Workgroup on the Reorganization of the Maryland Transit Administration

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December 2025

Maryland Department of Transportation

Maryland Transit Administration

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) respectfully submits this report on the Workgroup established by House Bill 517 to examine and recommend improvements to the organizational structure and governance of the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA). This report fulfills the requirements outlined in the 2025 Joint Chairmen's Report:

"Further provided that, contingent upon the enactment of HB 517, $150,000 of this appropriation made for the purpose of departmental administration may not be expended until the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) submits a report to the budget committees on a reorganization plan through which the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) would continue providing local Baltimore City transit services, including light rail, subway, and bus services and the Office of the Secretary or a new unit of MDOT would provide statewide transit services.

The report should: (1) detail the current contractual obligations and agreements of the MTA and the process to transfer the obligations and agreements as part of a reorganization of MDOT and MTA and the governance changes to MTA necessary to ensure that Baltimore City has the appropriate oversight and input into local Baltimore City transit service; (2) make recommendations regarding the reorganization of MDOT and MTA to ensure that: (a) local Baltimore City transit service, including light rail, subway, and bus service, remain as a single unit within MDOT and any other functions of MTA are reorganized into a separate unit within MDOT or the Office of the Secretary; (b) the workforce and personnel of MTA necessary to operate local Baltimore City transit services remain within MTA and the workforce and personnel of MTA necessary to operate statewide transit services are reorganized into a separate unit within MDOT or the Office of the Secretary; and (c) the funding for local Baltimore City transit service is not reduced.

The report shall be submitted by December 1, 2025, and the budget committees shall have 45 days from the date of the receipt of the report to review and comment. Funds restricted pending the receipt of a report may not be transferred by budget amendment or otherwise to any other purpose and shall be canceled if the report is not submitted to the budget committees."

Legislative Overview

The Workgroup on the Reorganization of the MTA was established by Chapter 402 (House Bill 517) (2025) to study potential reorganization options for MDOT and MTA. The Workgroup membership includes legislators, members from regional governmental bodies, MDOT, MTA, and transit riders. MDOT and the Department of Legislative Services (DLS) provide staff support to the Workgroup.

The Workgroup is tasked with evaluating alternative reorganization plans, assessing costs and benefits, identifying contractual obligations, and outlining steps to transfer such obligations if necessary. The scope includes analyzing impacts on federal funding and regulatory compliance. The Workgroup will explore options for maintaining core Baltimore transit services alongside establishing a statewide transit unit within the Secretary's Office (TSO), while ensuring Baltimore City has appropriate oversight and input for its core transit services.

Workgroup Roster

The Workgroup comprises a diverse group of stakeholders representing government, transit agencies, transportation advocacy groups, and rider representatives:

- Sameer Sidh, Chair, MTA Rider[1]
- Holly Arnold, MTA Administrator
- Acting MDOT Secretary Samantha Biddle
- Delegate Mark Edelson, House Appropriations Committee
- Mike Kelly, Baltimore Regional Transportation Board (BRTB)
- Delegate Marc Korman, Chair, House Environment and Transportation Committee[2]
- Jon Laria, Chair, Baltimore Regional Transit Commission (BRTC)
- Senator Cory McCray, Senate Budget and Taxation Committee[3]
- Wesley "Wes" Mitchell, MTA Rider
- Vacant (formerly Senator Michael Jackson), Senate Budget and Taxation Subcommittee on Public Safety, Transportation and Environment

The Workgroup is staffed by Sean Winkler, Senior Policy Advisor, MDOT; Samuel Quist, Senior Policy Analyst, DLS; and T. Patrick Tracy, Counsel, House Environment and Transportation Committee.

Interim Session Activities

The Workgroup conducted five meetings during the interim session, beginning on August 28, 2025, and concluding on November 21, 2025. All meeting materials and information can be found on MDOT's website created for the Workgroup.[4]

Meeting 1 (August 28, 2025) — Introduction and Overview

This session discussed the authorizing legislation and reporting requirements and MDOT and MTA provided a general overview of both MTA and TSO. The Workgroup also confirmed schedules and communication protocols for future meetings.

