



HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF TRANSPORTATION

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Memorandum

To: Brandee Ganz, Chief Administrative Officer, Department of County Administration

From: Bruce Gartner, Administrator, Office of Transportation

Date: October 25, 2023

Subject: Testimony in support of resolution endorsing the 2023 RTA/Howard County Transit Development Plan

The RTA/Howard County Transit Development Plan (TDP) is a plan to implement short term transit objectives. The planning horizon is five-years, but this TDP also includes longer-term transit concepts. The TDP has a regional component in that it recommends improved connectivity to other jurisdictions including portions of Anne Arundel, Howard, and Prince George's Counties. The TDP is an important document that is used in many transit-related planning documents, such as the County's Annual Transportation Plan, Asset Management Plan, Fleet Management Plan, and grant applications. Implementing this TDP will require continued cooperation and support from local stakeholders, neighboring jurisdictions and the State of Maryland.

A resolution of endorsement is needed because Howard County is a Locally Operated Transit System (LOTS) subject to Federal and State rules and regulations, and these require that the County has a TDP that is endorsed by local elected officials.

Work on the TDP began in late 2022. The process was inclusive, with informational presentations, public meetings, outreach events and pop-up events, widely distributed community and rider surveys, stakeholder meetings and interviews, and a dedicated website.

The TDP provides a framework for improvements in the following areas:

1. Providing service where there is currently limited or no fixed-route connectivity.

- Elkridge, MD
- US 1 Corridor
- Maple Lawn/Johns Hopkins APL and the US 29 Corridor
- Ft. Meade/NSA

2. Increasing regional connections to the Baltimore and DC regions.
 - Baltimore County & BWI Airport
 - Washington DC Train & Metro Stations
3. Increasing frequency and reliability.
 - Adding additional buses on the most active routes
 - Replacing existing aging fleet to improve reliability
4. Transitioning the fleet to zero-emission fleet.
 - Developing a plan to transition from diesel to a zero-emission fleet
 - Applying for grants to purchase zero-emission vehicles

The complete TDP is a long and detailed document totaling over 400 pages. Much of this length is due to map pages describing recommended changes to routes. To assist readers to review understand the document, the Office of Transportation (OoT) has prepared a 22-page slide-style Executive Summary. This document is attached to this testimony as Attachment 1.

All documents are posted on the OOT webpage:
<https://www.howardcountymd.gov/Departments/County-Administration/Transportation/Transportation-Projects>

The TDP does not obligate or commit Howard County to implement each of the TDP's specific recommendations. Under the rules and regulations for LOTS, public input is required before the TDP's recommendations for route or fare changes are implemented. Such input may result in changes to the TDP's specific recommendations.

The OoT presented the TDP to the following County boards and commissions:

- The Multimodal Transportation Board (multiple presentations)
- The Central Maryland Transit Commission (3 presentations)
- The Transit Ridership Advisory Committee

As of November 1, 2023, the Multimodal Transportation Board adopted a resolution endorsing the TDP, with additional recommendations (see Attachment 3).

Attachment 2

Executive Summary



RTA of Central Maryland/
Howard County

2023
Transit Development Plan

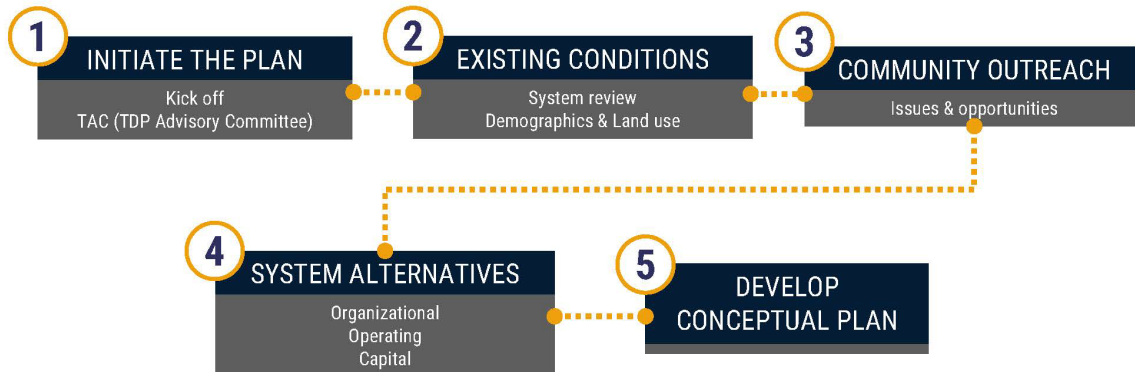
Executive Summary Presentation
October 2023

ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY MARYLAND
HOWARD COUNTY MARYLAND
LAUREL MARYLAND
Prince Georges County
RTA
MDOT MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
KFH GROUP

What is a Transit Development Plan (TDP)?

