

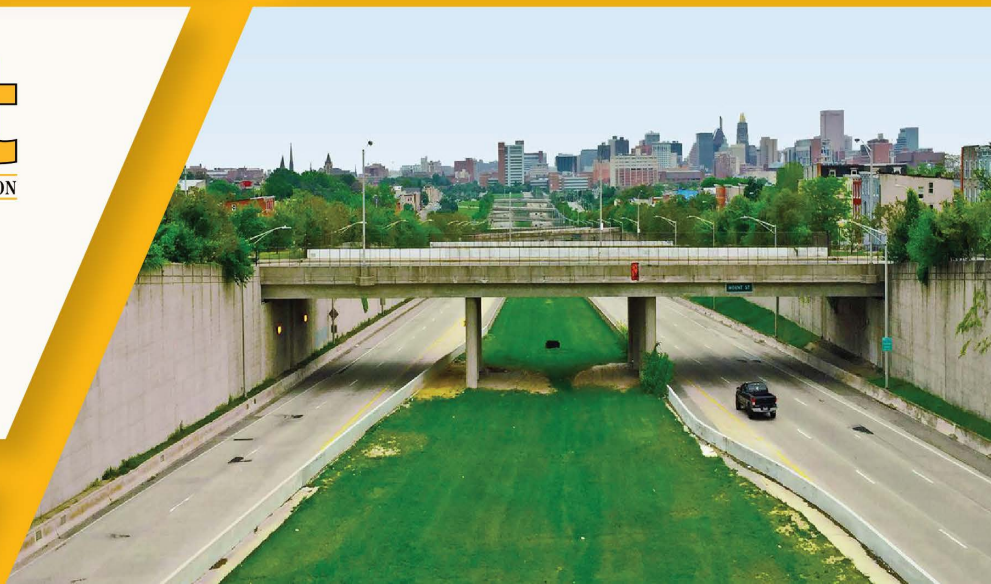
Reconnecting Communities Pilot  
Project Narrative

# West Baltimore United Construction

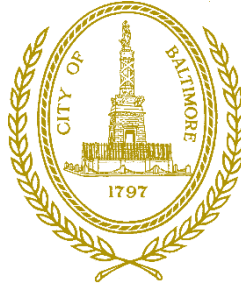
PHASE 1

Reconnecting communities impacted by US 40  
For a thriving West Baltimore

September 2024



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BRANDON M. SCOTT  
MAYOR

*100 Holliday Street, Room 250  
Baltimore, Maryland 21202*

September 30, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg  
Secretary of Transportation  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

The City of Baltimore, in partnership with the Maryland Department of Transportation, is pleased to submit this application for a Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) Program Capital Construction Grant for West Baltimore United (WBU) – Phase I. This grant will build upon the important community planning process already underway, funded by the \$2 million RCP grant Baltimore was awarded in 2023, and will help our City begin reuniting long-divided communities separated by the Franklin-Mulberry Expressway.

The City of Baltimore, working with state, federal, and community partners, seeks to use the requested \$100 million in RCP Grant funding towards a \$200 million Phase I construction project that will build an initial one block-long cap atop the highway; deconstruct two ramps at the eastern terminus of the expressway over Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard; redesign surrounding roadways and intersections with Complete Streets elements and safety improvements; and provide additional community benefits. This cap will be designed as a new civic space integrated with the planned Red Line light rail station and the project also includes design, environmental review, community engagement, and other preconstruction activities, geared to stimulate transit-oriented development, improve mobility, and provide a long-sought built connection between legacy divided communities. This Phase I project is part of an ultimate vision for future expanded phases that will cap multiple blocks.

The construction of the 1.4-mile long, six-lane divided highway during the 1970s continues to scar the landscape of West Baltimore, more than half a century later. This project erased 14 contiguous blocks in a middle-class Black Baltimore community, demolished 971 homes and 62 businesses,

and displaced over 1,500 people. While this expressway was intended to extend another three and a half miles west to I-70, it was never completed. Other communities successfully advocated against and halted the construction of additional expressway segments in additional areas of Baltimore such as Fells Point, but the community outcry over the Franklin-Mulberry Expressway could not stop construction. Today, this short section of expressway is commonly known as “The Highway to Nowhere,” and the adjacent communities of West Baltimore have struggled to recover from its scarring effects ever since.

In line with RCP goals, this capital construction project achieves the following merit criteria:

- Reduces inequities by redressing historic discriminatory and divisive infrastructure and tailoring benefits to Justice40 communities
- Improves mobility and access to restore community connectivity through the capping of a program-eligible highway while also introducing new transportation options to increase safe mobility and connectivity for all to daily destinations
- Removes an existing barrier that leads to Baltimoreans’ over-reliance on automobiles while reconnecting communities for people to live, work, play, and move freely and safely
- Continues to facilitate meaningful engagement in planning, design, construction, operations, and related land use decisions, with a vision shaped by the existing West Baltimore United Stakeholder Workgroup and additional community outreach
- Implements community-supported design components that celebrate West Baltimore’s rich history and culture in public spaces
- Addresses climate change and sustainability by prioritizing active transportation in the facility’s design, and by integrating green infrastructure components
- Promotes inclusive economic development via the utilization of disadvantaged business enterprises on project-specific work
- Advances additional planning work taking place under the West Baltimore Thriving Communities Project, which has received funding for community-based planning from USDOT

The Baltimore City Department of Transportation (BCDOT) and city and state partners have spent the last year engaging in a robust, ongoing community engagement campaign via interactive community meetings and the West Baltimore United Stakeholder Workgroup. This 14-member body includes community leaders from throughout the Project corridor who are actively involved in economic development in West Baltimore and serve as liaisons to communicate their communities’ desires for this transformation. The Stakeholder Workgroup will continue to play an instrumental role in providing feedback and input throughout the design and construction phases.

BCDOT will lead this capital construction project and utilize its robust experience managing federal funding, supplemented by resources from its own capital program. In recent years, BCDOT has successfully been awarded and managed the following Federal grants:

- Reconnecting Community Pilot (RCP) Planning Grant for West Baltimore United in 2023 (\$2M)
- Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Planning Grant for Restoring Connections to Druid Hill Park in 2024 (\$6M)



- Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding for transit service operations in 2020 (\$11.6M)
- American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) grants for transit service operations in 2021 (\$1.1M)
- Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grants for the implementation of the Downtown Bicycle Network in 2014 (\$2.12M), for the design of the Middle Branch Trail in 2018 (\$250K), and the design of the Greenway Trail segment between Druid Hill Park and Lake Montebello in 2024 (\$2M)
- Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant for the Hanover Street Multimodal Corridor Plan in 2016 (\$1.8M)
- Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grant for the Revitalizing Hanover Street Corridor Project in 2024 (\$15.5M)
- Federal transportation formula grant funding every year for capital improvements and transit operations
- Partnership with the Maryland Department of Transportation Maryland Transit Administration (MDOT MTA) on the 2021 RAISE Baltimore East/West priority transitway implementation grant, the 2022 Penn Station RAISE Planning Grant, and the 2023 Mondawmin Transit Hub RAISE Construction Grant

The City of Baltimore's application clearly and closely aligns with the goals and objectives of the Reconnecting Communities Program. BCDOT and its state partners are committed to meeting the matching funds requirements for this project and we will continue a legacy of working successfully with USDOT to manage and report on grant progress. I encourage your thoughtful review and consideration of the WBU Phase I Construction RCP funding request for this transformative project.

We appreciate your ongoing partnership to unite West Baltimore and introduce a new era of economic redevelopment, connectivity in the built environment, and opportunity for all. Thank you for your consideration.

