
Workgroup on the Reorganization of the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA)

Meeting #4 Minutes

1. Attendance:

- a. MTA Administrator Holly Arnold
- b. Delegate Mark Edelson, House Appropriations Committee
- c. Mike Kelly, Baltimore Regional Transportation Board (BRTB)
- d. Delegate Marc Korman, Chair, House Environment and Transportation Committee
- e. Jon Laria, Chair, Baltimore Regional Transit Commission (BRTC)
- f. Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) Assistant Secretary Joe McAndrew, on behalf of Acting Secretary Samantha Biddle
- g. Senator Cory McCray, Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
- h. Wesley “Wes” Mitchell, MTA Rider
- i. Sameer Sidh, MTA Rider, Chair

2. Call to Order

- a. Chair Sidh called the meeting to order.
- b. Chair Sidh made a motion to approve the minutes from meeting three. Assistant Secretary McAndrew seconded. **There was no discussion, and the minutes were adopted unanimously.**
- c. Chair Sidh provided an update on the schedule. The next meeting is scheduled for November 20th at 1pm in Annapolis. Chair Sidh asked for any comments.
 - i. Mr. Laria mentioned a scheduling conflict.
- d. Chair Sidh noted that Senator Jackson has moved on from the Workgroup to a new role as the Acting Superintendent of the Maryland State Police and thanked him for his service.
- e. Chair Sidh reminded the Workgroup of the Interim Report deadline of December 1, 2025, and asked that MDOT and Department of Legislative Services begin drafting.
- f. Chair Sidh stated the rules for public participation.

3. Public Comment

- Monica Blair, Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU)
 - Ms. Blair shared principles she believes the workgroup should prioritize: 1) protecting the rights of transit workers and respecting bargaining units and pension obligations; 2) a Baltimore Regional Transit Authority should have authority to deliver core services in Baltimore, and any reorganization should

preserve those benefits; 3) any BRTA should be robustly funded at or above existing funding levels.

- James Rouse, Transit Choices
 - Mr. Rouse referenced a transit brochure developed by Transit Choices that was shared with members of the House and Senate during session. He spoke in favor of a dedicated revenue stream for transit and establishing a core service board as an alternative for the governance of the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA). Mr. Rouse noted that a core service board could help the Baltimore region achieve equity with the Washington D.C. region in terms of transportation funding. Mr. Rouse noted that a board could help prevent a governor from unilaterally halting a transportation project and noted the importance of public transportation for poverty alleviation.
 - Delegate Edelson thanked Mr. Rouse for his advocacy, which was seconded by Senator McCray.
- Patrick Flemming, Baltimore City Department of Transportation
 - Mr. Flemming noted that the current governance structure of the Maryland Transit Administration is no longer working and holds back the Baltimore region. Mr. Flemming expressed the need for an independent board for core service area. Mr. Flemming referenced the Transit Safety and Investment Act and expressed the need for adequate funding for services with dedicated funding within Baltimore and additional measures to index funding for Baltimore commensurate with WMATA funding.
 - Delegate Korman asked for a clarification of Mr. Flemming's expectations related to extending the Transit Safety and Investment Act and funding indexed to inflation.
 - Mr. Flemming responded that the current needs and structures of MTA should be considered along with inflation costs and future growth.
- Anna Ellis
 - Ms. Ellis said that she would share a rider's perspective on how transit decisions in Baltimore affect riders. Ms. Ellis noted the postponements to the light rail mid-life overhauls and the impact of delays in service and shortages of available vehicles.
 - Administrator Arnold noted that the mid-life light rail overhaul is now complete and overall service reliability is improving.
- Eric Norton, Central Maryland Transportation Alliance
 - Mr. Norton noted how transportation delays affect his family and other Marylanders. Mr. Norton noted a state-of-good-repair backlog and the importance of improving transit systems for the next generation. Mr. Norton referenced the Central Maryland Transportation Alliance (CMTA) memo previously sent to this Workgroup and the request for the development of a problem statement. Mr. Norton noted that CMTA's problem statement observes political imbalance and structural mismatch in transit funding and decision making, and that any reform or reorganization should address that mismatch.

