



STEPHANIE RAWLINGS-BLAKE
MAYOR

100 Holliday Street, Room 250
Baltimore, Maryland 21202



September 28, 2015

The Honorable Pete K. Rahn
Secretary, Maryland Department of Transportation
7201 Corporate Center Drive
Hanover, Maryland 21076

Dear Secretary Rahn:

The purpose of this letter is to outline Baltimore City's transportation priorities as the FY 2016-2021 Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP) is being prepared by the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT). We believe that these projects will advance local and regional mobility, economic growth and environmental quality.

Our transit priorities are as follows:

Reliable Mass Transit Solution for East-West Commuters in Woodlawn/Bayview Corridor

Creating and providing effective mass transit has been a State responsibility for nearly 50 years. In 1971, late Governor Mandel and the Maryland General Assembly determined that regional transit was a critical State function worthy of its own administration to be supported by a dedicated funding source. Since the State accepted responsibility for regional mass transit nearly 5 decades ago, the City and the State have largely held a shared vision of the mass transit needs of the region. This shared vision has consistently highlighted the pressing need for reliable transit for east to west commuters in the region, and triggered an investment of 12 years and \$288 million in taxpayer dollars into advancing the Red Line as a solution to the transportation problems that face east-west commuters. To demonstrate our commitment to this shared vision, Baltimore City identified \$230 million in cash and in-kind contributions for the project.

The recent State action to cancel the Red Line has created growing concerns that a shared vision and commitment to effective regional mass transit no longer exists. Compounding the effect of the decision to cancel, no alternative plan has been offered by the Hogan Administration, allowing a gaping east-west void in the regional transit system to persist.

Talk of routine upgrades to the Maryland Transit Administration's (MTA) core bus service, which per the Department of Legislative Services has failed to meet its modest on-time performance goals since 2011, is in no way a substitute for a reliable, efficient, connective east/west transit option that is sorely needed for the economic well-being of the City and region as a whole.

The decision to cancel the Red Line de-committed \$736 million in State funding previously dedicated to provide reliable mass transit to the region. We believe that it is vital that the State demonstrate its commitment to its standing responsibility of nearly 50 years to provide effective mass transit to the region, and more specifically to address the transportation problem facing east-west commuters. In addition to studying lower cost options for implementing the Red Line, the State should consider investing State funds de-committed from the Red Line in the projects listed below:

- **Fixed Guideway Connection from Southeast Baltimore to Major Transit Hub:** Southeast Baltimore is rapidly developing, with 12.5 million square feet of development and 35 individual projects currently in planning or permitting stages. Without the presence of a reliable mass transit option, an already congested corridor will be further strained by the potential for 20,000 new peak hour vehicle trips per day resulting from new development. A glaring need for efficient mass transit to serve the congested southeast corridor exists and must be considered, addressing densely populated communities like Harbor East, Fells Point and Canton, and potentially connecting to a new Bayview MARC station. Connection points to the west that should be studied are the Shot Tower Metro station and the Camden MARC/Light Rail station. The City urges MDOT to fund evaluations and solutions in coordination with the City and its stakeholders to address this growing and historic problem in the FY 2016-2021 CTP.
- **Green Line Extension to Morgan State University:** With original concepts dating back to the mid 1960's and re-confirmed in the 2002 Baltimore Regional Rail System Plan, the Green Line was to have connected to the Martin State Airport MARC station, stopping at Morgan State University, the growing White Marsh area and an I-95 stop along the way. Understanding the significant expense that would accompany a 17 mile expansion of the Metro system, phased expansion to Morgan State was contemplated. Connecting the existing Metro system to another young, dense population center like Morgan State University will expand access to reliable, efficient transit to a greater number of people, while enhancing connectivity through a connection to a potential Madison Square MARC station. The City urges MDOT to study and fund advancement of phased Green Line expansion in the FY 2016-2021 CTP.

- **Madison Square and Upton MARC Stations:** In both the 2002 Baltimore Region Rail System Plan and the 2007 MARC Growth and Investment Plan (MGIP), the creation of a MARC station at Madison Square is identified as a system enhancement. In each plan, it is contemplated that Madison Square will be connected to the existing MTA Metro system through the proposed Green Line expansion. A Madison Square MARC station represents a significant opportunity to connect commuter transit through MARC to the local Metro system in East Baltimore by constructing a station between Martin State Airport and Penn Station on the MARC Penn Line. Similarly, a MARC stop at the existing Upton Metro station, identified in the 2007 MGIP, would provide much needed connectivity in West Baltimore between the local Metro system and the commuter MARC train. The City urges MDOT to fund advancement of creating these MARC stations in the FY 2016-2021 CTP.
- **Fixed Guideway Connection from Woodlawn to Lexington Market:** The Woodlawn area is home to major employment centers like the Social Security Administration and the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services, creating a major opportunity to increase transit accessibility to a high volume of commuters in search of alternative transportation options. A connection from this major employment center to the Lexington Market transit hub, with a stop connecting to the West Baltimore MARC Station, could dramatically impact commuter travel patterns in West Baltimore and throughout the region. The City urges MDOT to study and fund advancement of creating a fixed guideway connection from Woodlawn to Lexington Market, connecting to West Baltimore MARC, in the FY 2016-2021 CTP.