In partnership,



Brandon M. Scott  
*Mayor*  
*City of Baltimore*

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## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Project History .....	2
Transportation Needs .....	3
Proposed Improvements.....	5
Location & Map.....	7
Response to Merit Criteria .....	8
#1 Equity & Justice40 .....	8
#2 Access .....	10
#3 Facility Suitability.....	11
#4 Community Engagement and Community-based Stewardship, Management, and Partnerships.....	11
# 5 Equitable Development.....	13
# 6.1 Climate Impacts, and Planning Integration.....	14
# 6.2 Workforce Development and Economic Opportunities.....	16
# 6.3 Planning Integration.....	17
Project Readiness: Environmental Risk.....	17
Planning and Constructability.....	17
Proposed Schedule .....	18
NEPA and Permitting .....	18
Project Support.....	18
Risk & Mitigation .....	19
Project Budget.....	20
Benefit-Cost Analysis .....	20

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## Introduction

The many neighborhoods within West Baltimore were once connected, vibrant, and thriving majority Black communities. The construction of the Franklin-Mulberry Expressway (US 40) in the 1970s divided neighborhoods, demolished homes, uprooted community anchors, and created a physical barrier that continues to cause harm to these communities to this day.

The Mayor and City Council of Baltimore (“City of Baltimore”), in partnership with the Baltimore City Department of Transportation (BCDOT), and the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) (“Project Partners”), request \$100M in Reconnecting Community Pilot (RCP) Construction funds for the *West Baltimore United Phase 1 Construction Project* (“West Baltimore United Phase 1” or “The Project”). The City of Baltimore is committed to providing \$40M in Non-Federal cost share and MDOT is committed to “flexing” an additional \$60M in Other Federal Funds to comprise a combined \$200M budget. The Project will enhance community safety, foster new economic and workforce development opportunities, and directly address historic wrongs.

The Project Scope consists of the following core elements:

1. All pre-construction activities including full design, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) work, permitting, and community engagement;
2. Removal of the entrance and exit ramps over Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard (MLK Blvd.) to reconnect West Baltimore to the City’s Central Business District, reclaim land for targeted transit-oriented development, and support future east-west Light Rail Transit (LRT) service;
3. Construction of a single-block cap at the center of the Project area that will establish a critical reconnection point between Franklin Street (Franklin St.) and Mulberry Street (Mulberry St.) across US 40, enhance walkability and multi-modal access to transit, and create a vibrant community gathering space that celebrates the history of this area;
4. Construction of Complete Streets and safety improvements in targeted locations throughout the project area to improve public safety and pedestrian access;
5. A substantial package of community benefits that will be defined through intensive community engagement and consensus building in the West Baltimore United Planning Project (“the Planning Project”), currently underway. These benefits may include targeted programs aimed at stimulating local business incubation and entrepreneurship, incentivizing property redevelopment, attracting new retail and other needed community services, anti-displacement measures, and community capacity building through hiring of local residents to assist with ongoing community engagement activities.

Collectively, these elements comprise the first phase of a broader vision that is emerging in conjunction with the Planning Project that include additional highway cap space up to three city blocks and reclamation of portions of US 40 for uses that better serve the community. Phase 1 of the Project will be a first major step toward transforming West Baltimore into a more vibrant

### Now is the Time to Reconnect West Baltimore

West Baltimore United is a high priority for the Mayor of Baltimore, the Maryland Congressional Delegation, the State Delegation, and MDOT. For local residents, investments to heal communities from the disruption of US 40 is long overdue.

**RCP Construction funding is the critical piece** that will enable the project to take truly transformative steps to restore communities, revitalize economic development, and create a more equitable future for the communities of West Baltimore.

community and enabling it to realize its full potential. As further detailed in Appendix B, the potential future Phase 2 of West Baltimore United is anticipated to cost up to \$324 million.

It is important to note, however, that West Baltimore United Phase 1 will deliver independent utility and provide significant and meaningful benefits that will not depend on any future efforts to deliver lasting economic, social, and environmental improvements.

Delivery of West Baltimore United Phase 1 will be closely coordinated with the Maryland Transit Authority Administration (MTA) Baltimore Red Line Project (“the Red Line Project”), a 14-mile high-frequency, high-capacity LRT corridor project currently in the Alternatives Analysis phase. While independent, the Project and the Red Line Project are compatible in their aligned missions to support economic development and community revitalization and to increase access to transit near work and activity centers. The City of Baltimore and MTA will deliver these two projects by working in close coordination to minimize community disturbance and compound their unique benefits to surrounding communities and to the region.

During delivery of the Project, the Project Partners will build upon and extend community engagement activities that are already underway through the Planning Project. Early engagement activities<sup>2</sup> exemplify the communities’ eagerness to address the longstanding inequities created by the construction of US 40. These are further demonstrated in letters of support included in this application.

The Project Partners are making concerted efforts to advance key decisions to ensure the Project meets the needs of affected communities. RCP Construction funds will catalyze the Project beyond the Planning phase, making strides toward the vision of the thriving, vibrant, and connected West Baltimore these communities deserve.

### Community Redevelopment Priorities

In a public community workshop<sup>1</sup> hosted in February 2024, residents in affected neighborhoods identified the following priority opportunities for redevelopment:

- Neighborhood revitalization and community enrichment
- Redevelopment of existing infrastructure such as the West Baltimore MARC Station
- Transit redevelopment and increased transit capacity throughout the corridor such as building on the current Red Line Project and West Baltimore MARC station
- Reduction in food deserts, investing in new grocery stores and locally owned restaurants
- Increased park capacity, green space, solar panels, and sustainability
- Investment in art spaces

## Project History

In the 1960s, US 40 was designed as a segment of an east-west freeway to connect predominantly white commuters from Baltimore’s western suburbs to bypass West Baltimore on the way to the Central Business District. Strong advocacy by communities in the footprint of the proposed highway prevented full completion of the project, but not before the 1.4-mile West Baltimore section of US 40 was constructed, earning it the local nickname “The Highway to Nowhere.”

During construction of the highway, 971 homes, 62 businesses, one school, and 20 city blocks were demolished and an estimated 1,500 residents were displaced. The communities of West Baltimore have continued to face blight and disinvestment in the decades since.

<sup>1</sup> [West Baltimore United Community Workshop #2](#)

<sup>2</sup> [West Baltimore United Project Updates Website](#)



*Harlem Park and surrounding communities were a thriving social and economic hub prior to the development of US 40*

This segment of US 40 is a below-grade, trenched highway with 3 lanes per direction, an open 30-foot median originally reserved for a Metro line (not built), 10 bridges to carry north-south cross-streets over the highway, and no exits or entrances to the adjacent communities.

The trenched highway portion is bounded on the north by W Franklin St., on the South by W Mulberry St., on the East by MLK Blvd. and on the West by the West Baltimore MARC station.

## Transportation Needs

### Lack of Community Connectivity

The US 40 trench spans a massive 300 feet across and contains six lanes of active traffic. While the roadway bridges have sidewalks and metal fencing, the bordering expansive roadways make these long crossings unpleasant, unsafe, and isolating for pedestrians and bicyclists. The existing crossings make it feasible but not desirable to cross the wide US 40 divide. This is especially problematic given that the neighborhoods surrounding US 40 have lower vehicular access, higher public transit dependence, and higher rates of walking to work as compared to the broader City<sup>3</sup>.

