



# LAB Report

## Mt. Airy and La Plata, MD

Listening & Storytelling for Inclusive Transit  
September & October 2025 MOVE Roundtable

with support from **AARP**



### Where We Started

AARP Maryland convened local and county leaders to discuss transportation challenges facing Mt. Airy's aging population in October 2023. With Mt. Airy spanning four counties—each with its own transit system—and including rural areas, older adults increasingly face barriers traveling to medical appointments and community destinations, especially across county lines.

### Opportunity

To follow up on the October 2023 convening, AARP Maryland and the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) brought together a new group to focus on La Plata and Mt. Airy in the fall of 2025. The two cities experienced shared challenges: Aging or insufficient transportation infrastructure; limited public funding; gaps in reliable, affordable, and safe access to multimodal options (transit, biking, walking); and disproportionate impacts on residents with disabilities, mobility limitations, and older adults. Together, they group explored the question: **“What are the transportation connectivity and safety challenges, particularly for aging Marylanders and their caretakers; and how can the mobility needs of residents be improved with current resources?”**

### Approach

The MOVE Roundtable brought together 12-15 community leaders, transportation agencies, and advocates from Mount Airy, La Plata, and surrounding counties over four weeks to: Identify local and regional mobility challenges, explore opportunities for improving access, safety, and livability, and strengthen cross-county coordination, particularly for older adults and rural residents. The MOVE Roundtable spent the first week building partnerships and goal setting. In weeks two and three, they unpacked current multimodal options, limitations, unmet needs, and the power of narrative and partnerships to improve safety and accessibility for all. This included hearing from local and national speakers and experiencing a virtual tour of both Mt. Airy and La Plata. Finally, the group synthesized their experience and plotted out next steps in week four.

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**“By 2050, Marylanders over 50 will drive most consumer spending, making it more important than ever to create communities that support aging well. Through our partnership with M: PACT and AARP, we’re connecting with residents in Maryland’s rural and suburban areas and providing tools to identify local mobility challenges — turning ideas like better sidewalks, more trails and improved paratransit access into meaningful action.”**

**— Deron Lovaas**  
Chief, Environment & Sustainable Transportation,  
Maryland Department of Transportation





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## Outcomes & Next Steps

Through the MOVE Roundtable process, jurisdictions have strengthened communication amongst themselves, new partnerships have been fostered, and the group has built momentum toward safer, more connected, and inclusive transportation systems. Partner and agency highlights include:

- **MDOT/MTA:** Updating Complete Streets policy and supporting local transit (LOTS). Promoting Context-Driven design and planning for Southern Maryland Rapid Transit.
- **National RTAP:** Provides free technical assistance, training, and tools for rural and tribal transit providers; emphasizes transit in all community projects.
- **AARP Maryland:** Supports local livability initiatives through Community Challenge Grants and resources like the Transportation Workbook.

Key themes and major takeaways include:

- **Safety & access:** Persistent safety concerns for pedestrians and seniors; demand for safer crossings, sidewalks, and community connections.
- **Transit familiarity & options:** Residents are often unfamiliar with existing transit; interest in microtransit, walking, and biking is hindered by limited infrastructure and funding.
- **Cross-county coordination:** Efforts like a new MOU between Carroll and Frederick Counties signal growing collaboration. Participants emphasized the importance of regional integration and shared planning.
- **Equity & inclusion:** Strong emphasis on engaging underrepresented populations and prioritizing the needs of non-drivers, older adults, and those with disabilities.
- **Integrate transit early:** All community planning efforts will benefit from considering transit needs from the beginning.
- **Visibility = funding:** Include mobility needs in formal plans to qualify for state/federal support.
- **Leverage partnerships:** Strengthen collaboration between state, county, and local leaders.
- **Use advocacy tools:** Combine data and community stories to influence policy and investment.

The group identified the following as next steps:

- Expand microtransit and short-trip options.
- Improve pedestrian and bike infrastructure.
- Develop volunteer driver programs.
- Continue community outreach and education to build trust and participation.

