



ACTION COMMITTEE for *TRANSIT*

Transit Times

The newsletter of the Action Committee for Transit of Montgomery County, Maryland.

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Next Meetings

- Sunday, October 5, 2025 at 3:00 PM -
ACT Fundraiser Gala, Crescent at Chevy Chase in
Chevy Chase, MD
- There will be NO October membership meeting,
instead join ACT leaders for a walk-around in down-
town Silver Spring on Saturday, October 19.
- Tuesday, November 11, ACT meeting, TBD
- Tuesday, December 9, ACT meeting, TBD

Check ACT’s web site and social media for updates.

Can’t make it in person? Watch the meeting recording on our YouTube channel afterward.

ACT’s monthly meetings are normally held on the second Tuesday of each month at the Silver Spring Civic Building, One Veterans Place. The Silver Spring Civic Building is an eight-minute walk north from the Silver Spring Metro Station. Meetings begin at 7:30pm.

Editorial Remarks

Your *Transit Times* editor is Quon Kwan. He welcomes your submissions. Cutoff date for receiving materials for the next publication is **December 1**. Send your materials to Quon at: qykwan@gmail.com.

We Need YOU!

Join us in working for more and better transit. Whether you want to help us leaflet at Metro and MARC stations, work for pedestrian and bicycle safety or testify at public hearings, or volunteer in some other way—we would love to work with you. Contact ACT Staff at admin@actfortransit.org. In the Subject Line, please put, “I want to help ACT.”

President's Letter

Happy Fall!!!

During times like these that we find ourselves, it is always great to celebrate wins whether they be big or small. In August, ACT along with TAME and other coalition partners continued to show up and testify and advocate for the removal of the M-83 Highway plan from the Master Plan. Well friends, they voted to remove it. This was a victory that has been hard fought so I thought it important to stop and see "advocacy in action" and remember that together we can do great things.

This year's ACT Gala will be held Sunday, Oct 5, from 3:00 to 5:00. Our venue will be the new Crescent at Chevy Chase transit-oriented apartment complex, overlooking Purple Line tracks at 3929 Landmark Court in Chevy Chase. We will honor Margaret Schoap and the TAME Coalition, who led the fight against M-83.

Please join us for this celebration. Tickets are \$75 each, or sponsorships are still available for \$250 and up.

S.T. Whitehurst

Shanika T. Whitehurst



MARC Growth & Transformation Plan: Brunswick Line

By Quon Y. Kwan

In June of this year, the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) published its "MARC Growth & Transformation Plan," describing a 25-year plan (hereinafter called "the Plan") for the expansion of the Maryland Area Rail Commuter (MARC) for all three lines: Penn Line (Perryville to Washington Union Station), Camden Line (Baltimore Camden Station to Washington Union Station) and the Brunswick Line (Martinsburg, WV to Washington Union Station). It recognizes that MARC service operates in the constraints of a shared-ownership environment (i.e., on rights-of-way owned by a different entity, such as AMTRAK or CSX).

Three service phases are considered in the Plan:

- 5-year (2026-2030),
- 15-year (2031-2040) which implicitly includes the prior five years) and
- Unconstrained (2041 and beyond). Capital improvements are identified distinctly in each phase of the Plan.

Each phase is contingent on successful implementation of the previous phase, execution of required agreements with stakeholder railroads, and of course, adequate funding. Work commenced in 2023 with drafting of the vision and goals of the Plan. The Plan was developed with input from riders, the public, host railroad partners, and other stakeholders as well as data from a market assessment.

Input (4700 responses) was received through an on-line survey in fall 2023: the top priorities were expanded weekend service, improved frequency (all-day weekday service) and expanded service to new destinations. A market assessment was carried out with results revealing that the Frederick branch has a stronger market than the Brunswick branch of the Brunswick line. A virtual public meeting was conducted in December 2024.