Meeting 2 (September 17, 2025) — MDOT Governance and MTA Contractual Relationships

This session discussed the legislative history of the State Railroad Administration[5] and its integration into MTA, governance boards at MDOT, and MTA's contractual relationships. The Workgroup also adopted public policy participation protocols.

Meeting 3 (October 9, 2025) — MTA Workforce Considerations and BMC Governance Studies

This session discussed MTA's workforce and collective bargaining agreements. The Workgroup also received a briefing from the Baltimore Metropolitan Council on its efforts to examine transit

[1] Chapter 402 required the Governor to appoint two MTA riders to the Workgroup. In addition, the Secretary of Transportation was to designate the Chair.

[2] Delegate Korman sponsored the legislation that created the Workgroup.

[3] Senator McCray was the sponsor of the cross-file of the legislation that created the Workgroup.

[4] https://mdot.maryland.gov/tso/pages/Index.aspx?PageId=225.

[5] The State Railroad Administration was established in 1976 and had responsibilities including administering local commuter train service. In 1991, the SRA was abolished, and all of its assets, obligations, powers, and responsibilities were transferred to what is now MTA.

governance in the Baltimore area. The Workgroup also announced a public comment opportunity at its next meeting and requested MDOT prepare potential board governance proposals for MTA.

Meeting 4 (October 30, 2025) — Report Considerations and Public Participation
The Workgroup heard from five public commenters:

1. Monica Kristin Blair, PhD, Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU)
2. Anna Ellis, Transit Rider
3. Patrick Fleming, Baltimore City Department of Transportation
4. Eric Norton, Central Maryland Transportation Alliance (CMTA)
5. James "Jimmy" Rouse, Chair, Transit Choices

In addition to in-person public comment, the Workgroup also received written comments from CMTA, ATU, and the Greater Washington Partnership. All written comments received are available on the Workgroup's website as a part of the meeting materials.

The Workgroup received a briefing from the American Public Transportation Association regarding national transit governance trends. MDOT provided a preliminary presentation regarding potential board governance proposals. Option A was a Statewide, Multi-Modal Board. Option B was a Baltimore Core Service Board. Option C was Independent, Mode-Specific or Geographic Specific Boards. There was substantial interest and consensus in an option to create a strong Baltimore Core Service Board—building on the success of the Baltimore Regional Transit Commission (BRTC)—and an advisory commuter services board. The Workgroup requested more detailed analysis regarding a potential reorganization option to create a Board of Directors for MTA Baltimore Core service and an Advisory Board for MARC service.

Meeting 5 (November 21, 2025) — Final Meeting
The Workgroup refined a potential reorganization option to create a Board of Directors for MTA Baltimore Core Service (BCS) and an Advisory Board for Commuter Services (CS). The Chair led a discussion regarding potential findings to include in this Report and reached consensus on those findings, at a high level. The Workgroup concluded that its activities and work during the 2025 interim session had met the legislative intent of House Bill 517 and that there was no reason for the group to meet in 2026 because a proposal for legislative changes—subject to further refinement by the General Assembly, MDOT, and MTA—could be submitted at this time.

Workgroup Problem Statements

The Workgroup identified two main problem statements it was seeking to address in considering potential reorganization options for the MTA:

1. Greater Local Control of the Baltimore Region's Transit System
    1. The Baltimore region has lacked direct or shared control over transit and governance decisions, including when it comes to capital expansion projects. Enabling more local representation and authority is essential to create successful Baltimore transit operations and prevent detrimental, unilateral decisions such as the Red Line cancellation in 2015.

2. Improvement of MARC Services
    1. The Workgroup believes MARC commuter rail services could be improved, especially compared to peer and other regional commuter rail transit systems.