*Table 1: 2022 Transportation Attributes of the Local Communities.<sup>3</sup>*

	Households with no vehicles available	Population that uses public transportation to get to work	Population that walks to work
City of Baltimore	26.5%	12.8%	5.5%
Sandtown-Winchester/Harlem Park	56.1%	25.7%	2.9%
Upton/Druid Heights	51.4%	35.2%	9.0%
Downtown/Seton Hill	31.7%	12.3%	18.6%
Poppleton/The Terraces/Hollins Market	54.7%	16.9%	17.7%
Southwest Baltimore	48.4%	23.7%	6.5%
Greater Rosemont	46.4%	35.1%	1.9%

In addition to the homes, businesses, and school erased by the highway, US 40 created barriers to economic development along adjacent roadways. These streets are not conducive to the success of new businesses. Franklin St. and Mulberry St. once had two-way traffic with development on both sides; now they are one-way, higher-speed roadways that are designed for vehicle traffic first and foremost, with sidewalks and other pedestrian and bike infrastructure as an afterthought.

<sup>3</sup> [Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance](#)

## Existing Safety Challenges

Vehicle-centric infrastructure within the City creates serious challenges and grave danger for vulnerable road users. The City of Baltimore suffered an average of 1,007 total pedestrian crashes per year and 204 total bicycle crashes per year from 2016-2020. Bike facilities were found along only one of the top ten bicycle/pedestrian hot spot road segments, suggesting that bike facilities help to reduce bike crashes along road segments. While pedestrian crashes comprise only about 4% of all crashes, they make up anywhere from 30–47% of all fatal crashes, making protecting pedestrians a crucial priority for the City and a key element of its highway safety plan. W Franklin St. and N Payson St., an intersection on the west side of the Project area near the West Baltimore MARC station, was ranked as the number one intersection crash hot spot from 2017-2019<sup>4</sup>.

The Project seeks to protect vulnerable road users through the creation of Complete Streets at key locations throughout the Project area. The City's modal hierarchy, established in the Complete Streets Ordinance<sup>5</sup>, prioritizes the safety and accessibility of transportation modes other than single-occupant vehicles. The acceleration of safety improvements within the US 40 corridor directly supports Baltimore's Complete Streets Ordinance and Complete Streets Manual<sup>6</sup>.

## Disconnection from Baltimore's Central Business District

The neighborhoods immediately surrounding US 40 were not the only ones impacted. Central West Baltimore communities lost their direct connection to the jobs, stores, and amenities of downtown Baltimore when US 40 severed Fremont Avenue. To this day, bus service does not operate on Fremont Ave. because it cannot connect to downtown without significant detours.

While US 40 divides the northern and southern halves of West Baltimore, the broader neighborhoods of West Baltimore such as Midtown-Edmondson, Harlem Park, Heritage Crossing, Poppleton, Franklin Square, and Penrose/Fayette Street Outreach are disconnected from the City's Central Business District by MLK Blvd. Entrance and exit ramps at the eastern terminus of US 40, which are grade-separated over MLK Blvd and connect to the downtown street grid, also reinforce the barrier effect between West Baltimore and neighboring downtown. These functionally obsolete ramps contribute to high-speed vehicular traffic directly entering the Central Business District.

## Need for Transit Integration

West Baltimore will be the beneficiary of multiple transit improvement projects that are expected to improve transit availability in the Project area. Amtrak is redesigning the West Baltimore MARC station at the western terminus of the project as part of their Frederick Douglass Tunnel Program. The renovated station will be an interconnected transit hub for West Baltimore, featuring full ADA accessibility<sup>7</sup>, wider sidewalks, public art opportunities, bike storage, and connectivity between the MARC train, MTA bus, and future Red Line LRT<sup>8</sup>. The CityLink Blue and Orange bus service routes intersect with the Project area around US 40. Proposed alignments in for the Red Line Project include LRT from MLK Blvd. to the West Baltimore MARC station.

The planned MARC station redevelopment and Red Line Projects will not transform the Project area to its full potential without additional improvements to reconnect neighborhoods of West Baltimore and improve safety and multimodal access throughout the area. Absent redevelopment

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<sup>4</sup> [Baltimore City Strategic Highway Safety Plan](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Baltimore City Complete Streets Ordinance](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Baltimore City Complete Streets Manual](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Amtrak Unveils Renderings of Future West Baltimore MARC Station](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Amtrak West Baltimore MARC Station Flyer](#)



of the central portion of US 40, access from the planned Red Line station to the neighborhoods of West Baltimore will only be possible by navigating difficult road crossings at W Franklin St., W Mulberry St., and associated north-south cross-streets. While existing sidewalks provide feasible access to the planned Red Line station and West Baltimore MARC Station, there is only a dedicated bike lane along the southern side of W Franklin St. Roadways within the Project area, such as N Carey St. between W Franklin St. and W Mulberry St., present the highest risk for severe traffic injury as seen in the City's High Injury Network data, as shown in Appendix A.

## Proposed Improvements

The Project will consist of several major scope elements, as described below.

### Construction of a Single-Block Cap Over US 40

The Project will construct an initial cap over US 40, spanning a single block in the center of the Project area. Figure 1 below provides a conceptual rendering of the highway cap park. An initially proposed location for the single cap is between N Calhoun St. and N Carey St.; however, the final location and conceptual design will be determined as part of the West Baltimore United Planning Project currently underway.



*Figure 1 Conceptual image of the US 40 cap and park space*

The surface level of the cap will consist of an attractive public park or plaza, including pedestrian walkways, landscaping, public art, and entry to the planned Harlem Park Red Line light rail station. While the cap itself is not expected to include substantial structures due to structural limitations, some new mixed-use development along a portion of the Franklin St. greenway is envisioned that would preserve the greenway while activating the cap's public space.



*Figure 2 Concept graphics of park space on the cap over US 40 and view from the park over the future Harlem Park Red Line station platform*

The cap will stitch together the neighborhoods of Harlem Park in the north and Franklin Square and Poppleton in the south of the central portion of the corridor. This cap, park, and associated elements will be tangible progress in rejoining the two sides of the US 40 through intentional placemaking.

The City will explore opportunities to create public art installations in accordance with the 1% for Art Program<sup>9</sup>. With the development of a stairwell and elevator providing access between the below-grade platform and the plaza level, the Project will enhance access to the site of a planned LRT station currently in development via the Red Line Project.

In conjunction with the overall vision for the corridor and the ongoing West Baltimore United planning process, a future Phase 2 of the project envisions expansion of the cap up to three additional blocks over US 40 as well as other potential highway deconstruction elements along the corridor that will better serve the community.

### **Removal of US 40 Ramps over MLK Blvd.**

The Project will deconstruct the existing entry and exit ramps on the eastern terminus of US 40 and reconfigure the area to reconnect West Baltimore to the Central Business District. Doing so will provide space for a proposed Heritage Crossing Red Line station. This area was once the location of infamous high-rise housing projects that are now a HOPE VI community that is beginning to flourish. The area to the south of US 40 at this location is in the midst of a steady resurgence with recent federal and private investment in affordable mixed income housing, a rehabilitated K-8 school, and the addition of a 250,000 square foot commercial building in the University of Maryland BioPark.

The deconstruction of these ramps will unlock the potential for transit-oriented development on the west and east of MLK Blvd. The land to the west is owned by the City. The land east is a privately held key redevelopment site at the former Social Security Administration complex, now known as Metro West. Redevelopment of the long vacant Metro West site is currently underway with refurbishment and long-term leasing of the 600,000 square feet of offices in the existing buildings to the State of Maryland for the new headquarters for the Maryland State Department of Health to be completed by 2026. Approximately 3,000 employees will be relocated to this location. Moreover, the owner of Metro West has been in discussions with the City of Baltimore on a public-private partnership proposal to develop a new Circuit Court complex on the undeveloped portion of the Metro West property which is currently occupied by the US 40 ramps. Overall, removal of the ramps will unlock significant land use and multimodal opportunities to build and enhance the

<sup>9</sup> [Baltimore Public Arts Program](#)



transportation network for West Baltimore neighborhoods to more easily and safely connect to regional opportunities and daily needs.