- Short-term (five year) plan to guide transit growth.
- The TDP planning process identifies:
 - ▶ Referenced studies on pertinent issues not covered in this plan (downtown transit center, bus stop improvements, etc...)
 - ▶ Transit goals and objectives
 - ▶ Unmet transit needs
 - ▶ Alternatives for addressing unmet needs or to improve performance
 - ▶ Phased plan for improvements
 - ▶ Capital and operating budget projections

The Planning Process



3

TDP Goals

1. Evaluate Alternatives from Previous TDP
2. Set Realistic Performance Goals and Service Improvements
3. Ensure Regional Coordination
4. Increase Ridership
5. Explore Transition towards Electric Buses
6. Study and Implement Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)
7. Enhance Public Transit Circulation/Access in Columbia
8. Enhance Transit Options along Route 1 Corridor
9. Study a Direct Connection between Elkridge and Columbia

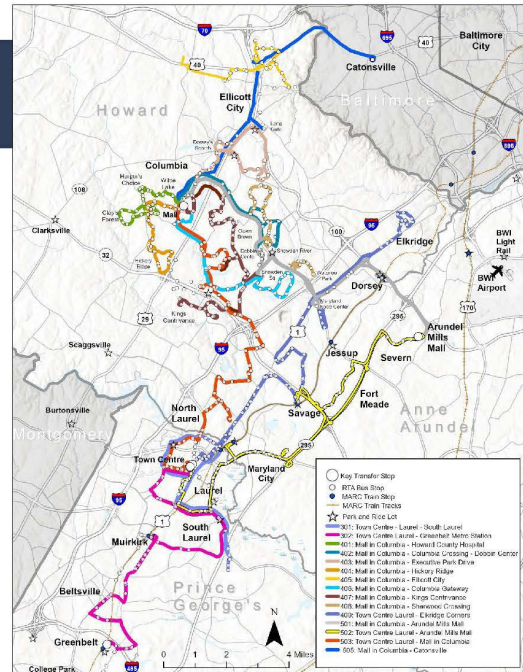
4

Existing Services



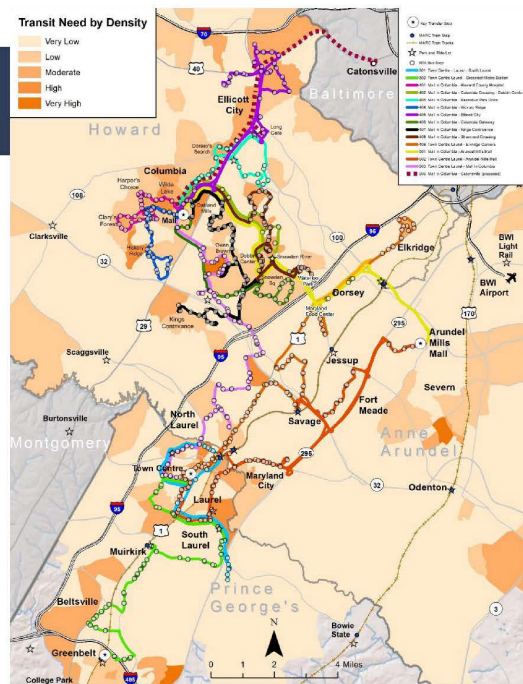
Regional Transportation Agency

- Organizational Structure
- Fleet
- Facilities
- Technology
- Marketing
- Funding and Fares
- Performance Evaluation
- Other Area Providers



Transportation Needs

- Population and Employment Profile
- Transit Dependent Population Groups
- Title VI Demographics
- Land Use Profile
- Commuter Data (Census Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics LEHD)



