, minority, and/or underserved populations.

How We Responded:

- Added new and additional information about the importance of equitable transit for the region in the context of long-standing racial disparities in the distributions of resources and opportunities
- Added new and modified existing strategies to focus on lower-income, minority, and vulnerable populations

- Revised targets to focus on access to frequent transit, and added new targets related to serving low-income, minority, and under-served populations

Strategies to Grow Ridership

What We Heard:

Specific strategies that focus on the customer experience are needed to address concerns cited about cleanliness and sanitation, as well as safety and comfort. Further, the Plan needs to better explain the opportunity of Transit Oriented Development (TOD) and MDOT MTA's role in promoting it as a way to grow ridership over the next 25 years. Finally, the Implementation Plan identifies a Task Force that will focus on growing ridership on Light Rail and Metro Subway, but it is unclear what this group will do once convened.

How We Responded:

- Added new strategies focused on customer experience improvements that will add and retain transit riders
- Explained the opportunity of TOD and MDOT MTA's role in promoting it and added strategies directly related to TOD
- Defined the purpose of the Task Force and the stakeholder groups that would be engaged to collaborate and coordinate to advance strategies and initiatives targeting growing ridership on the rail modes.

Connections Beyond Central Maryland

What We Heard:

The Plan needs to better incorporate connections to Washington, D.C., and the Northeast Corridor, as well as private and college shuttles.

How We Responded:

- Incorporated a discussion about how connection to the Northeast Corridor offers opportunities to the region
- Modified Regional Transit Corridors to enhance Washington, D.C., connections
- Explained how Amtrak’s construction of a new Baltimore and Potomac (B&P) Tunnel on the MARC Penn Line facilitates improved MARC service
- Added private and college shuttles to the list of transit providers and discussed them in the Plan

Funding Information

What We Heard:

While the Plan is financially unconstrained, many people had questions about how projects get funded; information about sources and types of funding sets the stage for studies and analysis that will follow during implementation. The Plan should also acknowledge the need to achieve a State of Good Repair to support quality transit service.

How We Responded:

- Added information on how transit projects are funded
- Added information on alternative delivery methods and discretionary grants

- Added information about and strategy focused on addressing State of Good Repair

Targets

What We Heard:

The Plan should identify baselines for all proposed targets and include both short-term and long-term targets. There were also some specific suggestions on targets to add or modify.

How We Responded:

- Added baselines for all targets
- Included short-term (5-year) and long-term targets (25-year)
- Added and revised targets to a create more specific, comprehensive approach

Transit Network Improvements

What We Heard:

Overall, there was general agreement with the Transit Network Improvements, with some suggested modifications. Many people expressed uncertainty about what hubs are, why they are important to the transit system, and how the hubs identified in the Plan build on existing hubs throughout the region.

How We Responded:

- Added improvements to fixed-route service for peak, off-peak, and weekend service in Brooklyn Park and Annapolis
- Included information about the importance of hubs and their role in the transit system
- Explained the differences and connections between TOD and hubs

Regional Transit Corridors

What We Heard:

There was general agreement with the Regional Transit Corridors with some suggested modifications.

How We Responded:

- Modified Corridor 24: Originally BWI to Laurel; now extends from BWI to Greenbelt
- Modified Corridor 4: Originally Glen Burnie to Crofton; now extends from Glen Burnie to Bowie
- Modified Corridor 28: Now includes service to New Carrollton

The hundreds of comments contributed as well as productive dialogues over virtual meetings provided the Project Team with actionable ways to dramatically strengthen and improve the Plan.

5

Looking Ahead to Implementation

Over the course of developing the Regional Transit Plan, the Project Team spoke with hundreds of individuals throughout the region at transit stops, libraries, events, and presentations. Once public engagement transitioned to more virtual tools due to COVID-19, we were able to continue speaking with and hearing from people as they reviewed the draft Plan and contributed through online comments, emails, and conversation. The input gathered through these avenues dramatically impacted the final product: Members of the public directly shaped the Plan from its inception through finalization.

Further, these conversations created new connections with groups, organizations, and individuals to whom we can return as the Plan moves into the implementation phase. We've learned how to share information that is meaningful and engaging; we've heard how to create and share information in more accessible formats for a broader spectrum of people. These are lessons that we will carry forward as we begin advancing specific projects proposed within the Plan.