4. Reports and Briefings

- a. Ward McCarragher, Vice President, Government Affairs, American Public Transportation Association, provided a report on National Transit Governance Models
 - i. Mr. Laria asked for clarification on the definition of state transit agencies from the presentation.
 - 1. Mr. McCarragher replied that there is some variety, although most are statewide agencies.
 - ii. Mr. Laria noted that the Workgroup is receiving commentary on the funding issue, even though funding is not within the scope of this Workgroup.
 - 1. Delegate Korman seconded the funding point. He asked if the point of the example shared is whether these are state level agencies with operating roles.
 - 2. Mr. McCarragher gave an example of SunRail, noting the service is state-funded, state-owned, but has a regional commission.
 - iii. Delegate Edelson stated that the examples of agencies shared in the presentation are not comparable to Baltimore.
 - iv. Chair Sidh noted that the MTA is one of the largest operators without a board of directors.
 - 1. Mr. McCarragher stated that King County Metro is city-owned and does not have a board.
 - 2. Mr. Kelly stated that looking for peer agencies is a dead end and that every region is unique and requires appropriate governance structures.
 - v. Assistant Secretary McAndrew noted that the value of boards is often found in the people on them and their commitment to the service or region. He noted it was critical that the appropriate people serve boards, utilizing the example of WMATA.
 - 1. Mr. Kelly asked who the wrong people are.
 - 2. Assistant Secretary McAndrew replied that people matter through commitment to supporting the agency.
 - vi. Senator McCray asked about the role the private sector plays with state transit agencies.
 - 1. Mr. McCarragher replied that the private sector often plays a role on the operations side, for example, with commuter rail, bus systems, and paratransit, in particular.
 - vii. Senator McCray asked whether regional partnerships are being appropriately considered.
 - viii. Delegate Edelson noted that every region is unique and governance choices must fit the region. He noted a point from the presentation on

capitalizing on windows of opportunity for governance change are often tied to funding or a crisis.

1. Mr. McCarragher noted that a funding crisis is the most common driver of change.
 2. Delegate Edelson noted the importance of not losing the window of opportunity.
- ix. Mr. Mitchell asked how agencies with a strong influence from a governor's office manage when there are changes in administration.
1. Mr. McCarragher noted that there are examples of projects being killed by transitions to a new governor but did not immediate example.
 2. Chair Sidh noted that both Maryland and New Jersey have experienced the unilateral termination of a transit project.
- x. Mr. Sean Winkler, MDOT, thanked Mr. McCarragher for the presentation.
- b. Stacy Weisfeld, Senior Director, Strategy and Business Process, MTA, provided a report on follow-up items from Meeting #3 that included overviews of various councils and groups hosted by MTA.
- i. Delegate Korman asked if there is a plan to continue or transition Purple Line community advisory teams.
 1. Administrator Arnold responded that MTA is doing planning for the Purple Line community advisory committee.
- c. Mr. Winkler and Chair Sidh presented a review of the Workgroup's activities to-date, interim report considerations, and preliminary governance concepts
- i. Delegate Korman stated that there is another option that was not mentioned in the presentation, which is to break up the MTA. However, Delegate Korman noted that he sees Option C as the strong option in the interest of compromise, and preferable to Option A. Delegate Korman noted that the Baltimore core services and MARC rail services are the ripest for boards.
 - ii. Delegate Edelson noted that he did not favor the option of breaking up the MTA but is in favor of the ideas presented. He noted that there is no one-size-fits-all approach and that he does not see a scenario where a statewide board provides a sufficient local voice to Baltimore City. He noted that he supports Option C, which should go hand-in-hand with tort reform and procurement reform for MTA. He noted that he would like to see this option paired with personnel at MTA dedicated to this process.
 - iii. Mr. Laria noted a need to give local and regional players a greater voice in determining the future of the transit system.

- iv. Chair Sidh noted that the board structure selected should address the problem statement. He expressed the possibility of an umbrella group for statewide service coordination and capital planning that brings together the two boards.
- v. Assistant Secretary McAndrew noted that Option C is an approach to the core themes presented in this Workgroup.
- vi. Mr. Kelly noted that the status quo is a unique model that has created the current reality.
- vii. Administrator Arnold noted the need to have serious conversations on operations.
- viii. Chair Sidh noted that the umbrella would be Option C, which would involve these two groups coming together, perhaps on a quarterly basis, with an overarching chair.
- ix. Administrator Arnold noted that the union considerations should be thought through.
- x. Mr. Mitchell asked who makes the final call in the areas of overlap between two boards with a shared geography.
 - 1. Mr. Laria noted the lack of parity in the two regional boards being described.
- xi. Delegate Edelson noted that the Baltimore Core Service Board could be a vessel for revenue discussions in the future.
- xii. Chair Sidh summarized that there seems to be broader consensus around Option C for coverage, but there remain open questions around composition and function.
- xiii. Mr. Winkler summarized that Workgroup meeting five will cover the topics of 1) the composition of the boards under Option C, 2) functional adjustments to allow for correspondence with a new model, 3) the actual powers of each board, and 4) issues that would allow MTA to function most effectively.

5. Adjournment

- a. Chair Sidh moved to adjourn. Mr. Laria seconded. **There was no discussion and the motion to adjourn was carried unanimously.**