Community Outreach Process

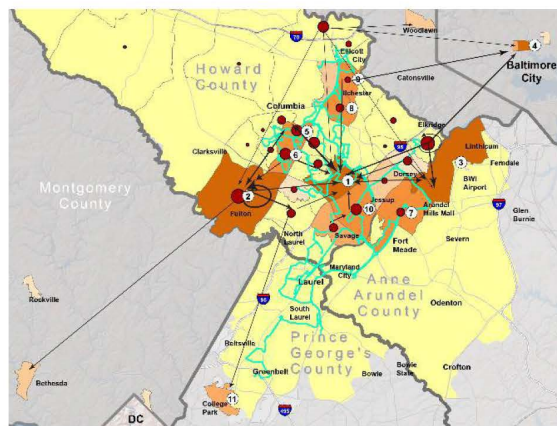
- Informational presentations
- Public meetings
- Stakeholder Outreach (13 meetings)
- Pop-up events (Columbia Mall & Arundel Mills)
- Surveys
 - ▷ Rider Survey (173 responses)
 - ▷ Mobility Rider Survey (36 responses)
 - ▷ Community Survey (160 responses)



7

Issues & Opportunities

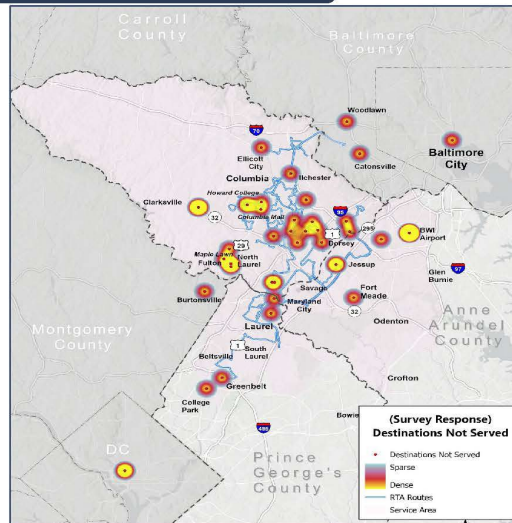
- Most areas with high density and need are currently served.
- Limited fixed-route connectivity to Elkrigde and Maple Lawn/APL.
- Improved service and outreach to students and older adults.
- More connections to Baltimore and DC regions are requested.
- Improved frequency and reliability



8

Locations Where Service is Desired

- BWI Airport
- Washington, D.C./Metro Stations
- Ft. Meade/NSA
- Maple Lawn/Johns Hopkins APL
- Baltimore/Light Rail Stations
- Clarksville
- Laurel
- Towson University
- UMBC



9

TDP Alternatives/Major Issues

- Propose concepts for administrative, capital and operational improvements over the next 5 years
- Address local initiatives, community desires, and long-range visions
- Summarize capital vehicle additions and replacements
- Summarize challenges and next steps for expanding number of zero-emission vehicles in RTA fleet
- Represent options, rather than commitments to be considered for the Transit Plan

10

Alternatives – Proposed Services

- Columbia to Homewood Campus/Clarksville
- Columbia to Elkridge
- Columbia to BWI/Train Station/LightRail
- Columbia/Laurel to Ft. Meade
- Columbia to Maple Lawn/Johns Hopkins APL
- Laurel to Bowie
- Peak hour express services
- Increase frequency on key routes

Five-Year Transit Plan

FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realignment of Route 405 • New Route 505 (Catonsville) • Extend Route 409 to Lansdowne (Spring '24) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Route – Columbia to HoCo BOE/Homewood /ARL (Connection to Clarksville (Phase 1) • Microtransit Pilot along US 1 Corridor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend Route 501 to BWI area • New Route - Columbia-Elkridge • FLASH BRT Extension along US 29 to Downtown Columbia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Route - Columbia/Laurel to Ft. Meade • Extend Route between Columbia-HoCo/BOE /Homewood/ARL to Clarksville (Phase 2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Route – Laurel to Bowie • New Route - Columbia to Maple Lawn/Johns Hopkins APL