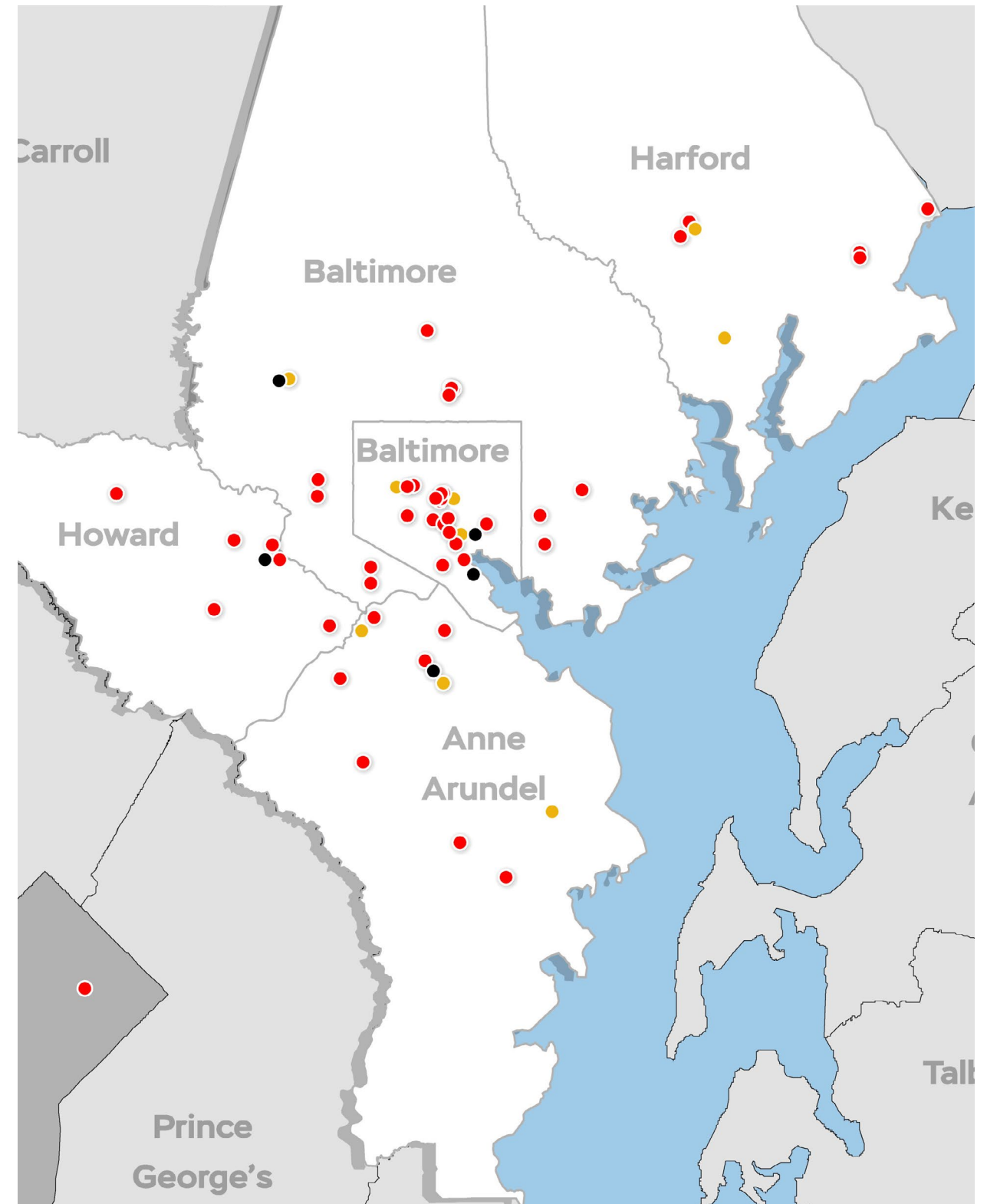
The Project Team learned several key lessons through the three phases of Plan development that will inform the Implementation Team's engagement efforts to advance specific projects:

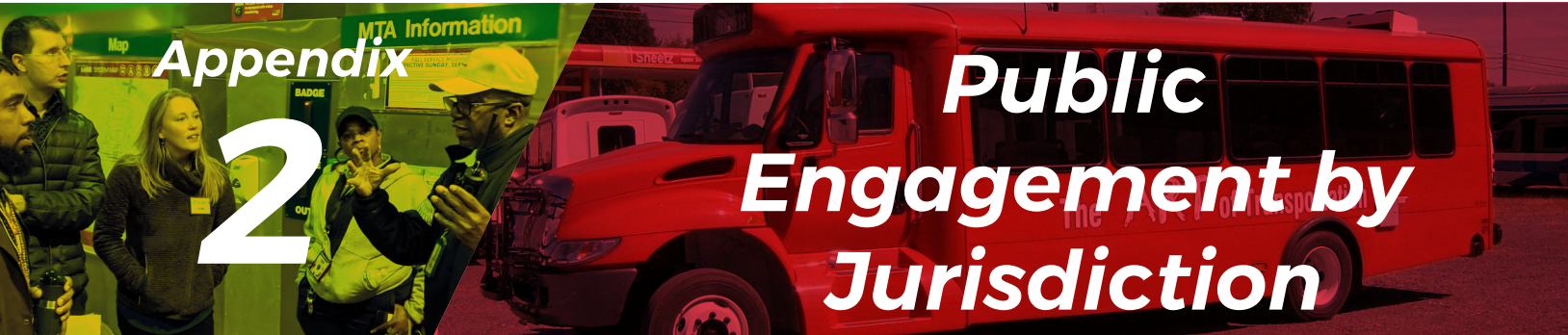
- **Embracing a nimble approach to public engagement allows for quick adjustments as circumstances demand.** Whether due to realizing a specific group is not being reached and needing to change formats and locations or the dramatic impacts of COVID-19 forcing all engagement to pivot away from in-person, building in capacity for changing circumstances and knowledge is key.
- **Not all audiences are engaged in the same way.** Understanding the needs of our region's residents allows us to more effectively reach and communicate with diverse populations. Approaching public engagement with flexibility allowed the Team to pinpoint successful strategies and address concerns immediately. Accessible documents serving different needs, whether plain text or tagged PDFs, allowed different audiences to interact with the materials in meaningful ways.



- **Opportunities to give and receive information create more meaningful exchanges.** The Project Team shared information with the public while providing an opportunity for the public to respond. Open house boards with opportunities to "vote," pop-up displays designed to gather sticky note comments, and the web-based commenting tool all created bi-directional information exchanges. It established an iterative process of development for the Plan, creating a final product more reflective of public input than traditional methods may have.



As the Plan advances into implementation under the guidance of the Implementation Team, public engagement will continue to serve a pivotal role. As discrete projects commence, targeted outreach to relevant stakeholder groups will continue the iterative process of providing information to the public while soliciting feedback. Further, overall progress toward the targets will be tracked on the project website with a virtual dashboard. This will provide annual reporting on progress in an accessible, transparent way.




MDOT MTA looks forward to continuing the collaborative work and cooperative communication developed and deployed throughout the RTP development, as we continue to incorporate lessons learned to provide ever more robust public involvement.