### Complete Streets and Safety Improvements

Select streets and roadways within the Project area will be modified to create multimodal Complete Streets that will make walking, biking, and transit use safer and more attractive.

The specific location of Phase 1 Complete Street and safety improvements will be identified as part of the current West Baltimore United Planning Project currently underway, and are expected to focus primarily at three major nodes along the highway corridor, as follows:

- 1) At the western edge of the highway corridor around the West Baltimore MARC station and planned Red Line station in order to provide safer and more convenient access to and from the stations;
- 2) At the center of the highway corridor around the planned Red Line station in Harlem Park, which will maximize integration with the cap park, and;
- 3) At the eastern edge of the highway corridor around the intersection of MLK Blvd. and Franklin and Mulberry Sts., and in the vicinity of the planned Red Line station at Heritage Crossing.

Additional improvements will be identified at roads and intersections that cross over US 40 and intersect with Franklin and Mulberry Sts., as well as on other local streets along the corridor that experience historically high crash rates.

#### WBU Phase 1 Complete Streets Elements

##### Pedestrian Safety Improvements

- Improved crosswalks
- Pedestrian safety islands
- Curb ramps
- Pedestrian-level lighting
- Pedestrian signage

##### Traffic Calming Measures

- Curb extensions
- Bollards
- Vertical speed control
- Speed cameras

##### Streetscaping and Beautification

- Tree planting & beautification
- Sidewalk improvements
- Lighting
- Street art and furniture
- Wayfinding

## LOCATION & MAP

Figure 3 below summarizes the West Baltimore United Phase 1 project area and highlights existing key community assets as well as other planned and proposed improvements in the corridor.

The current design and configuration of roadways that bifurcate and surround the area create significant barriers to connectivity and contribute to a perception of West Baltimore as an isolated place, severed from the greater Baltimore community. These decisions have compounded decades of blight and disinvestment that occurred since the construction of US 40, resulting in hundreds of vacant and abandoned properties in the corridor, with few businesses to serve local residents.

In particular, existing transportation design and configuration that limit development include:

- US 40, a six-lane divided freeway that terminates at each end and merges with the city street grid. The posted speed limit of the freeway portion is 50 mph.
- MLK Blvd., a six-lane divided principal arterial roadway along the eastern edge of the project area that has a posted speed limit of 35 miles per hour (mph) and has no parking.
- Mulberry St., a two-lane, one-way eastbound roadway with a posted speed limit of 30 mph and has a sidewalk but no dedicated bike lane within the Project area.



- 
- The map illustrates the proposed West Baltimore Red Line Station and surrounding infrastructure. Key features include:
- Proposed Location Highway Cap over US 40:** A new highway cap is proposed over US 40, indicated by an orange box labeled '2'.
  - Deconstruction of Ex. US 40 Ramps over MLK Blvd.:** The existing US 40 ramps over MLK Blvd. are to be deconstructed, indicated by an orange box labeled '3'.
  - Metro West property:** A blue box labeled '4' indicates the Metro West property.
  - Heritage Crossing Red Line Station:** A red dashed line indicates the proposed station location.
  - Landmarks and Community Anchors:** A list of landmarks and community anchors is provided, including Mary Ann Winterling Elementary, Augusta Fells Savage Institute of Visual Arts, Harlem Square Park, Franklin Square Elementary/Middle School, Francis M Wood High School, Edgar Allan Poe House & Museum, and Downtown Baltimore Child Care.
  - Additional Major Infrastructure Investments:** A list of additional major infrastructure investments is provided, including Reconstructed West Baltimore MARC Commuter Rail Station, Reconstructed Northeast Corridor/MARC Penn Line & Frederick Douglass Tunnel Project, Future Red Line and Stations, and Metro West Redevelopment.

Table 2: Environmental Justice Indicators.<sup>11</sup>

Indicators	Project Area Value*	State Average	U.S. Average
<b>Environmental Burden Indicators</b>			
<b>Hazardous Waste Proximity</b> (facility count / km distance)	15	4.4	3.5
<b>Nitrogen Dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>)</b> (ppbv)	14	7.3	7.8
<b>Traffic Proximity</b> (daily traffic count / distance to road)	3,500,000	1,500,000	1,700,000
<b>Diesel Particulate Matter</b> (µg/m <sup>3</sup> )	0.293	0.208	0.191
<b>Socioeconomic Indicators</b>			
<b>Unemployment Rate</b>	17%	5%	6%
<b>Low Life Expectancy</b>	28%	19%	20%
<b>Less Than High School Education</b>	23%	9%	11%
<b>Health Indicators</b>			
<b>Asthma</b>	15.8	10.3	10.3
<b>Heart Disease</b>	8.5	5.0	5.8

\*Values in this table have been collected from the EPA's Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool for the communities in the project area.

The Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool by the US Environmental Protection Agency ranks the project area in the 92<sup>nd</sup> percentile or higher as compared to both the state of Maryland as well as the United States for several public health indicators including low life expectancy, heart disease, asthma, and persons with disabilities. Additionally, the Climate and Economic Justice Screening tool identifies the project area as disadvantaged because it meets more than one burden threshold and the associated socioeconomic threshold. According to the USDOT Equitable Transportation Community Explorer, the project area ranks in the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile as compared to the nation for transportation cost burden, and the 59<sup>th</sup> percentile for lack of transportation safety. See Appendix A for additional demographic screening analyses.

The Project will revitalize West Baltimore neighborhoods by mitigating the disconnections resulting from the US 40 “Highway to Nowhere” and the MLK Blvd. overpass, as well as previous poorly planned infrastructure policy and planning decisions. Project improvements will include safe and accessible bicycle and pedestrian facilities, improvements to green spaces, and the creation of livable streets. The potential increased transit connectivity through coordination with the Red Line Project and community walkability enabled by Complete Streets improvements and the cap park will contribute to economic development, commercial investment, and retail growth within communities. The removal of ramps over MLK Blvd. will connect West Baltimore to the emerging Metro West complex and to the Central Business District.

This combination of infrastructure investments has been targeted to increase safety for multimodal users of roadways, directly spur new equitable development opportunities for high-quality jobs, provide access to affordable transportation, contribute to healthy lifestyles in historically disenfranchised neighborhoods, and improve socioeconomic and racial equity in Baltimore. In 2018, the Baltimore City Council passed the Equity Assessment Ordinance.<sup>12</sup>, which is now part

<sup>11</sup> [EJScreen: Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Baltimore City Council Equity Ordinance](#)

of the Baltimore City Code. The Project discussed in this proposal is in line with the City's goals to carry out activities to eliminate inequity, inequality, and discrimination.

## #2 Access

For the past five decades, the Highway to Nowhere has served as both a physical and symbolic barrier to mobility and access, both within the West Baltimore communities as well as to the economically advantaged neighborhoods in the City. The overpass ramps on the east side limit the development of commercial and residential parcels and limit active transportation and transit access to the City's Central Business District. While US 40 has several bridge crossings, they are unsafe, visually unappealing, and have no economic anchor or transit connection to draw in pedestrians or cyclists. Vehicle-centric roadways and intersections across the Project area disincentivize neighborhood-level mobility, particularly for people with disabilities.