The baseline costs (assumes Implementation of the requirements laid out in the 2022 Maryland Regional Rail Transformation Act) are \$7,119,300,300 for implementing the entire MARC Growth and Transformation Plan; baseline costs for just the MARC Brunswick line were not separated out in the Plan). This amount reflects commitments necessary to continue existing MARC operations, to bring the *existing* MARC system to a State of Good Repair as identified in MTA's Capital Needs Inventory forecasted to 2050, recapitalization of existing MARC rolling stock and ongoing payments to support maintenance of existing infrastructure.

The objectives of the Plan support the 2050 Maryland Transportation Plan's guiding principles and goals.



On Monday, July 28, 2025, at the press conference on Bike Safety Enforcement, Councilmember Evan Glass introduces Shanika Whitehurst, President of the Action Committee for Transit. Photo by Chris Farrell.

5-Year Phase (2026-2030) Service Improvements on the Brunswick Line

In the 5-year phase, weekday, peak service on the Brunswick (Brunswick branch) line is slated to be hourly and weekday, peak service on the Brunswick (Frederick Branch) is slated also to be hourly. This would result in weekday, peak service on this line between Dickerson and Washington Union Station every 30 minutes. There would be three round-trip trains in the peak direction per day to/from Harper's Ferry, Duffields and Martinsburg in West Virginia. Moreover, the schedule would be adjusted to expand the window of weekday peak service by one hour to 5–10 AM in the morning and to 3–9 PM in the evening.

Select Brunswick line trains from Frederick during the weekday AM peak will continue on the Camden line after reaching Washington Union Station providing a one-seat ride to Baltimore Camden Station. Select Camden line trains from Baltimore Camden during the weekday PM peak period will continue on the Brunswick line after reaching Washington Union Station providing a one-seat ride to Frederick.

Three new commuter bus trips would be introduced during the weekday AM peak period to provide connecting service from Hagerstown to Monocacy Station of the Brunswick line (Frederick branch). Reverse connecting commuter bus service would run three times during weekday PM peak period from Monocacy Station on the Brunswick line (Frederick branch) to Hagerstown.

During the weekday, off-peak period (10 AM – 3 PM), the Brunswick line will have two trains per day between Frederick and Washington Union Station, which of course, are contingent upon funding. [If not funded by the State of Maryland, then Montgomery and Frederick Counties should fund these mid-day trips as advocated by the ACT Board. Funding of these two mid-day trips will be a key scoreboard question.].

No weekend service is proposed on the Brunswick line in the 5-year phase.

15-Year Phase (2031-2040) Service Improvements on the Brunswick Line

All of the service improvements introduced in the 5-yr Phase would be continued in the 15-year Phase. [Note that the first five years of the 15-year Phase are comprised of the 5-year Phase].

There will be two new major service improvements in the 15-year Phase. The first is an extension of service of the Brunswick line past Washington Union Station directly into Virginia, serving L'Enfant Plaza, Crystal City, and Alexandria stations two times per day during the weekday AM peak and two times per day during the weekday PM peak.

The second new improvement in the 15-year Phase is

weekend service on the Brunswick line for the first time with trains every two hours between Frederick and Washington Union Station. Connecting bus service between Hagerstown and Monocacy will be provided on the weekend with three trips per day.

Note expansion of service hours on weekend evenings: instead of ending service at 9 PM as on weekdays, weekend service on the Brunswick line will operate until 1 AM.

Unconstrained Phase (2041 and beyond) Service Improvements on the Brunswick Line

All the service improvements in the 15-Year Phase will continue unchanged into the Unconstrained Phase.

There will be two major new service improvements in the Unconstrained Phase. The first major improvement is in service during the weekday off-peak hours. Frequency of service on the Brunswick line during the weekday off-peak hours will match the frequency of service during weekday peak hours. Weekday, off-peak Service on the Frederick branch and on the Brunswick branch will run hourly all-day. Weekday, off-peak Frederick branch trains will terminate at Silver Spring. Weekday, off-peak Brunswick branch trains will run through to Washington Union Station. As a result, weekday, off-peak service between Dickerson and Silver Spring will run hourly between Silver Spring and Washington Union Station. [Note that passengers on MARC trains terminating at Silver Spring will have the opportunity to board the Metrorail Red Line to continue to Washington, DC. and vice versa]. Conversely, weekday, off-peak Brunswick line trains originating hourly at Washington Union Station will terminate at Brunswick. Weekday, off-peak trains originating hourly at Silver Spring will terminate at Frederick.