City/Co.	Date	Event	Location
 Anne Arundel Co.	Feburary 2019	Pop-Up	Cromwell Light Rail Station
	May 2019	Open House	Glen Burnie Regional Library
	June 2019	Commission Meeting	Henry L. Hein Building
	August 2019	Pop-Up	Fiesta Latina
	August 2019	Pop-Up	MVA Glen Burnie
	September 2019	Pop-Up	Anne Arundel Co. Fair
	September 2019	Pop-Up	Annapolis Mall
	September 2019	Pop-Up	Odenton Regional Library
	October 2019	Pop-Up	Arundel Mills Mall
	October 2019	Open House	Severna Park Recreation Center
	Decmber 2019	Presentation	Greater Severna Park Council
	Feburary 2020	Presentation	BWI Business Partnership Transportation Think Tank
 Baltimore City	March 2019	Commission Meeting	Baltimore Metropolitan Council
	March 2019	Pop-Up	Baltimore Penn Station
	March 2019	Pop-Up	Mondawmin Metro Station
	April 2019	Pop-Up	Sustainability Commission Meeting
	April 2019	Pop-Up	Northwood Library
	April 2019	Commission Meeting	Baltimore Metropolitan Council
	May 2019	Open House	Impact Hub
	June 2019	Pop-Up	Harbor Market McKeldin Square
	June 2019	Pop-Up	Baltimore Veterans Administration (VA) Hospital
	July 2019	Pop-Up	West Baltimore MARC Station
	July 2019	Pop-Up	WTS Event at AVAM
	August 2019	Pop-Up	Druid Hill Farmers Market
	August 2019	Pop-Up	SE Anchor Library
	August 2019	Pop-Up	MICA Outreach Event
	August 2019	Pop-Up	Bush Bus Division
	August 2019	Pop-Up	Eastern Bus Division
	August 2019	Pop-Up	Kirk Bus Division
	August 2019	Pop-Up	Northwest Bus Division
	August 2019	Pop-Up	North Avenue Light Rail Division
	September 2019	Pop-Up	Black Chamber of Commerce

City/Co.	Date	Event	Location
 Baltimore City	September 2019	Pop-Up	BCPS Student Government Association
	October 2019	Open House	Mondawmin Mall
	October 2019	Presentation	MDOT MTA Community Advisory Council (CAC)
	October 2019	Presentation	Citizens Advisory Committee for Accessible Transportation (CACAT)
	October 2019	Pop-Up	Greater Washington Partnership Vision for Mobility Summit at AVAM
	October 2019	Open House	Mondawmin Mall
	November 2019	Presentation	Greater Baltimore Black Chamber of Commerce
	November 2019	Presentation	BMC Housing Committee
	December 2019	Commission Meeting	Baltimore City Department of Planning
	February 2020	Presentation	Transit Choices
 Baltimore Co.	March 2019	Pop-Up	Owings Mills Metro Station
	April 2019	Pop-Up	North Point Library
	May 2019	Open House	Owings Mills Metro Station
	June 2019	Pop-Up	Essex Library
	July 2019	Pop-Up	Towson Farmers Market
	July 2019	Pop-Up	Halethorpe MARC Station
	August 2019	Pop-Up	Towson Farmers Market
	August 2019	Pop-Up	Maryland State Fair
	August 2019	Pop-Up	Towson University
	September 2019	Pop-Up	Security Square Mall
	September 2019	Pop-Up	Towson Chamber of Commerce
	October 2019	Open House	Towson Branch of the Baltimore County Public Library
	October 2019	Commission Meeting	Baltimore County Community College
	November 2019	Presentation	Baltimore County Public Schools Associated Student Congress