* Bold items already implemented in July 2023

Conceptual Financial Plan for Operating

Proposed Operating Requests	Fiscal Year				
	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
Proposed Future Projects					
Baseline Operating Cost with Inflation	\$21,646,482	\$22,295,876	\$22,964,752	\$23,653,695	\$24,363,306
Extension Route 409 to Lansdowne	\$83,522	\$344,108	\$354,432	\$365,065	\$376,017
New Route Columbia to Homewood Campus		\$155,177	\$159,832	\$164,627	\$169,566
Extension Route 501 to BWI Airport			\$334,847	\$344,892	\$355,239
New Route Columbia to Elkridge			\$1,103,579	\$1,136,686	\$1,170,787
Integrate Flash BRT Blue Route Extension			\$650,000	\$669,500	\$689,585
New Route Columbia/Laurel to Ft. Meade				\$1,233,501	\$1,270,506
Extension Columbia-Homewood Campus to Clarksville				\$155,177	\$159,832
Extension Route 301 to Bowie					\$311,114
New Route Columbia to Maple Lawn					\$512,995
New Operating Expenses	\$83,522	\$499,285	\$2,602,690	\$4,069,448	\$5,015,641
Total Proposed Operating Expenses	\$21,730,004	\$22,795,161	\$25,567,442	\$27,723,143	\$29,378,947
Anticipated Funding Sources for Operating					
ARPA	\$1,469,000				
State/Federal					
Large Urban	\$1,445,255	\$1,498,544	\$1,635,559	\$1,773,501	\$1,879,449
Section 5307	\$406,478	\$421,465	\$460,001	\$498,797	\$528,595
ADA	\$474,224	\$491,710	\$536,668	\$581,930	\$616,694
SSTAP	\$162,520	\$162,520	\$162,520	\$162,520	\$162,520
Total State Funding	\$2,506,614	\$2,599,037	\$2,836,673	\$3,075,916	\$3,259,670
Local					
Fares, Advertising Revenue, Local Match	\$16,734,913	\$18,121,885	\$19,936,021	\$21,630,479	\$22,932,019
Total Local Funding	\$16,734,913	\$17,621,885	\$19,936,021	\$21,630,479	\$22,932,019
Total Projected/Proposed Operating Revenues	\$21,730,004	\$22,795,161	\$25,567,442	\$27,723,143	\$29,378,947

13

Conceptual Financial Plan for Capital*

Projected Vehicle Requests	Fiscal Year				
	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
Replacement Vehicles					
30' Heavy Duty Bus	4	4	4	4	4
Small Cutaway	1				
Accessible Van		5			
Total	5	9	4	4	4
Expansion Vehicles					
30' Heavy Duty Bus	0	3	2	2	3
Total	0	3	2	2	3
Projected Vehicle Costs					
Replacement	\$2,100,000	\$2,250,000	\$2,000,000	\$2,000,000	\$2,000,000
Expansion	\$0	\$1,500,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,500,000
Total	\$2,100,000	\$3,750,000	\$3,000,000	\$3,000,000	\$3,500,000
Anticipated Funding Sources					
Federal	\$1,200,000	\$3,000,000	\$2,400,000	\$2,400,000	\$2,800,000
State	\$150,000	\$375,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$350,000
Local	\$750,000	\$375,000	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$350,000
Total Capital Project Funding	\$2,100,000	\$3,750,000	\$3,000,000	\$3,000,000	\$3,500,000

*does not include FLASH extension or US1 Micro-transit pilot program

14

Conceptual Service Plan

The following slides include service maps and route descriptions for **near-term** expansion options (FY 24 – FY 26):

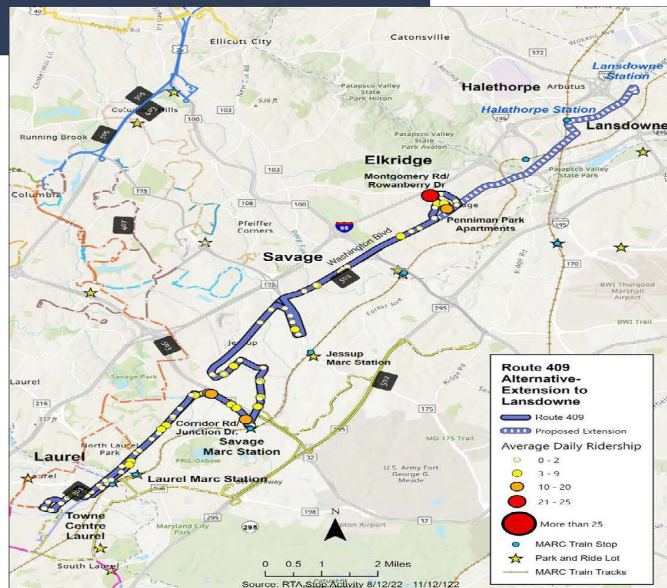
- Extend Route 409 to Lansdowne via Elkridge
- Service between Columbia & Homewood/ARL (Phase 1)
- Extend Route 501 to BWI MARC/Amtrak Station
- More direct service between Columbia & Elkridge
- Extend Peak Express Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)

Service map and route descriptions for implementations beyond FY 26 include service between Columbia/Laurel & Ft. Meade, service between Columbia & Clarksville via Homewood/ARL (Phase 2), service between Laurel & Bowie, and service between Columbia & Maple Lawn/APL.