Current Contractual Obligations and Agreements of the MTA

The Workgroup discussed and was briefed on the contractual and agreement obligations, as well as federal obligations, of the MTA during Meeting #2 and Meeting #3. At Meeting #2, MTA presented its federal requirements as a recipient of federal funds. This included requirements as a direct recipient of FTA funds, which requires compliance with environmental reviews, civil rights requirements, procurement procedures, the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise program, and certain workforce requirements. It was also noted that MTA, as the federally designated direct recipient, is responsible for the oversight of the distribution of federal funds to local governments.

In addition, MDOT and MTA are required to maintain a compliant State Safety Oversight program by FTA for rail transit systems in the State. This function is currently maintained at the Secretary's Office and must maintain independence from the transit agency that provides the defined rail transit services. The MTA also provided a high-level briefing on its contract obligations at Meeting #2. MTA provided four broad categories of contracts it maintains: architecture and engineering (A&E), services, purchasing, and construction. In addition, MTA also maintains grant agreements with the federal government, access agreements with railroads for MARC service, real estate agreements, intergovernmental agreements, and certain property rights agreements (easements, rights of entry). MTA identified that three of its modes operated with contracted service: mobility, commuter bus, and MARC. It also identified that the Purple Line project is a Concession, in which a private company is designing, financing, operating, and maintaining the service under a 40-year contract. MTA noted that its contracted services and contracts in general are utilized and support multiple teams and functions that serve multiple modes and geographic regions of the state, which enhances efficiency, cross-training and operations. Similarly, multiple agencywide teams support the development and management of contracts utilized by each mode.

The MTA also provided a briefing at Meeting #3 on its workforce obligations and contracts. Of MTA's approximately 3,500-person workforce, nearly 80% are unionized. MTA maintains multiple collective bargaining agreements (CBAs). The CBAs outline employment terms, wages, benefits, operating and work rules, training, grievances, and other processes and benefits. AFSCME, ATU Local 1300, and OPEIU represent approximately 70% of MTA's unionized workforce. MTA's Office of Labor & Employee Relations serves as the primary liaison for the agency on CBA matters. MTA must meet certain federal and state requirements to provide job protections, rights, and benefits, to its unionized workforce.

Workgroup meeting materials from Meetings #2 and #3, including MTA's contractual obligations and agreements are available online.[6][7]

[6] Meeting #2 Materials: https://mdot.maryland.gov/OPCP/Meeting_2_Materials_final.pdf.
[7] Meeting #3 Materials: https://mdot.maryland.gov/OPCP/Meeting_3_Materials_final.pdf.

Report Findings

The Workgroup submits the following Findings for the consideration of the Budget Committees:

1. The Workgroup finds that MTA governance reform would enhance transparency and collaboration for local governments and the public in transit decision making.
2. The Workgroup finds that MTA separation into two modes would not support the State's goals at this time.
3. The Workgroup acknowledges that transit governance reform nationally is often tied to increased revenue or cost-sharing with local governments. While revenue was outside of the purview of this Workgroup, identifying and sustaining adequate revenue remains an important component of a sustainable and accessible multi-modal transit system for Marylanders.
4. The Workgroup finds that a technical study should be undertaken by MDOT, or another organization, on the creation of a rail authority in the State of Maryland. The study should provide the State of Maryland key findings, considerations, peer models,[8] and potential next steps to consider in the creation of a rail authority. It is intended that this authority would be focused on funding and financing, while current rail transit services would remain at MTA and funding options for a statewide rail authority should not undermine future funding support for Baltimore Core Services.
5. The Workgroup finds that the creation of an MTA Board of Directors for Baltimore Core Services and an Advisory Board for Commuter Services would be in the interest of the State of Maryland.
6. The Workgroup finds that the creation of five (5) positions is needed for MTA to implement the re-organization goals of these recommendations and staff the two boards:[9]
    a. Core Services Deputy CEO
    b. Commuter Services Deputy CEO
    c. Core Services Analyst
    d. Commuter Services Analyst
    e. Board Support Officer (shared between both boards)
7. The Workgroup acknowledges that existing Boards at MDOT maintain authority over certain management personnel positions, ensuring top transportation talent is attracted to the State of Maryland and MDOT. Certain MTA management personnel positions should receive this same treatment. The Workgroup recommends that either MDOT itself or another commission or board at MDOT, such as the Maryland Transportation Commission, be granted this type of authority on behalf of MTA.
8. The Workgroup finds that there are several legislative initiatives that would enhance MTA's ability to deliver dependable and affordable transit services to Marylanders. These include parity treatment of MTA under the Maryland Tort Claims Act and with respect to quick take authority and delegated procurement authority for capital construction projects on existing, defined, fixed guideway systems.
9. The Workgroup acknowledges that the exact authorities, duties, and composition of the Baltimore Core Service Board and the Commuter Services Board would benefit from