West Baltimore MARC Station

In recent years, both the City and State have made significant investments to improve infrastructure at the West Baltimore MARC Station, including demolition of the last section of the “highway to nowhere” for expanded parking, street scape improvements on Pulaski Street and Edmonson Avenue, and reconfiguration of the Fulton Avenue bridge as part of the West Baltimore Bicycle-Pedestrian loop. The City has also gone to great efforts to evaluate transit-oriented development (TOD) at the site, being one of seven cities selected for USDOT’s Ladders Pilot, gaining technical assistance to foster sustainable economic development around West Baltimore MARC, completing the West Baltimore MARC Station Area Redevelopment Strategy in March, and partnering with the Baltimore Metropolitan Council’s Opportunity Collaborative for TOD evaluation purposes. Improvements to make the West Baltimore MARC Station ADA compliant are sorely needed, including elevator access to platforms. The City urges MDOT to include planning, design and construction funds to make the West Baltimore MARC Station fully ADA compliant in the FY 2016-2021 CTP.

Bayview MARC Station

Baltimore City strongly supports this project as a major economic growth opportunity. The National Institute of Health has long-expressed its desire to see this station built so it can strengthen the relationship between its facilities at the Bayview Medical Center and suburban Washington, DC. Additionally, enhanced local transit connectivity to a new Bayview MARC station could have a highly beneficial impact on congestion from commuters travelling from areas in eastern Baltimore County and Harford County into the central business district in Baltimore City. The City urges MDOT to include funds for planning, design, right-of-way acquisition, and construction in the FY 2016-2021 CTP.

MARC Penn and Camden Line Service Expansion

The MARC Penn Line is a vital transportation service to regional residents commuting to and from Washington, DC for work or leisure. However, overcrowded trains, particularly during the evening commute, have clearly demonstrated a need for more evening service on the Penn Line. The City is appreciative of MDOT's efforts to add two new trains to Camden Line service. However, a major gap exists in Camden Line midday service, with no eastbound or westbound trains running between roughly 8 am and 3:30 pm. Additionally, weekend service on the Camden Line could provide a significant opportunity to reduce traffic congestion created by major sporting events. The City urges MDOT to fund additional evening service on the Penn Line, and midday and weekend Camden Line service in the FY 2016-2021 CTP.

Lexington Market Station Redesign

Lexington Market currently serves as the lone existing terminus between MTA's Light Rail and Metro service, and is a high ridership location for both systems. The 2010 Strategic Plan to Enhance the Howard Street Corridor recommends the creation of a consolidated Light Rail and Metro station to better serve customers transferring between the two systems. The City urges MDOT to advance the plans in the 2010 study and fund this project for design and engineering.

Commuter Bus Service Expansion

Commuters from jurisdictions surrounding Baltimore City are a significant contributor to congestion levels in Baltimore's central business district. Specifically, Baltimore City experiences heavy commuter traffic into its downtown and Harbor East areas from locations like White Marsh/Essex, Towson, and Howard, Montgomery and Prince George's Counties from the south. The City urges MDOT to fund expansion of its commuter bus service in the FY 2016-2021 CTP, and recommends new routes from Harford County/White Marsh, Hunt Valley/Greenspring Station and Howard County.

Expedite Implementation of Bus Network Improvement Project (BNIP)

The MTA currently struggles to fulfill its obligation to provide a reliable and efficient core bus service. For several years, I have called on the MTA to update and improve its bus network to address issues with on-time performance, reliability, crowding and low customer satisfaction. The success of Baltimore City's own Charm City Circulator is proof that if a bus system takes people from where they are to where they want to go, people will use the system.

In response to my requests, in August 2014 the MTA announced a badly needed plan to overhaul its core bus service, realigning routes through analysis of current employment and population centers to create system-wide improvements. BNIP was announced after MTA conducted extensive public outreach to gain community support for the project. Without explanation or consultation with the City, BNIP was shelved by MDOT this March. Though bus service is in no way a solution for the transportation issues that the Red Line was to have addressed, providing a functional, reliability bus system for the region is a State responsibility that is currently going unfulfilled. To that end, the City urges MDOT to fund full implementation of Phase 1 of BNIP in the FY 2016-2021 CTP.