15

Extend Route 409 to Lansdowne via Elkridge

- Provides a more direct connection to MTA MARC service at Halethorpe and MTA Local Link service for easier access to the greater Baltimore area.
- Improves connections to the new Guilford Park High School along US 1.
- Requires additional resources including an additional vehicle and approximately 4,000 annual service hours.
- Demand should be closely monitored following the extension. This alternative proposes 60-minute frequencies.
- This improvement is expected to cost approximately \$344,108 annually.



16

New Route between Columbia & HoCo BOE/Homewood/ARL & Clarksville (Phase 1)

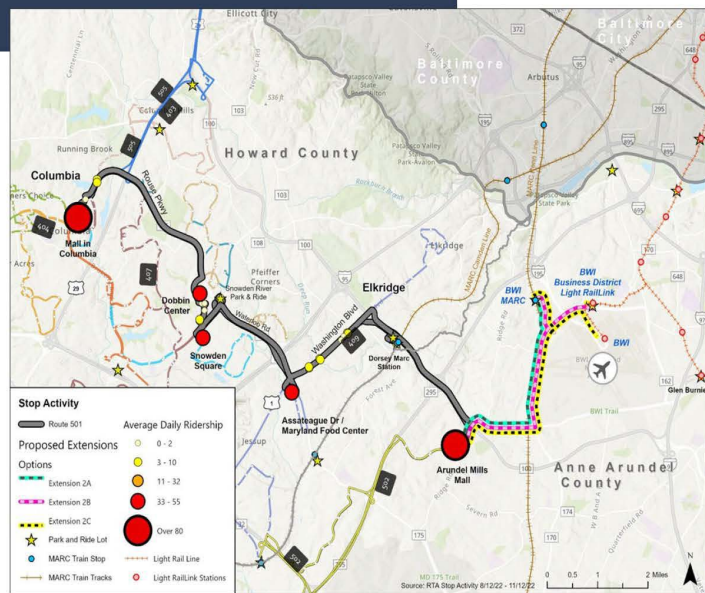
- First of two-phased implementation of weekday service between Columbia & Clarksville.
- Phase 1 includes stops at Harper's Choice Village Center, Howard County Board of Education, Homewood Campus.
- Phase 2 extends route to River Hill High School and River Hill Village Center.
- 30-minute frequencies during peak periods, hourly frequencies all other times.
- Proposed operating hours are 6am – 11pm.
- Each phase is expected to cost approximately \$155,177 annually.



17

Extend Route 501 to BWI MARC/Amtrak Station

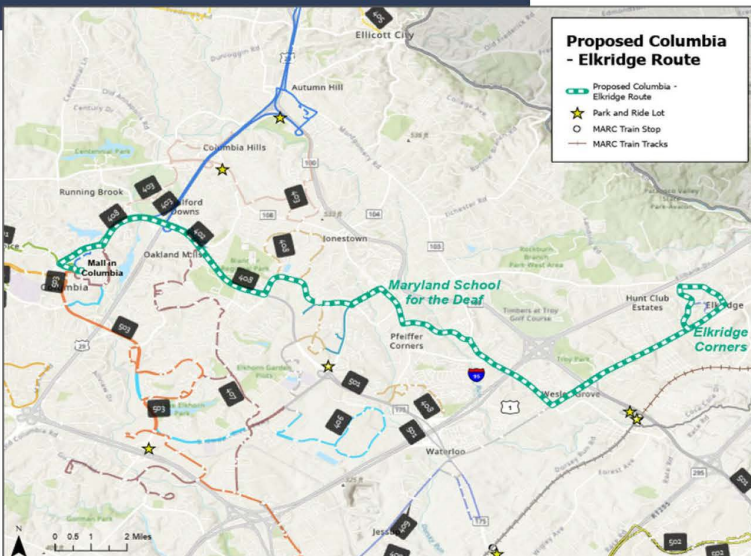
- Extends Route 501 beyond Arundel Mills Mall to the BWI Train Station.
- Offers an improved connection to BWI (via BWI Courtesy Shuttles) without directly serving the congested passenger terminal.
- BWI's Amtrak/MARC Courtesy Shuttle operates 24/7 on an approximate 10- to 15-minute frequency, providing more opportunities for connections.
- This extension is expected to cost \$334,847 annually.