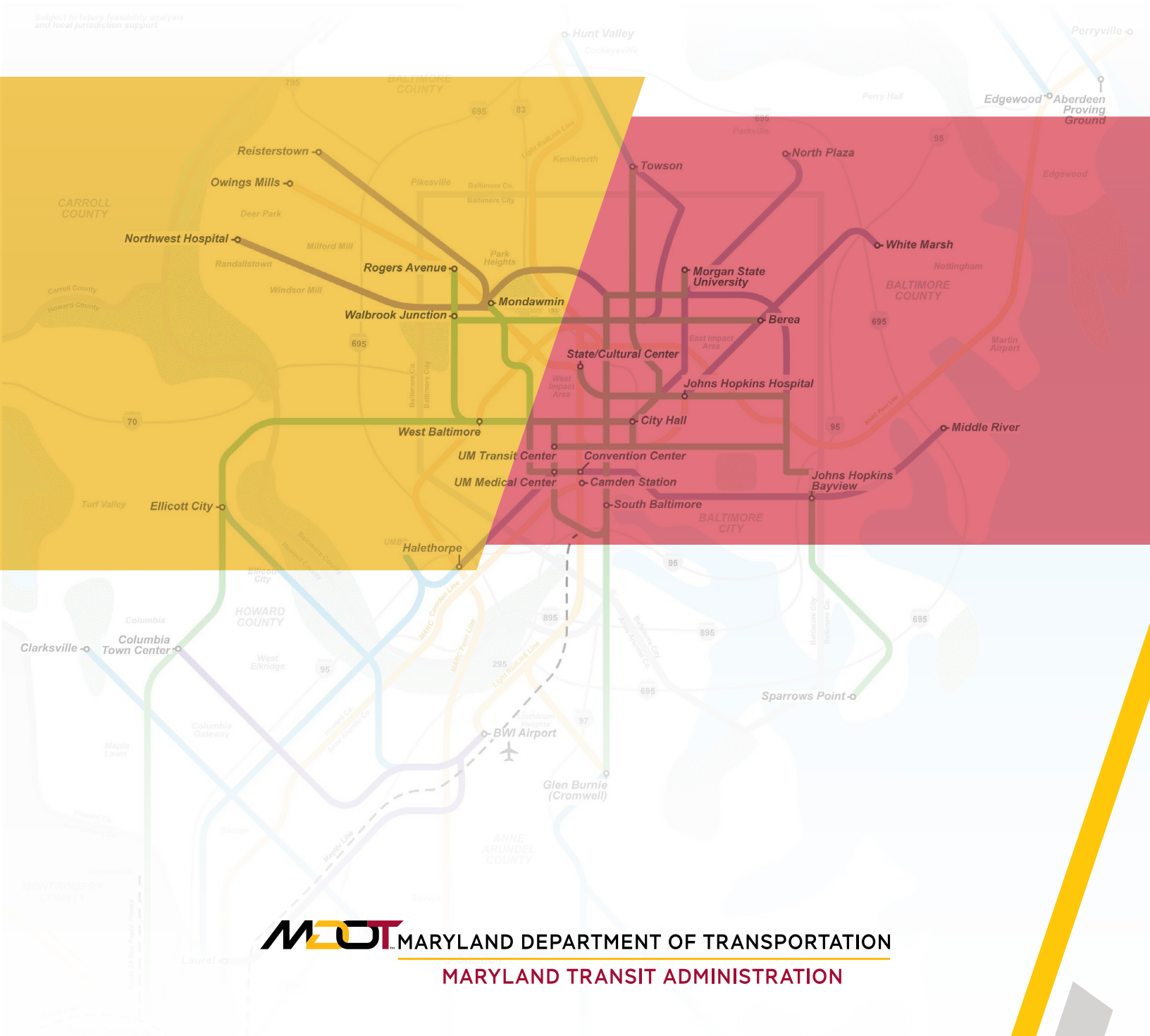
City/Co.	Date	Event	Location
 Harford Co.	April 2019	Pop-Up	Harford Co. Mall
	May 2019	Open House	Bel Air Library
	June 2019	Pop-Up	Aberdeen MARC Station
	June 2019	Pop-Up	Aberdeen Library
	August 2019	Pop-Up	Havre de Grace First Fridays
	August 2019	Pop-Up	Howard Co. Fair
	October 2019	Open House	Edgewood Recreation and Community Center
 Howard Co.	April 2019	Pop-Up	Miller Branch Library
	May 2019	Open House	Columbia Mall
	July 2019	Pop-Up	Ellicott City Farmers Market
	July 2019	Pop-Up	Elkridge Branch Library
	9/20/19	Commission Meeting	Miller Branch Library
	October 2019	Open House	Howard County Public Library System - Elkridge Branch
Washington, DC	December 2019	Presentation	Howard County Transportation Forum
	November 2019	Presentation	MARC Riders Advisory Council
 Virtual	May 2020	MARC Riders Advisory Council	
	May 2020	Get Maryland Moving	
	May 2020	Baltimore Regional Transportation Board (BRTB)	
	May 2020	Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC)	
	May 2020	MDOT MTA Community Advisory Council (CAC)	
	May 2020	Citizens Advisory Committee for Accessible Transportation (CACAT)	
	May 2020	Howard County Multimodal Transportation Board	
	June 2020	Inclusive Transportation Steering Committee	
	June 2020	Accessible Resources for Independence	
	June 2020	Baltimore City Sustainability Commission	
	June 2020	National Federation of the Blind	
	June 2020	RTP Commission	



Connecting Our Future

A Regional Transit Plan for Central Maryland

Subject to future feasibility analysis
and local jurisdiction support



MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

MARYLAND TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION