



**2024 RAISE Grant Application**

# **Opportunities for Access and Connectivity at Reisterstown Plaza Metro Station**

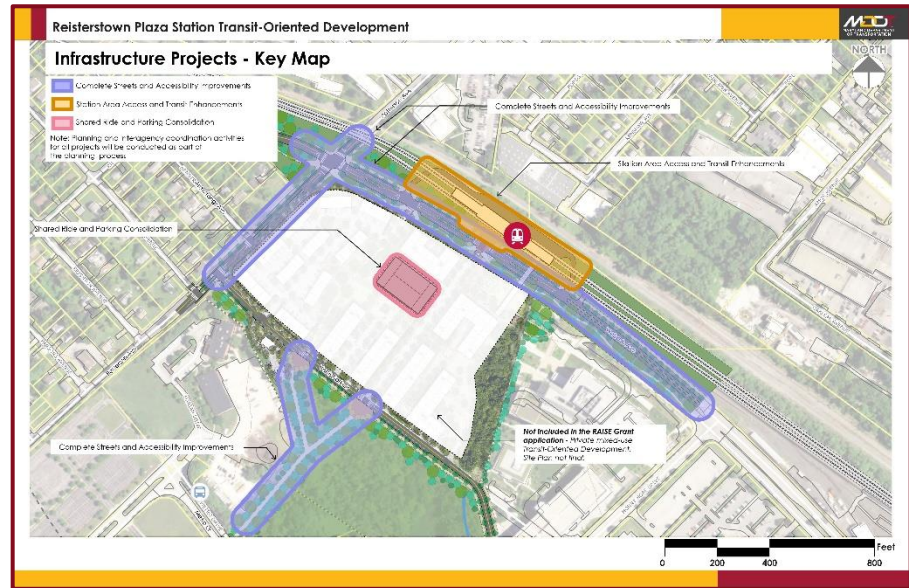
**Project Description**



## 1. Project Description

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) is seeking \$4,690,700 in Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) planning funds to advance critical multimodal access, connectivity, and pedestrian safety enhancements around the Reisterstown Plaza Metro Station (Station) on MTA’s Metro service (Figure 1). The **Opportunities for Access and Connectivity at Reisterstown Plaza Metro Station** project seeks to advance multimodal investments to improve MTA transit services and the Station, create **complete streets** and convenient **pedestrian access** on surrounding roads and trails, and enable **transit-oriented development (TOD)** through improved land use and **parking consolidation** to 30 percent design and through National Environmental Policy Act review. MDOT is also seeking funding for required grant administration, interagency collaboration, and public outreach efforts necessary to implement this community-driven project. The specific grant activities include the following:

Figure 1. Project Map and Key Conceptual Improvements



- **Station Area Access and Transit Enhancements**

- Determine feasible options to relocate the existing MTA bus service to be directly connected with the subway station. Consider the bus loop for an MTA Tier I or II Transfer Center and the potential for an enhanced layover facility, with zero-emission bus charging and additional MTA bus services to the Station.
- Determine feasible options to create a transit plaza at the subway station to allow for seamless rider pickup and drop-off services from both public (MTA) and private (transportation network company) providers.
- Study the feasibility of removing the existing pedestrian overpass structure, which depends on Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) improvements on Wabash Avenue, to enhance community visual appeal.
- Determine feasible options to create a new shared-use trail from Vertis Park Drive to Metro Drive, which would provide access to the Seton Business Park, a key employment destination.

- **Complete Streets and Accessibility Improvements**

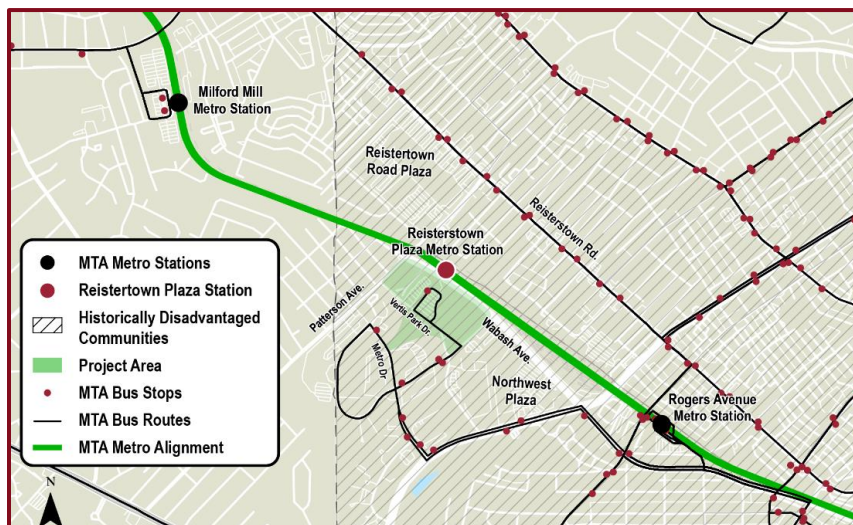
- Determine feasible options to enhance pedestrian safety and user access, to include new ADA-compliant crossings, sidewalks, traffic calming, and inviting public green spaces, on Wabash Avenue and Patterson Avenue.