18

New Service Between Columbia & Elkridge

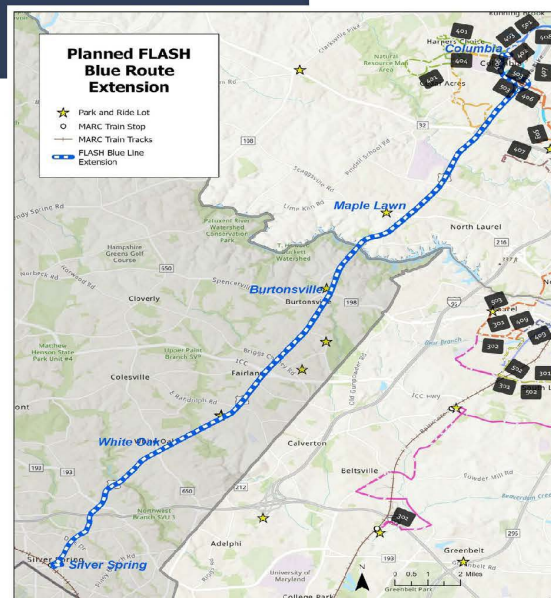
- Provides more direct route between Elkridge and Columbia, reducing time in transit, eliminating the need for a transfer.
- New service would feed into the 409 to make connections to destinations in the Baltimore area.
- This new service is expected to cost approximately \$1,103,579.



19

Extend Peak Express Bus Rapid Transit (Flash BRT)

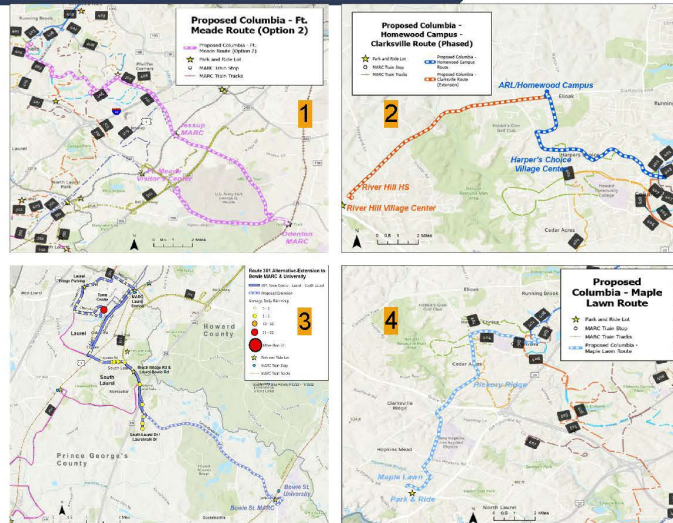
- Extension of existing FLASH Blue Route from Montgomery County on US-29 to Mall in Columbia.
- Additional stops include Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory (APL) and Maple Lawn.
- 30-minute frequencies during peak periods, through-running to Silver Spring.
- Terminates in Silver Spring with connections available to WMATA Metrorail Red Line and MARC Brunswick Line at Silver Spring.
- This extension is expected to cost \$650,000 annually.



20

Additional FY 27-28 Expansion Alternatives

- 1) New Route between Columbia/Laurel & Ft. Meade
- 2) New Route between Columbia & Clarksville (Phase 2)
- 3) New Route between Laurel & Bowie
- 4) New Route between Columbia and Maple Lawn/APL



21

Contact Information

For additional information, please contact:

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- Carrie Anderson-Watters, OOT – cawatters@howardcountymd.gov

22

Attachment 3

Multimodal Transportation Board Resolution

The Multimodal Transportation Board (MTB) supports the Final Draft Transit Development Plan for the Regional Transportation Agency of Central Maryland (RTA) that is being offered for consideration and endorsement by the Howard County Council in November 2023. The 2023 TDP provides recommendations for the expansion of existing and new public transportation services in the central Maryland region. The TDP specifically focuses on addressing community desires and local initiatives including:

- Improving overall service through progressive route and schedule designs that make transit more attractive and convenient.
- Meeting the intra-county and out-of-county travel needs for work, school, medical services, and personal business.
- Providing transit infrastructure improvements to support continued growth in transit services.
- Generating local support and broadening financial support for transit.

The MTB further endorses the TDP's aims to improve services at a steady rate over the next five years given the challenges of addressing transit operating budget increases above normal inflation. While the MTB is supportive of the new services and improvements identified in the plan to address deficiencies identified during the review of needs, it hopes and expects that the Howard County Administration, County Council and state and federal elected officials to work aggressively to not only expand service but also identify funding to increase the frequency of service to help improve mobility for RTA customers.