



## MTA STAKEHOLDER WORK GROUP



# Key Issues and Themes for Improving Transit in the Baltimore Region as Identified by Stakeholders

---

The Maryland Department of Transportation and its Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) have been hosting and participating in Stakeholder meetings this Summer, which have focused on the transit needs in the Baltimore Region. Input will help establish a Transit Performance Improvement Plan by October 1, 2015 and will help to develop transit improvements for the Baltimore Region.

### **Improve the Transit Rider Experience**

- Make the transit experience safer and more secure
- Provide a better, more reliable, quality experience
- Keep transit fare rates affordable
- Increase positive user experiences; attract those with alternative sources of transportation to use transit, such as younger people who typically like to take transit
- Consider marketing/branding certain bus lines to promote cool, easily identifying routes, etc.
- Make the buses more user friendly, especially for people with disabilities (i.e., visually impaired)
- Make transit timely and convenient
- Make the bus experience “cool” and fun

### **Improve Transit Reliability**

- Use better tracking systems to improve real-time user information
- Ensure that the transit system can accommodate existing riders before taking on more riders
- Ensure that buses stop for all riders including those with impairments or using wheelchairs
- The region needs a better way of locating stops and station, especially for those with disabilities

### **Improve Access to Jobs**

- Provide connections to work site locations, provide the last mile of access to jobs
- Connect jobs and people in the Baltimore Region, identify gaps in the current transit system
- Provide access to jobs, schools and commerce
- Increase reliability of service
- Connect to Port of Baltimore employers/employees
- Connect to all of the Universities, Hospitals and Larger Employers/Key Activity Centers in the Region, including Fort Meade, Arundel Mills, Sparrows Point, etc.
- Connect Annapolis, as the State Capital, to the Region through transit (bus and rail)
- Need east/west County transit access without having to go through the City of Baltimore
- Link employment centers outside of Baltimore City with workers within the City
- Provide better transit service between the Beltways, where 45% of the employment is located

### **Improve the Ease of Use of Transit**

- Integrate and map all of the public and private transit for ease of access and use
- Consider the use of smaller vehicles for some of the lesser utilized transit services/routes
- Market the bus routes – the Charm City Circulator does well because of good marketing, reliability and public perceptions, it is simple, easy to use, frequent and has next bus information
- Consider using short and longer routes, including circulators
- Promote bicycle/pedestrian access at transit stations/stops

### **Improve the Flexibility of the Transit System**

- Accommodate and adjust transit to the longer peak commute periods and the peak-hour service that is changing with 24-hour needs (hotels, casinos, hospitals, Amazon)
- Consider flex-time to enable better employee access through transit
- Refocus/redesign the transit access in/out of Baltimore City, as travel patterns have changed
- Need frequent transit headways for the 24/7 businesses (casinos, hotels, hospitals, etc.)

### **Improve Bus Efficiencies**

- Consider more efficient bus routes to decrease ride times
- Maximize efficiencies with the number of State and local transit providers
- Weigh options between shorter bus routes with longer transfer times or longer bus routes
- Need more bus frequency - “Frequency is freedom”
- Evaluate the duplication of public/private transit and shuttle bus services

### **Improve Transit Connections**

- Consider better connections for paratransit to decrease the ride time
- Consider better connections for the Baltimore Transit Systems beyond Baltimore City
- Consider better scheduled routes so that transit riders do not need to plan for a 1.5-hour ride time

### **Improve the Fare Collection System**

- Use the Charm Card to variably price high-use routes and distances
- Note that people are selling day passes to make money and "cheat" MTA
- Need a universal fare card or payment as the fares can be confusing

### **Redesign Bus Routes**

- Use a data-driven approach to defining routes
- Ensure that we do not block parts of the City from jobs and opportunities
- Note that public transit cannot get to the door of all businesses
- Redesign the entire system for today/tomorrow rather than adjusting existing routes
- Suggest looking at demographic shifts, needed movement(s), as well as shift changes (especially at the Port of Baltimore employment areas)
- Assess how to address/link transit to the suburbanization of employment
- Consider that the MTA buses provide bus access to school children in the City of Baltimore
- Consider fewer bus stops (based on use and presence of shelters) for more reliable bus service

## **Promote Employment Partnerships**

- Find opportunities to direct employees to transit options
- Identify programs for employers/employees to incentivize or take advantage of transit
- Promote shuttle bus service into major growth/cities and use transit hubs/transfer centers
- Need transit funding, business partners need to provide funding for transit options
- Large employers/locally operated transit should help with the last mile of travel
- Need more economic development opportunities around transit stations
- Consider options for Transit Oriented Development especially at light rail stations

## **Transit Funding**

- Provide adequate funding to improve transit
- Need more resources to get the transit vehicles operating efficiently
- Consider eliminating fares that are on necessary routes to minimize the cost to recover the fare collection costs
- Consider advertisement opportunities inside the buses to improve farebox recovery
- Consider a dedicated revenue stream for transit
- Incentivize some routes and opportunities

## **Improve the Buses**

- Buses are overcrowded, consider adding more transit vehicles
- Bus drivers need to pay better attention to passengers (fights, patrons standing, sick passengers, etc.)
- Bus operators should be better trained as to how to handle difficult situations
- Bus operators need a better understanding and knowledge of the bus network so they can answer questions about connections
- Bus operators should be friendly, pleasant, courteous, and helpful
- Bus drivers need to announce stops
- Provide free Wi-Fi on buses

## **MARC Improvements**

- Consider improving and adding MARC services
- Consider increased MARC weekend mid-day service between 11 am and 2 pm and earlier service on Sunday mornings for those attending church

## **Bus Improvements**

- Consider bus only lanes
- Consider regional transit solutions besides 54 passenger buses
- Need service expansion to Frederick, Wilmington, Alexandria and Annapolis, as well as Fort Meade and Arundel Mills
- Re-imagine the Baltimore transit system using Houston, which took two years to make transformative improvements as an example

## **Discourage Cars in Baltimore**

- Take away the incentive for driving
- Get cars off historic streets
- Consider free suburban parking lots with vouchers from employers
- Provide shuttle bus services to employment
- Development shouldn't be approved unless parking issues and transit connections are addressed
- Consider restricted parking or bus lanes in the City of Baltimore
- Employers need to provide employee shuttles
- Consider using the park and ride lots identified in the Baltimore Red Line project
- Discourage employers from providing free parking
- Tax the employers who provide free parking

## **Market Transit & Educate the Public**

- Need to educate people on the Charm Card
- MTA needs better advertising and public awareness
- Need to make incremental transit improvements and changes and keep people apprised
- Need to give people enough notice of transit bus stop and route changes
- Need to market and educate the public on transit routes and opportunities
- Provide performance metric dashboard information publicly

## **Improve Safety and Security**

- Need more bus shelters and bus shelters with lighting
- Need shuttles for the last mile for business access
- Need more safety on transit and to transit
- Need more police presence on and off transit