- **Shared Ride and Parking Consolidation**
  - Determine feasible options to reconfigure the existing onsite parking infrastructure to a multilevel garage that will include sustainability elements (electric vehicle charging and bicycle parking) to unlock TOD opportunities.
- **Grant Administration, Interagency Coordination, and Public Outreach**
  - Funding would support MTA grant administration and implementation on behalf of subrecipient, fund an equity analysis as part of the feasibility study, and support a robust public outreach plan.

The Station, which opened in 1983, is the last stop within the city limits in northwest Baltimore. The MTA Metro system attracts 48,000 average weekday riders (as of second quarter 2023), and the heavy rail system provides frequent service from Owings Mills in Baltimore County to Johns Hopkins University and downtown Baltimore City.<sup>1</sup> An existing bus loop on the parking lot south of Wabash Avenue provides spaces for a bus stop layover for up to two buses and pickup/drop-off of MobilityLink and rideshare services. The loop is served by LocalLink 82, which connects to destinations in northwest Baltimore City, with approximate 30-minute frequencies. A pedestrian overpass connects above Wabash Avenue to the MTA Park and Ride lot, with nearly 700 parking spaces. A February 2024 MTA observational report noted weekday parking use at 10 percent of available supply. ADA parking, bicycle parking, and bus drop-off space is also provided directly under the Station on the east side of Wabash Avenue.

In June 2022, MDOT entered an exclusive negotiating privilege agreement with Wabash Development Partners (WDP) to pursue a TOD on the site. The TOD has been guided by MTA’s 2020 Station Area Concept Plan (Attachment), which encourages sustainable, connected, and multimodal development. RAISE funding would advance several identified infrastructure improvements from the Concept Plan. Additionally, there has been more recent detailed area planning that recognized the City of Baltimore’s Complete Streets initiatives prioritizing walking, biking, and transit, as well as a collaborative and comprehensive effort that includes the City of Baltimore, MDOT’s Office of Real Estate and Economic Development (ORED), MTA, and WDP. This collaborative effort has updated the 2020 Concept Plan, recognizing reduced emphasis on drive up passengers in favor of people living nearby and able to walk, bicycle, or be dropped off at the station. This was possible due in part to demand and the proximity of nearby stations with underused parking.

Figure 2. Project Location Map



The Station is within a defined Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool historically disadvantaged community (Census Tract 24510280102) and Area of Persistent Poverty (Figure 2). Residents experience disproportionate chronic health and housing affordability burdens.

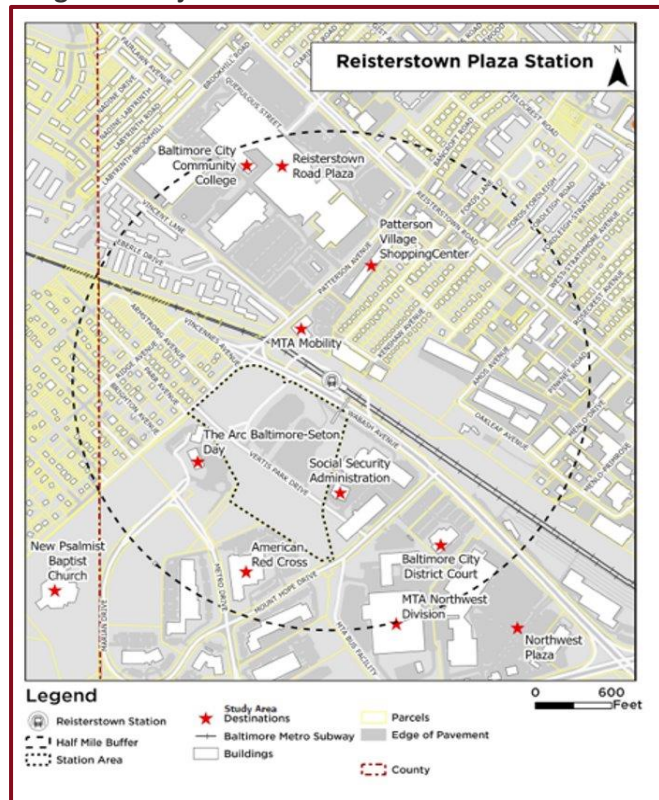
<sup>1</sup> American Public Transit Association. 2023. *Second Quarter 2023 Ridership Report*. <https://www.apta.com/wp-content/uploads/2023-Q2-APTA-Ridership.pdf>.