West Baltimore Phase 1 will address these historic inequities and create multimodal connections across US 40, between West Baltimore and the Central Business District, and at key streets and intersections throughout the Project area. The three major scope elements have been carefully chosen to provide complementary benefits to mobility and access to local residents.

*Table 3: Project Benefits to Access and Mobility*

Project Element	Primary Benefits to Access and Mobility
<b>Construction of a Cap Over US 40</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provides safe and inviting connection between the Harlem Park neighborhood in the north of US 40 to Franklin Square and Poppleton in the south. replacing existing unsafe and uninviting bridge crossings</li><li>• Improves access and connection to planned West Baltimore Red Line station</li><li>• Creates public park area and enables expected future development along the parkway on Franklin St. which will become draws for community access</li></ul>
<b>Removal of US 40 Ramps over MLK Blvd.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improves multimodal access and connect West Baltimore to Metro West</li><li>• Enables developments in Metro West, creating additional employment opportunities and destinations</li><li>• Supports potential alignments of the Red Line project and future station development efforts</li></ul>
<b>Complete Streets and Safety Improvements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Addresses localized street safety issues</li><li>• Aligns street infrastructure to increase walkable streets and streets designed for cycling, public transit, and micromobility</li></ul>

As detailed in the US 40 over MLK Blvd. Traffic Study in Appendix B, construction of West Baltimore United Phase 1 improvements is expected to have limited, short-term impacts to traffic flow and mobility but are not expected to result in reduced traffic flow along US 40. By restriping the existing roadway at the intersection of MLK Blvd and Mulberry St. and optimizing signal timings to account for the redistributed volumes and lane reassignment, all intersections within the traffic study maintain acceptable levels of service following the removal of the ramps. The brief section of US 40 has low average annual weekday daily traffic of 17,850 vehicles per day. When US 40 was temporarily closed in 2015, there were negligible impacts on surface street traffic. Zoning is already in place to allow for multistory housing and commercial development within the project area, as described in further detail in #5 Equitable Development.

### #3 Facility Suitability

US 40, MLK Blvd., Franklin St., and Mulberry St. all present significant barriers to access, mobility, and economic development and are poorly suited to the community. US 40 was “sold” to the community as a key connection between the City and Interstate 70 that would foster economic benefit. Roughly 50 years later, the highway remains both a physical and symbolic barrier to progress, dividing large sections of West Baltimore that were once connected.

MLK Blvd. functions as another physical barrier between the mostly Black residents in West Baltimore and the economic activity in the central spine of the City. The US 40 ramps over MLK Blvd. limit the ability to develop multimodal transportation to spur economic development and connectivity, including the proposed high quality Red Line transit service. While fully addressing the detrimental impacts of MLK Blvd. is a long-term undertaking that extends beyond the scope of this Project, eliminating the US 40 ramps over MLK Blvd. is a valuable first step that brings immediate progress toward re-knitting West Baltimore to the Central Business District through this major access point, and helping to lay the groundwork for new LRT transit options.

Residents within the Project area rely heavily on transit to commute to destinations and have less access to automobiles as compared to the citywide population. Several locations within the Project area appear on the City’s High Injury Network included in Appendix A, making them dangerous for vulnerable road users. There are also limited dedicated bike lanes throughout the Project area in the current state. Adding Complete Streets infrastructure directly caters to the needs of the local population, who need safe access to locations both within their community as well as within the greater region without reliance on a vehicle. By constructing the single-block cap that will improve access to the future Red Line station, the Project begins to mitigate the detrimental impacts of US 40 by adding new facilities that improve mobility and provide appropriate transportation options.

The Project is not expected to impact movement of vehicles, trucks, or goods in the corridor since the dividing roadways of US 40, Franklin St., and Mulberry St. will remain active to current vehicular transportation. The removal of the ramps at MLK Blvd. are also not expected to impact movement of vehicles; however, an updated traffic study will be conducted in the Planning Project to further analyze traffic impacts and accommodate expected downstream impacts.

### #4 Community Engagement and Community-based Stewardship, Management, and Partnerships

#### Community Engagement

The Project Partners are actively engaging community members in needs identification and key planning decisions in the current Planning Project. The Project Partners will extend these community engagement efforts in West Baltimore United Phase 1 and beyond, including continued involvement in key decisions throughout the construction and future use of facilities developed in the Project.

The West Baltimore United Planning Project has established and is implementing a robust Community Engagement Plan<sup>13</sup> that establishes a transparent process to seek public input and gain broad public support through a variety of avenues for public engagement. The Planning Project began with visioning and goal setting with community members and stakeholders.

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<sup>13</sup> [West Baltimore United Planning Project Engagement Plan](#)

Through Planning Project efforts in early 2024, the Project Partners established a Stakeholder Workgroup (the Workgroup) comprising diverse representation from local communities and organizations. Letters of support from community organizations are included in Appendix A. Workgroup members who are not representing an employer are offered a stipend to participate. Workgroup meetings are open to the public. The City of Baltimore has hosted two public community workshops to identify where opportunities, challenges, and preservation areas exist within the project area and to develop a vision for the future of the project area<sup>14, 15</sup>.

The West Baltimore United Phase 1 project will build on previous work to set the communities of West Baltimore on a path to a brighter future. The Project will be guided by five core community engagement principles, shown to the right. The Project Partners will continue to use a community-first strategy where community members build the vision and plan for their future, with technical assistance and support from Project Partners. The Project directly addresses priorities identified in the February 2024 Community Workshop by increasing transit capacity throughout the corridor by building on the Red Line Project and West Baltimore MARC station and increasing park capacity and green space through the single-block cap.

West Baltimore United Community Engagement Principles
1. Acknowledging challenges of embarking on a new project with a complex history
2. Reflecting and honoring memory of communities damaged by the highway while celebrating the culture of West Baltimore today
3. Establishing, empowering, and maintaining a Stakeholder Workgroup to inform and guide the decision-making process
4. Undertaking a transparent process that gains broad public support
5. Maintaining open dialogue with the community throughout all project efforts



The City will lead Project update sessions with local community members focused on sharing project progress, soliciting feedback, and identifying how the public input has shaped future plans for the community. This iterative process is critical to the success of the Project. Mutual transparency is key to re-building trust with communities who have historically been divested by those in leadership positions in government. The City will consistently communicate progress and challenges and will be forthright with the communities throughout the planned transformations to their neighborhoods during design, construction, and beyond. The Project Partners will ensure the proposed redevelopment is community-oriented and will offer amenities and services that strengthen and support local neighborhoods. Community enhancements and benefits will be incorporated into the project, including: streetscape beautification and repairs; Complete Streets amenities for walking, biking, scooting, riding transit, or driving; and environmental improvements with recreational amenities, flood reduction, and landscaping.

## Partnerships

The Project Partners continue to actively establish and foster partnerships with community-based groups through a variety of methods including community meetings, direct outreach to community leaders, and surveys to strengthen and advance this project. Additionally, the Project Partners have established a frequently updated webpage<sup>Error! Bookmark not defined.</sup>, social media and press media

<sup>14</sup> [January 2024 Community Workshop Summary and Notes](#)

<sup>15</sup> [February 2024 Community Workshop Summary and Notes](#)



engagement, and direct mailing to community representatives. Coordination with other key stakeholders includes working with local and state elected officials, local and state peer and partner agencies, Amtrak, universities, community organizers and nonprofit groups, and the Greater Washington Partnership, a civic alliance of employers in the Washington-Baltimore area.