Charm City Circulator

The Charm City Circulator has demonstrated over the past several years that a bus system can secure ridership and high customer satisfaction if operated in an efficient and reliable manner. Sustaining the success that the Circulator has enjoyed is a necessary component of a complete and integrated transit network in Baltimore City. Baltimore City is requesting that MDOT solidify the role of the Circulator in the City's transit network, and reduce MTA routes that are duplicative of Circulator service. The savings realized from reduction of duplicative MTA routes should be turned over to Baltimore City to support the continued successful operation of the Circulator. Additional funding for the program will allow the service to remain at an acceptable level offering a rare amenity in Baltimore; a fast, friendly, free and reliable transit service. The City requests \$12 million annually to fund the successful Circulator operation.

Penn Station Redevelopment

Penn Station is Maryland's most important passenger rail hub, and a significant generator of pedestrian traffic in the Mount Vernon/Charles North corridor. Penn Station is surrounded by a multitude of transit options (MARC Light Rail), cultural, business and institutional amenities, and multi-cultural communities, making it a prime area for high-density residential and commercial infill development.

In March 2013, a preliminary plan to redevelop of unused land around the Penn Station into mixed-use Transit Oriented Development (TOD) was proposed.

The plan, aiming to capitalize on nearly \$10 million in station improvements expended by Amtrak over the past 5 years, called for 1.5 million square feet of residences and commercial use and \$500 million in investment into the area in the next 10 years. Amtrak is currently developing a strategic plan based on the preliminary vision for Penn Station, similar to redevelopment around Philadelphia's 30th Street Station and the existing 20-year master plan for Washington, DC's Union Station. The City urges the State to support this unique opportunity for TOD, and to recognize the economic development possibilities around Penn Station by designating it a TOD site in the near future.

Highway Priorities

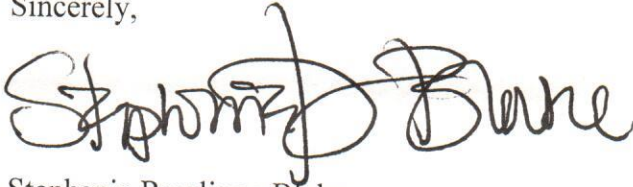
The City has included federal-aid appropriations in its CIP for the following highway priorities, but continues to be challenged with its local match contribution as Highway User Revenues remain flat. Baltimore City's highway priorities are as follows:

- **Central Avenue Bridge Phase II:** This project includes full-depth pavement reconstruction of Central Avenue between Lancaster Street and Baltimore Street into an urban boulevard, concrete curb/gutter and sidewalk reconstruction, construction of ADA-compliant pedestrian ramps and driveway entrances, roadway drainage system improvements, new street and pedestrian lighting, new pavement marking and signing, new traffic and pedestrian signals, and a new bridge over the tidal inlet waters to the proposed Harbor Point development site.
- **Edmonson Avenue Bridge:** The complete replacement of the existing 4 span reinforced concrete arch bridge, originally constructed in 1907, will feature 4 vehicle travel lanes and sidewalks on either side of the structure and two 8-foot sidewalks in each direction for the Gwynns Falls hiker/biker trail.
- **I-295 Bridge Reconstruction (Waterview, Annapolis, Maisel):** This project involves the total replacement of three bridges (two vehicle and one pedestrian) over I-295 (Baltimore-Washington Parkway) to provide for geometric and safety improvements.
- **Harford Road Bridge:** This project involves the total replacement of the existing bridge and retaining walls on both sides of the roadway adjacent to the structure, as well as a pedestrian underpass under Harford Road and a pedestrian bridge over Herring Run.
- **Hawkins Point Road Bridge Reconstruction and Roadway Improvements west of Chemical Road to west of Quarantine Road:** This project is significant due to its importance to the region's chemical industry, designation as an emergency evacuation route, and status as the only network redundancy for the southernmost portion of I-695.

It consists of replacement of the existing bridge structure over CSX, and widening of roadway sections to provide for geometric and safety improvements.

We look forward to working with your staff to advance these projects.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephanie Rawlings-Blake". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Stephanie" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Rawlings-Blake".

Stephanie Rawlings-Blake
Mayor
City of Baltimore

- cc: The Honorable Catherine Pugh, Chair, Baltimore City Senate Delegation
The Honorable Curt Anderson, Chair, Baltimore City House Delegation
The Honorable Bernard "Jack" C. Young, Baltimore City Council President
Kaliopé Parthemos, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office
Andrew Smullian, Deputy Mayor, Government Relations and Labor
Colin Tarbert, Deputy Mayor, Economic and Neighborhood Development
Khalil Zaied, Deputy Mayor, Operations
William Cole, Baltimore Development Corporation President and CEO
William M. Johnson, Director, Baltimore City DOT
Thomas Stosur, Director, Baltimore City Department of Planning
Sameer Sidh, Chief, Special Projects and Business Improvement, Baltimore City DOT