[8] The Workgroup heard about Virginia and Austin, TX, as potential peer models to be explored.

[9] Existing MTA personnel oversee what the report describes as Baltimore Core Service and MARC service and can be re-organized to accomplish the goals of this report.

additional refinement and deliberation. However, the Workgroup has identified the following potential consensus considerations:

a. The Baltimore Core Services (BCS) Board of Directors
    i. The composition of this board would be shared between seats appointed by the Governor, the Mayor of Baltimore City, and the County Executives of Anne Arundel and Baltimore Counties. The Governor would appoint a majority of the seats and designate the Chair. The Workgroup discussed nine (9) potential voting seats for the BCS Board of Directors.
    ii. The Governor's appointees should include a mix of MTA riders, core service residents, representatives for riders with accessibility challenges, and a representative from anchor institutions that also provide transportation services in the region.
    iii. The Workgroup acknowledges that unions representing MTA's workforce are a critical voice in governance and deliberations regarding Baltimore Core Service. The Workgroup requests that the Office of Attorney General (OAG) be consulted to determine their appropriate governance role, given Collective Bargaining Agreements and other contractual arrangements between MTA and its workforce. Based on the determination of OAG, the Workgroup recommends the creation of a voting or non-voting seat on the Board with the maximum authority possible based on OAG views.
    iv. The MTA Administrator and MDOT Secretary would serve as non-voting ex-officio members of the BCS Board of Directors.
    v. There would be staggered terms for board members, but the Governor may designate a Chair at any time.
    vi. Board members would receive reimbursement for meeting expenses but would not otherwise be compensated.
    vii. The Board would be empowered with the following duties and authorities:
        1. Approves major service plans, policies, and initiatives for Baltimore Core Services. Provides advice on major project initiatives. Takes on duties previously conducted by BRTC.
        2. Provides advice and guidance on the hiring and removal of a BCS Deputy CEO, subject to the approval of the MTA Administrator and MDOT Secretary. The BCS Deputy CEO will report to the MTA Administrator and support the BCS Board. The Workgroup recommends that OAG be consulted before the creation of removal authority to ensure compliance with human resources protocols and state procedural requirements.
        3. Review and approval authority of the MTA's capital (pre-draft Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP) request) and operating budget requests for Baltimore Core Services. Review and comment authority of the MTA's draft CTP budget allocation, to be utilized in the development of the final CTP. The Governor would maintain ultimate final budget allocation authority in the development and submission of the Final CTP and the Governor's Budget to the General Assembly, and the budget request would be non-binding. A timely BCS Board review timeline would need to

be established to ensure there are no delays to the overall budget process, with automatic approval of the budget request if there is no board action within the timeline. MDOT and MTA must be consulted in the development of a reasonable approval timeline.