### 1.1 Transportation Challenges

Both MDOT and the Baltimore City Department of Transportation (BCDOT) have long identified access challenges to the Station as a barrier to neighborhood connectivity, commercial development, and increased transit ridership. Since 2005, the Baltimore City Department of Planning has identified the current configurations of Wabash and Patterson Avenues as impediments to commercial growth, access to transit, and potential TOD opportunities at the Station.<sup>2</sup> Wabash Avenue, an unfinished six-lane arterial road initially intended to expand and connect the interstate system at Interstate (I-) 695 (Baltimore Beltway) and I-795 (Northwest Expressway), hinders safe and convenient access to transit and essential destinations (Figure 3). Because Wabash Avenue was never connected beyond the Patterson Avenue intersection, it is considerably wider than warranted by traffic demand. The lack of pedestrian accommodation along Wabash Avenue and a midblock desire line route to the Station’s fare gates caused MTA to provide an elevated pedestrian crossing accessed by an escalator from the Station’s west side parking lot in 1983, which was renovated in 2002. Patterson Avenue is a major east-west corridor that connects Liberty Road (Maryland Route [MD] 26) and Reisterstown Road (MD 140). It widens to four lanes approaching Wabash Avenue through to Reisterstown Road. BCDOT’s Strategic Highway Safety Plan identified Patterson Avenue near the Station as a hot spot for crashes and specifically pedestrian and cyclist crashes.<sup>3</sup>

Figure 3. Adjacent Essential Destinations



In addition to access, connectivity from the Station to nearby employers is lacking. The nearby Seton Business Park is occupied by the Food and Drug Administration, American Red Cross, FutureCare, Comcast, MTA Police, the Northwest Bus Division, The Arc, New Psalmist Baptist Church, Social Security Administration, and other employers. Despite nearby employment opportunities and proximity to fixed-rail transit, bus services are limited near the Station. MTA Bus 82 serves the Station’s existing parking lot. However, opportunities to increase bus transit services and connections to rail transit would be enabled by new development, better connectivity among area destinations, and a relocated bus loop within the Station zone, which would create additional layover and operator-supportive infrastructure. MTA bus routes currently serving Reisterstown Road or terminating at the nearby Rogers Avenue Metro Station have the potential to be redesigned or extended to serve the Reisterstown Plaza Metro Station.

The Station area has been identified by both MDOT and BCDOT as a TOD opportunity area for nearly two decades. In 2023, the Station area was formally recognized as a Maryland Designated Transit Oriented Development Site for the purposes of agency coordination, collaboration, and investment. However, efforts by multi-jurisdictional agencies and development partners to coordinate and collaborate have shown that for the TOD investment to realize its transformative potential for the

<sup>2</sup> Baltimore City Department of Planning. 2012. *Northwest Community Planning Forum*. 2012 Update. <https://planning.baltimorecity.gov/sites/default/files/Northwest%20Comm.%20Forum.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Baltimore City Department of Transportation. 2022. *Baltimore City Strategic Highway Safety Plan, 2022-2026*. <https://transportation.baltimorecity.gov/sites/default/files/Baltimore%20City%20SHSP%20Part%201.pdf>.

broader area, past decisions related to incomplete and auto-centric transportation infrastructure must also be addressed.

## 1.2 Project Opportunities

If funded, this grant will allow MTA and its partners to develop shovel-ready projects to collectively address multi-jurisdictional challenges to creating safe, comfortable, and accessible access to the Station site and surrounding essential destinations, enabling economic growth and stronger connectivity to existing transit services (Figure 4). Additionally, if awarded, this grant and the project will provide both MTA and BCDOT critical lessons learned to apply to our reinvigorated commitment to investing in TOD opportunities across the City of Baltimore and the State of Maryland.

MDOT entered into an exclusive negotiating privilege agreement with WDP to develop the current parking site into a mixed-use TOD. Development of MDOT-owned property adjacent to MTA rail stations is coordinated by the MDOT ORED in conjunction with the MTA Office of Real Estate. Additionally, MDOT ORED, in consultation with other state agencies and local jurisdiction partners, designates specific sites as TOD Areas. The TOD designation signifies that the proposed development is within 0.5 mile of transit, provides a preference to Maryland’s Sustainable Communities–related programs and tax incentives, and allows MDOT to more closely coordinate with the local land use agency on site development.<sup>4</sup> The award will allow WDP to create a site development plan for approximately 25 acres (approximately 3 acres zoned TOD-4 and 22 acres zoned TOD-3) of unimproved land and surface parking lots at the Station. The area is a large parcel of land adjacent to the Station located at 6300 Wabash Avenue in Baltimore City, which is ideal for a TOD. The developer will enter into a Master Development Agreement with the State of Maryland (expected to occur in 2025) once a negotiated site plan is agreed on.