### **Resource Commitments**

Refer to the Project Budget section and the Budget Attachment for a complete description of resources committed to the Project. The Project Partners hold paramount the community's needs and interests and are wholly committed to prioritizing the community throughout all decisions.

## **# 5 Equitable Development**

Transit-oriented development (TOD) is a critical pillar of the land use strategy for the project area, which encourages economic growth while enhancing livability and promoting appropriate infrastructure and land use mixes near transit stations. TOD promotes active, well-defined places near transit stations to create amenities for existing transit riders to generate new ridership through housing and destinations and to leverage transit investments to achieve community goals. This project is recognized as a major opportunity for equitable development within the 2024 Comprehensive Plan for the City of Baltimore<sup>16</sup>. Zoning is already in place that allows for multistory housing and commercial development within the project area<sup>17</sup>.

The areas surrounding the proposed single-block cap are already zoned for TOD, which encourages development conducive to increased transit usage including retail use. The majority of the surrounding project area is zoned for residential use of up to 58 residential units per acre, and no minimum parking is required for multi-family dwellings. Although local displacement pressures do not apply to the Project since the proposed improvements do not negatively impact any existing residences, the existing surrounding land use enables the development of greater mixed-income residential development and commercial investments. Future Red Line LRT stations may be recognized as Maryland Designated TOD Sites for the purposes of agency coordination, collaboration, and investment. The TOD designation signifies that the proposed development is within 0.5 miles of transit, provides a preference to Maryland's Sustainable Communities-related programs<sup>18</sup> and tax incentives, and allows MDOT to coordinate with the local land use agencies more closely on site development.

Economic revitalization within the project area is already underway, and removal of the ramps at MLK Blvd. will unlock potential for additional affordable housing or other mixed-use development. The Metro West complex, which straddles U.S. 40 on the east side of MLK Blvd. had been vacant since 2014. Recently, plans were finalized to reactivate the approximately 1 million square foot office building to establish the future home of the Maryland State Department of Health. The project is expected to be completed in summer 2026 and will include office space for approximately 3,000 employees, representing major progress for economic revitalization. Removal of ramps over MLK Blvd. will unlock approximately 7 acres of developable space, enabling significant additional commercial and residential development in this desirable parcel.

An equity lens better equips our Project team to identify, develop, and prioritize design strategies, investments, and policy tools that can close socioeconomic gaps and support a more equitable,

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<sup>16</sup> [Comprehensive Plan for the City of Baltimore](#)

<sup>17</sup> [City of Baltimore Existing Zoning Districts](#)

<sup>18</sup> [Sustainable Communities: Partnering to Revitalize Maryland Communities](#)

complete corridor. To encourage both public and private investments within the project area and the greater US 40 corridor, the Project Partners will target potential developers and large institutions through a marketing campaign to raise awareness of the critical needs and opportunities within West Baltimore's economy.

#### Local Investments to Complement Economic Development

- Murals, sculptures, and other artistic elements
- Beautifying vacant buildings with art
- Landscape design to reintroduce native species
- Complete Streets lighting, roadside vegetation, and other green space strategies

Mixed-use development that includes affordable housing, cultural amenities, community space, healthy food access, and green space will generate economic revenue while bringing new investment to underserved areas along the US 40 corridor. A similar marketing strategy is underway within the area directly adjacent to the project area to the east, spearheaded by a local nonprofit association, the Downtown Partnership of Baltimore (DPOB). The Project Partners will consult with DPOB for coordinated engagement strategies and opportunities for alignment and cooperation between the Central Business District and West Baltimore.

Additionally, the Project Partners will consult the equitable development framework within the Maryland Department of Planning's *Better Maryland State development plan*<sup>19</sup> when developing and constructing this project. The equitable development framework provides recommendations for workforce development, affordable housing, tackling economic development needs, and addressing infrastructure challenges. Additionally, celebrations of local history and culture will be interwoven throughout the redesign of the single-block cap and US 40 corridor. One percent of all capital construction costs will be dedicated to the construction of public art.

## # 6.1 Climate Impacts, and Planning Integration

### Reducing Transportation-Related Greenhouse Gases

The Project will consider climate impacts in all design elements and will align with the City of Baltimore's Sustainability Plan and Climate Action Plan to decrease greenhouse gas emissions, expand active transportation options, and improve the climate resilience of West Baltimore.

Transportation emissions comprised 23% of total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the City of Baltimore<sup>20</sup>. In 2022, the Mayor of Baltimore set GHG reduction goals<sup>20</sup> to meet climate reduction targets in the Paris Climate Agreement, as seen in Table 4.

Table 4: City of Baltimore GHG Reduction Goals

Year	Goal
2025	30% Reduction in Carbon Emissions (relative to 2007)
2030	60% Reduction in Carbon Emissions (relative to 2007)
2045	Carbon Neutrality

Similarly, under the Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022, the State of Maryland aims to reduce emissions 60% below 2006 level by 2031 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2045<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> [A Better Maryland State Development Plan](#)

<sup>20</sup> [Baltimore Climate Action Plan Update](#)



The Project components directly correspond to Climate Action Plan pillars, as seen in Table 5.

*Table 5: Project Alignment to Climate Action Plan Pillars*

<b>Climate Action Plan Goal</b>	<b>Single-Block Cap</b>	<b>Removal of US 40 Ramps over MLK Blvd.</b>	<b>Complete Streets &amp; Safety Improvements</b>
<b>Accelerate the Achievement of Baltimore's Tree Canopy Goal to Reach 40% Tree Canopy in 2037</b>	Add tree cover to a 1-block area that is currently entirely impervious roadway		Leverage landscape design to improve the safety and comfort of pedestrians
<b>Make Roads More Walkable and Bikeable</b>	Add a path in the park connecting Franklin to Mulberry in the center of the project area	Add sidewalks, ramps, and staircases to travel between US 40 and MLK Blvd.	Implement the Bikeways and Complete Streets plan to improve non-vehicular infrastructure options
<b>Support Transit-Oriented Communities &amp; Improve Transit for Low-Income Neighborhoods and Communities in Need of Transit Options</b>	Improve access to the planned Red Line station at the platform level	Enable the potential for a Red Line station within the east side of the Project area	Improve walkable access to existing and future transit options, including existing bus service and the West Baltimore MARC station
<b>Support State Public Transit Efforts</b>	Improve access to a planned Red Line station	Enable the potential for a Red Line station within the east side of the Project area	

Through a combination of Complete Streets efforts and by improving connectivity to the Red Line station platform, the Project will directly contribute to the City's carbon reduction strategy goals of reducing transportation-related emissions by developing pedestrian zones in communities lacking adequate pedestrian-centered design to foster a mode shift to active forms of transportation.

### **Addressing Climate Resilience and Adaptation**

In 2018, a flash flood event flooded and closed US 40 due to torrential rain near the West Baltimore MARC station. The US 40 corridor, like many areas of the City, will be increasingly at risk of extreme weather events due to the effects of climate change in the decades ahead.

West Baltimore United Phase 1 will directly improve the resilience of West Baltimore, through the addition of a cap park which will add tree canopy, green space, and permeable soil to the Project area. While this park will be only one block in Phase 1, the Project Partners plan to extend it in a potential future Phase 2. Further, Project Partners will consider resilience to climate change impacts in all elements of project design, in alignment with the City of Baltimore's 2019 Sustainability Plan and 2023 Baltimore Climate Action Plan.