4. Approval authority over a decision by MDOT and MTA to withdraw a New Starts Capital Investment Grant (CIG) for any Baltimore Core Service territory project, once it has been accepted into the Engineering Phase by the Federal Transit Administration. Withdrawal approval requires a supermajority of the BCS Board of Directors.
5. Submits an annual report to the respective budget committees of the Maryland General Assembly on system performance, trends, major projects, and other activities. The report should be accessible and designed to be a public-facing document.

viii. The Board would be housed at the MTA with staff provided by MTA and MDOT.

b. The Commuter Services (CS) Advisory Board
   i. This board would be appointed solely by the Governor of Maryland and the MDOT Secretary, or his/her designee, would serve as an ex officio, voting member. A certain number of appointments selected by the Governor would have to reside in the MARC and commuter bus service territories and be representatives of riders with accessibility challenges. The Governor would designate the Chair. The Workgroup discussed nine (9) potential voting seats for the CS Advisory Board.
   ii. The Workgroup acknowledges that unions representing MTA's contractual workforce are a critical voice in governance and deliberations of the CS Advisory Board. The Workgroup also acknowledges that MTA's contractors maintain these relationships for MARC and commuter services. The Workgroup requests that the OAG be consulted to determine their appropriate governance role, given Collective Bargaining Agreements and other contractual arrangements between MTA, its operations contractors, and its contracted workforce. Based on the determination of OAG, Workgroup recommends the creation of a voting or non-voting seat on the Board.
   iii. There would be staggered terms for board members, but the Governor may designate a Chair at any time.
   iv. Board members would receive reimbursement for meeting expenses but would not otherwise be compensated.
   v. The Board would be empowered with the following duties and authorities:
      1. Provide advice and guidance regarding commuter services (MARC and commuter bus), plans, and policies and approve major service plans and updates.
      2. Provide advice and guidance on the hiring and removal of a CS Deputy CEO, subject to the approval of the MDOT Secretary. The CS Deputy CEO will report to the MTA Administrator and support the CS Board. The Workgroup recommends that OAG be

consulted before the creation of removal authority to ensure compliance with human resources protocols and state procedural requirements.

3. Review and comment authority of the MTA's pre-draft CTP and operating budget requests for Commuter Services. Review and comment authority of the MTA's draft CTP budget allocation, to be utilized in the development of the final CTP. The Governor would maintain ultimate final budget allocation authority in the development and submission of the Final CTP and the Governor's Budget to the General Assembly, and the budget request would be non-binding. A timely CS Board review timeline would need to be established to ensure there are no delays to the overall budget process, with automatic approval of the budget request if there is no board action within the timeline. MDOT and MTA must be consulted in the development of a reasonable approval timeline.
4. Submits an annual report to the respective budget committees of the Maryland General Assembly on system performance, trends, major projects, and other activities. The report should be accessible and designed to be a public-facing document.

vi. The Board would be housed at the MTA with staff provided by MTA and MDOT.

10. The Workgroup completed substantial work during the 2025 interim work session and reached consensus on a governance proposal that meets the statutory objectives of the authorizing legislation. The Workgroup recommends to the Maryland General Assembly that this report be treated as the final report of the Workgroup and that there is no need for the Workgroup to continue activity during the 2026 session, pending legislative action by the General Assembly.

Additional Considerations

The Workgroup requested that MDOT and MTA explain why the Purple Line is not included in the currently proposed governance structure. At Meeting #4, MDOT proposed a potential governance option that would have included Purple Line representation as a part of a consolidated statewide board. However, the Workgroup did not advance this recommendation. For purposes of this report, MDOT MTA did not see a natural fit for the Purple Line given the geographic focus of the BCS Board of Directors and the commuter focus of the CS Advisory Board, as the Purple Line will provide urbanized rail transit in the National Capital Region and the unique contractual arrangement of the Purple Line. While the Purple Line is a contracted service and project, utilizing a public-private partnership, it is a unique contract structure compared to the contracts associated with commuter bus and MARC services. MDOT and MTA look forward to the anticipated opening of the Purple Line, commits to establishing a Purple Line Riders Advisory Council, similar to a Riders Advisory Council for other systems, once the Purple Line is in operation to replace the existing Community Advisory Teams, which support community engagement during construction.