Figure 4. Conceptual Before and After Conditions at the Reisterstown Plaza Metro Station



<sup>4</sup> Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development. n.d. *Sustainable Communities: Partnering to Revitalize Maryland Communities*. <https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Communities/Documents/dn/Benefits-3-2.pdf>.



Additionally, the City of Baltimore provides an annual priority letter to MDOT to identify priorities for MDOT’s Consolidated Transportation Program, a fiscally constrained 6-year capital budget compiled annually. The City of Baltimore’s 2023 Priority Letter specifically cites TOD and efforts around the Station as a priority, requesting that the State prioritize multimodal investment efforts around the Reisterstown Plaza site.<sup>5</sup>

As part of its site master-planning efforts, MDOT, in partnership with the City of Baltimore and MTA, hosted a public meeting on January 18, 2024, to collect community feedback to proposed public infrastructure improvements and TOD priorities.<sup>6</sup> After experiencing challenges in creating a safe, accessible, and viable TOD site, there is new momentum and renewed interest in moving forward to create a more sustainable, growing, and vibrant area at the Station. RAISE grant funding would further build momentum and enable critical public infrastructure improvements to move forward.

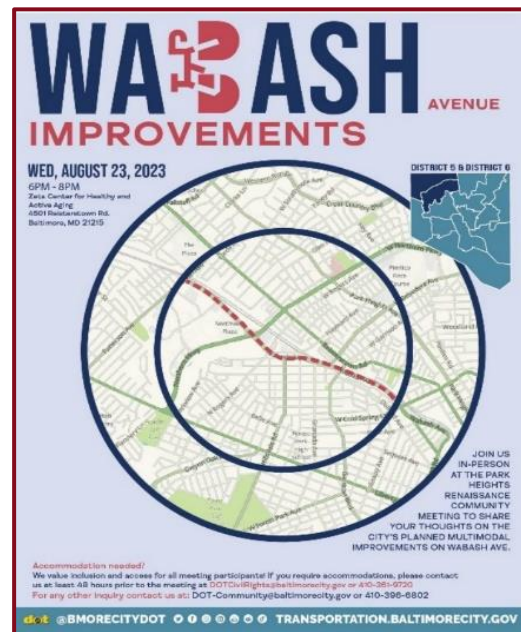
### 1.3 Project History and Investment Context

MTA owns approximately 25.6 acres of land near the Station and has competitively selected a private partner to advance a mixed-use development on the site.

BCDOT completed a feasibility study for a separated bike lane on the Wabash Avenue corridor and completed three public meetings (February 2023; April 2023; and August 2023 [Figure 5]) as part of the study. Although the feasibility study was focused on a corridor-wide bike lane, RAISE funding would support a more holistic approach to specific Wabash Avenue pedestrian, cyclist, and ADA improvements to provide safe and convenient access to the Station site from the area’s existing and new residents, employees, and visitors. In addition to the reallocation of space for bicycle and pedestrian network building, the proposed design would help to align the scale and space for the road with traffic needs and the presence of pedestrians, bicycles, and transit vehicles in the Station area right-of-way and be the first phase of community green space and recreational trail expressly desired by existing residents.

With the election of Governor Wes Moore, the State of Maryland has recommitted to TOD efforts, in partnership with local units of government. In November 2023, MDOT executed contracts to develop TOD plans near MTA light rail and subway stations in the region and Maryland Area Rail Commuter (MARC) Penn Line stations across the greater Baltimore and Washington area.<sup>7</sup> The Maryland General Assembly also continues to encourage local zoning efforts to align with the State of Maryland’s TOD site designations.

Figure 5. Wabash Avenue Improvements, August 2023 Public Meeting Flyer



<sup>5</sup> City of Baltimore. 2023. *City of Baltimore 2023 Priority Letter*. [https://www.mdot.maryland.gov/OPCP/Baltimore\\_City\\_PL\\_2023.pdf](https://www.mdot.maryland.gov/OPCP/Baltimore_City_PL_2023.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Stewart, Khiree. 2024. "Transformation planned for area surrounding Reisterstown Plaza Metro stop." WBALTV-11. January 18. <https://www.wbal.tv/article/reisterstown-plaza-metro-station-transformation-mdot-baltimore/46449139>.

<sup>7</sup> Maryland Department of Transportation. 2023. "Maryland Department of Transportation Studies Put 'Mission in Motion' To Create Vibrant Transit Hubs That Boost Economy, Lift Communities." <https://mdot.maryland.gov/tso/pages/newsroomdetails.aspx?newsId=761&PageId=38>.