## # 6.2 Workforce Development and Economic Opportunities

A common theme heard through ongoing public engagement efforts in the Planning Project is the desire for better job opportunities. The Project will create construction-related jobs within the project area in line with other existing and recent major transportation projects in the City. For example, on the Amtrak Frederick Douglass Tunnel construction project, the City of Baltimore Mayor's Office of Employment Development (MOED) is partnering with the Baltimore-DC Building Trades Union, the Baltimore Workforce Funders Collaborative, and others to create approximately 1,000 jobs at the project's peak. Similar engagement and job creation is expected through the Project. In 2023 the City was named as one of the nation's Workforce Hubs, showing how funding catalyzes private and public investments and creating good-paying jobs in the area<sup>21</sup>. As a part of this project's engagement strategy, the City of Baltimore will partner with the Baltimore-DC Building Trade Union to host a job opportunities forum to help connect jobseekers with new construction and skilled-trade jobs in West Baltimore.

The Project Partners intend to enter into project labor agreements (PLAs) with local labor unions and will ensure all jobs directly enabled by the Project offer a free and fair chance to join a union. The Project Partners will require that contracts and subcontracts associated with the Project include strong labor standards, anti-discrimination and anti-harassment plans, workplan rights notices, training and placement programs, and local hiring and procurement preferences particularly for underrepresented workers and individuals with convictions. The Project Partners will mandate that all contractors and subcontractors comply with Davis-Bacon requirements for prevailing wages.

### **MOED Workforce Development Outcomes**

- MOED apprenticeship and training programs have placed 207 apprentices, held 60 pre-apprenticeship classes, and provided services to 1,055 local residents
- Participates in linkage agreements to support underrepresented groups, including Grads2Careers program which has resulted in 428 direct job placements for Baltimore City Public Schools graduates
- MOED is a partner in the District Court Re-entry Project (DCREP) diversion program. To date, 200+ participants have completed the program in lieu of incarceration.
- MOED implements the City of Baltimore's local hiring law, which requires that 51% of new jobs from most City contracts are filled by City residents and that related job postings are promoted with MOED

The Project Partners will work in coordination with MOED to develop a workforce plan to connect unemployed or underemployed residents to work opportunities. It is the policy of the City of Baltimore to promote equal business opportunity in the City's contracting process by encouraging full and equitable participation by minority and women's business enterprises in the provision of goods and services to the City on a contractual basis. All City agencies, commissions, and boards must make every good faith effort to equitably utilize the services of minority and women's business enterprises. Current regulations from Maryland's State Highway Administration require agencies to allocate 26.04% of the total dollar value of their procurement contracts directly or indirectly to certified Minority Business Enterprise firms<sup>22</sup>. Additionally, the Project Partners will ensure the Project meets or exceeds all USDOT requirements for disadvantaged business enterprises.

<sup>21</sup> [Biden-Harris Administration Holds Workforce Hub Convening in Baltimore, Announces Commitments to Train and Hire Local Residents to Support Major Infrastructure Projects](#)

<sup>22</sup> [Maryland State Highway Administration Office of Equal Opportunity](#)

## # 6.3 Planning Integration

This project is recognized as a major opportunity for equitable development within the 2024 Comprehensive Plan<sup>16</sup> for the City of Baltimore published by the Department of Planning. It is also recognized as an opportunity for transit-oriented development in the 2020 Regional Transit Plan for Central Maryland<sup>23</sup>. The Maryland Transit Authority has been heavily engaged in the development of this Project and endorses the Project through its partnership commitment. As demonstrated in the letter of commitment from the Baltimore Regional Transportation Board (BRTB), the BRTB commits to the Project's inclusion in the Baltimore Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) by the time of award obligation. BRTB has supported West Baltimore United planning activities to be included in its Unified Planning Work Program.

The Project will directly address reconnecting communities' priorities, including expansion of access to affordable multimodal transit options for economically disadvantaged communities. Table 6 shows completed and ongoing plans and studies concerning this area.

*Table 6: Completed and Ongoing Plans and Studies*

Completed Plans and Studies of the Project Location	
» <a href="#">Resilience 2050 Long-Range Transportation Plan</a>	» <a href="#">2015 Red Line Project Plan</a>
» <a href="#">2025-2028 Short-Range Transportation Improvement Program</a>	» <a href="#">Red Line Station Area Advisory Committees (SAAC) Neighborhood Vision Plans</a>
» <a href="#">2022 East West Corridor Feasibility Study</a>	» <a href="#">2015 Southwest Partnership Vision Plan</a>
» <a href="#">2021 Regional Transit Plan</a>	» <a href="#">2012 West Baltimore Choice Neighborhood Plan</a>
» <a href="#">2018 ULI Baltimore Metro West Plan</a>	» <a href="#">2009 Cap over US 40 Study</a>
» <a href="#">2018 Historic Upton Neighborhood 2026 Master Plan</a>	» <a href="#">2008 West Baltimore MARC Area Master Plan</a>
» <a href="#">2017 US 40 over MLK Ramp Removal</a>	» <a href="#">1970 Corridor Plan</a>
Ongoing Plans and Studies of the Project Location	
» <a href="#">Baltimore City Comprehensive Plan</a>	» <a href="#">West Baltimore MARC Station Redevelopment</a>
» <a href="#">Transform Poe</a>	» <a href="#">Frederick Douglas Tunnel Realignment</a>
» <a href="#">Sandtown-Winchester Harlem Park Master Plan</a>	» <a href="#">RTP East-West Corridor Study</a>
» <a href="#">East-West Priority Transit Corridor Project (2021 RAISE)</a>	» <a href="#">2019 Community Development Framework</a>

## PROJECT READINESS: ENVIRONMENTAL RISK

### Planning and Constructability

All existing roadways as well as all future improvements will be owned by the City of Baltimore's DOT. No additional Right-of-Way acquisition will be required for completion of the Project.

It is anticipated that the construction of the highway cap will require closing the highway lanes to construct above them, potentially causing traffic impacts during construction. However, this will enable faster construction at lower cost by providing greater access to the deck-over area and avoiding maintenance of traffic and protection from operational lanes. It is expected that all Complete Streets improvements will be completed through lane closures as opposed to full road closures.

<sup>23</sup> [Regional Transit Plan for Central Maryland](#)

## Proposed Schedule

The Project Partners have developed a 5-year schedule that strategically progresses the project through several phases and activities, as seen in Figure 4. As seen in the Budget Attachment, RCP funds are proposed to fund project development phases including design and NEPA. Construction activities will be phased, with Ramp Deconstruction and Safety Improvements/Complete Streets Construction commencing in 2027 and the cap construction commencing in 2029.

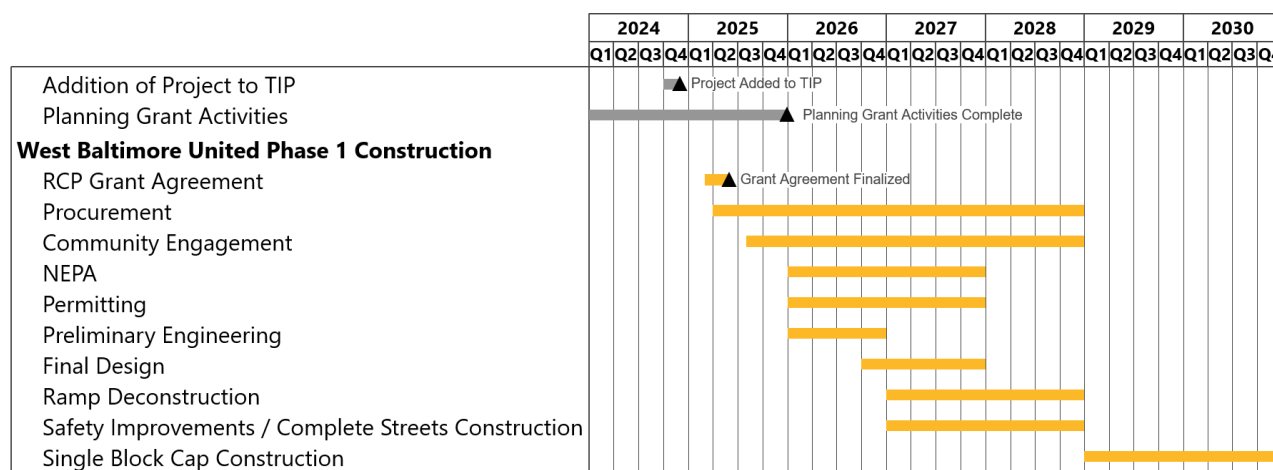


Figure 4: West Baltimore United Construction Phase 1 Project Schedule

## NEPA and Permitting

The City of Baltimore is dedicated to the successful completion of the Project and anticipates receiving all environmental permits in a timely manner ahead of Project construction. The City will coordinate closely with the FHWA for all NEPA documentation necessary to implement the Project. The NEPA process will commence in early January 2026 as design progresses.

