

Office of the County Auditor
Auditor's Analysis

Council Bill No. 4-2025

Introduced: January 7, 2025

Auditor: Diane Zagorski-Kelly

Fiscal Impact:

The fiscal impact of this legislation will include \$1,450,000 for bus acquisition, \$550,000 for planning and design of six stations, \$2,000,000 for station construction, and \$780,000 of operational costs in the first year of operation.

According to the Office of Transportation (OOT), the cost of installing cameras and data lines that will be used by the Police Department are included in the project budget; however, the final operational costs will depend on the technical requirements which are still to be determined. Personnel costs for this project will be absorbed within the existing budgets for OOT and the Department of Public Works.

Purpose:

Council Bill 4-2025 is seeking Council approval for a multiyear memorandum of understanding (MOU) between Howard County and Montgomery County to extend Montgomery County's existing Flash Bus Rapid Transit Service (BRT) along the US 29 Corridor. If approved, this MOU will allow the counties to collaboratively plan, design, and operate the service to Maple Lawn, Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory, and Downtown Columbia.

Other Comments:

According to the OOT, under the Federal Congressionally Directed Spending grant, Howard County is responsible for providing the \$1,450,000 match for the acquisition of four buses. This grant has been approved, and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) requires confirmation of the signed MOU to proceed.

Attachment A provides an overview of expenditures from FY2024 through operational year five.

CB4-2025 Attachment A

Overview of Expenditures provided by the Office of Transportation

	FY2024	FY2025	FY2026	Operation Year 1 ⁴	Operation Year 2	Operation Year 3	Operation Year 4	Operation Year 5	Total
Operation Planning & Preliminary Design	\$ 350,000	\$ 200,000							\$ 550,000
Station Construction			2,000,000						2,000,000
Bus Acquisition		1,450,000 ³							1,450,000
Operations ¹				755,000	755,000	785,200	816,608	849,272	3,961,080
Bus Station Operations ²				25,000	25,000	26,000	27,040	28,122	\$ 131,162
Total	\$ 350,000	\$ 1,650,000	\$ 2,000,000	\$ 780,000	\$ 780,000	\$ 811,200	\$ 843,648	\$ 877,394	\$ 8,092,242

¹ This includes drivers, maintenance, and other operating costs to manage day-to-day service

² This includes cleaning, snow removal, power, data services, trash, and repairs

³ This includes an \$850,000 earmark from FY2022 and \$600,000 from transportation assessment fees

⁴ Anticipated start date of service is agreed to be no sooner than second quarter 2026 and no later than 12/31/2027