The following will be evaluated and included in the NEPA process as design continues throughout 2026 including NEPA evaluation and reports on the following: Transportation, Land Use and Economics, Acquisitions, Displacements, & Relocations, Neighborhoods & Populations (Social), Visual Resources & Aesthetics, Air Quality, Noise & Vibration, Ecosystems (Vegetation & Wildlife), Water Resources, Energy & Natural Resources, Geology & Soils, Hazardous Materials, Public Services, Utilities, Historic, Cultural & Archaeological Resources, Parklands & Recreation, Construction, and Secondary and Cumulative impacts. The Project is expected to receive a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Class II categorical exclusion as the project is not anticipated to induce significant impacts to planned growth or land use for the area, cause any relocations of people or businesses, or impact historic or park and recreational resources, and the Project will have minimal effect on travel patterns through maintenance of traffic.

## Project Support

BCDOT and MDOT MTA have a strong track record of working collaboratively on projects of a similar magnitude, as well as projects that involve federal and U.S. DOT grant funding. Understanding the symbiotic relationship between the State's transit system and the local roadways, sidewalks, and bike facilities upon which transit patrons depend, MDOT MTA and

BCDOT have established several mechanisms to ensure this work is completed in a coordinated manner. MDOT MTA and BCDOT have worked closely over the last several years on several projects, most applicably the East-West Priority Corridor RAISE project<sup>24</sup> (2021) and the North Avenue Rising TIGER project<sup>25</sup> (2018). These working relationships reduce the potential for unexpected delays at all phases of the Project, beginning in the earliest phases of planning.

Thus far, the public has been engaged in the West Baltimore United Planning Project with one community listening session, two community workshops, one project update, and three stakeholder workgroup meetings. The West Baltimore United Phase 1 Construction Project will enact a similar Community Engagement Plan being implemented in the Planning Project to engage disadvantaged communities with particular consideration for persons with disabilities and limited English proficiency. The scope elements proposed in the Project directly address comments received by the public to date, as described in Merit Criteria #4 Community Engagement and Community-based Stewardship, Management, and Partnerships.

Mr. Stuart Sirota, Baltimore City DOT Deputy Director, Planning and Sustainable Transportation, with over 30 years of local and national transportation industry experience, will serve as the Lead Project Manager and point of the contact throughout the duration of the project. With the support of his team, Mr. Sirota will ensure appropriate uses of resources and will continue to engage directly with the community to foster trust, reliability, and continuity throughout the Project.

## Risk & Mitigation

Table 3 below denotes anticipated risks and mitigation strategies. The Project Partners will develop a robust risk register to identify, track, and proactively manage risks throughout the Project address any impacts to scope, schedule, and budget.

*Table 7: Preliminary List of Risks and Mitigation Strategies*

Risk	Description	Mitigation Strategy
<b>Interagency Coordination</b>	Risk of project delays or delays in benefit realization due to coordination with MTA and other State, City, and Federal agencies conducting transit improvements within the project area.	Coordinate closely with MTA and other State and City agencies throughout all community benefits, planning, and construction activities. WBU Phase 1 does not depend on Red Line or other projects for independent utility.
<b>Scope Changes in Planning Phase</b>	Risk of cost overruns due to potential scope adjustments as final conceptual plans are developed and selected.	Cost contingencies of 35% are included, providing appropriate flexibility for all phases of the project.
<b>Regulatory and Environmental Compliance</b>	Risk of project delays due to unexpected permitting requirements or environmental incidents since the NEPA process is yet to be completed.	Conduct thorough planning and design, keep the permitting team updated, and select contractors with a strong environmental compliance record.
<b>Supply Chain &amp; Procurement Delays</b>	Risk of construction delays due to long lead times for materials and equipment unavailability.	Regularly update the procurement schedule during planning, design, and procurement stages.

<sup>24</sup> [East-West Priority Corridor RAISE Project Website](#)

<sup>25</sup> [North Avenue Rising TIGER Project Website](#)



## PROJECT BUDGET

The Project Partners request \$100 million in Reconnecting Communities Capital Construction Grant funds to complete the Project's \$200 million funding package. Non-federal funds of \$40M from the City of Baltimore sources account for 20 percent of the Project cost. MDOT has committed an additional \$60M in additional Federal formula funding, which may directly support eligible project activities from both FHWA and FTA. Because the project is currently in early planning stages, costs include a conservative 35% contingency, which mitigates cost overrun risk and allows for flexibility throughout the progression of the project. The Budget Attachment presents a discussion of funding sources and uses, including a summary in Table 1 of that volume.

Throughout the design process, public engagement will support holistic analysis of potential alternatives to iteratively develop the best design option. Based on preliminary cost estimates of initial concept designs, the expected future Phase 2 West Baltimore United revitalization of the full US 40 project area up to an estimated \$324 million dollars, as further discussed in Appendix B. To continue the momentum that would be gained by implementation of Phase 1, the City intends to pursue several competitive Federal funding programs and other financing options for a potential future Phase 2, as further described in the Budget Attachment. To facilitate the achievement of federal funding for future phases of the project, the Project Partners request that the project be designated 'Reconnecting Extra' to support the crucial future phases of the project that will wholly reconnect the communities of West Baltimore.

## BENEFIT-COST ANALYSIS

A benefit-cost analysis (BCA) was conducted for the Project in accordance with the benefit-cost methodology as outlined by U.S. DOT in the BCA Guidance for Discretionary Grant Programs, released in December 2023. Project benefits include time travel savings, safety cost savings, emission cost savings, active transportation and health benefits, and others as detailed in the BCA.

Considering all the monetized benefits and costs, the Project produces a **net present value (NPV) of \$76.3 million** using a 3.1 percent discount rate with a **benefit-cost ratio of 1.49**. In other words, for every dollar invested, the Project is expected to generate \$1.49 worth of benefits.

The Project's total capital costs amount to \$188.4 million in 2022 undiscounted dollars (or \$155.8 million discounted). Total discounted benefits amount to \$232.0 million (\$418.0 million undiscounted). Note that some elements in the Project are expected to be constructed in 2027-2028 and others in 2029-2030. The BCA assumes that the benefits will begin accruing in 2031 once construction of the single block cap is complete.

The period of analysis used in the estimation of the Project's benefits and costs includes five years of Project development and construction (i.e., design, NEPA, community engagement and procurement, and construction) and 20 years of operations. The full technical basis of the BCA as well as a detailed list of Project costs and benefits modeled can be found in the BCA Technical Memorandum in Appendix C.