The second major improvement in the Unconstrained Phase is that weekend service levels on the Brunswick line will match those of the weekday, off-peak periods described.

Estimated Costs of the Plan

The 5-year phase costs across the entire MARC system are \$409,068,000, the 15-year phase costs across MARC are \$1,765,195,400 and the unconstrained phase costs across MARC are \$4,409,710,600. The total estimate capital costs for the entire Plan are \$13,703,274,300. (Note that the aforementioned baseline costs for bringing MARC to a state of good repair are NOT included). To reiterate, each phase is contingent on successful implementation of the previous phase, execution of required agreements with stakeholder railroads, and of course, adequate funding. Specific capital improvement projects on the MARC Brunswick line proposed in the Plan will be discussed in detail in the next issue of *Transit Times*.



Upcoming Opportunities to Take Action for Better Transit!

By Michael Larkin

University Boulevard Corridor Must Be Made Safe for Frequent Transit:

Tell the County Council to pass the University Boulevard Corridor Plan because it supports land use that enables frequent transit with safer pedestrian and bicycle access to bus stops. University Boulevard is already a heavily used transit corridor. The WMATA Metrobus Ridership Summary dashboard showed the M12 route (formerly the C2 and C4) through University Boulevard was the second busiest bus in WMATA's system in Maryland with 226,758 boardings. Compare this to the M70 that includes the Silver Spring and Bethesda Metro stops with 140,438 boardings. Submit comments to the County Council here: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council/PHSignUp.html#signup> or scan in the QR code below.



Support Safe Bikeways in Montgomery County:

Councilmember Evan Glass' Bill 28-25 would prohibit stopping, standing, and parking in bikeways in Montgomery County. The bill is co-sponsored by Councilmembers Luedtke, Friedson, and Fani-González. Submit comments to the County Council here: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council/PHSignUp.html#signup> or scan in the QR code below.



Tell the County Executive You Want More Frequent Buses Now, not future promises, at FY 2027 Operating Budget Forums:

The County Executive is hosting forums throughout the fall all over the County to hear feedback from residents on what they want in the FY 2027 Operating Budget. The Operating Budget includes all the funding for Ride On, Montgomery County's local bus system. Attend a forum that fits your schedule and tell the County Executive to fund interim express buses on planned Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) routes

In Memoriam: Samuel Jordan, 1946-2025

By Ben Ross

Maryland transit activism suffered a grievous loss with the passing of Samuel Jordan on August 1.

Samuel Jordan was a life-long activist for social justice. Born in North Carolina, he arrived in Washington with his family in 1957. In 1963, just beginning his studies at Georgetown University, he helped run a student filibuster in support of the Civil Rights Act. His activism never let up over the next 62 years.

In 2016, responding to Governor Hogan's stoppage of work on the Baltimore Red Line, Samuel founded the Baltimore Transit Equity Coalition. Over the years that followed, he was steadfast in insisting on the light rail Red Line and resisting watered-down substitutes. He saw light rail as the key to transportation fairness and to the economic revitalization of Baltimore neighborhoods. He also served as vice-chair of the Maryland Transit Opportunities Coalition.

Samuel is survived by four children and one grandson.

now instead of waiting for the full construction of BRT. Please also request County funding to start mid-day MARC train service to improve traveling time between up and down county.

Dates and locations of the forums are at this link: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OPI/budget-forums.html> or scan in the QR code below.



Please also contact your district Councilmember directly if you are represented by Councilmembers Marilyn Balcombe, Sidney Katz, Kristin Mink, or Kate Stewart to ask them to sign on as bill co-sponsors. You can find out who your Councilmember is and their email here: <https://mcgov-gis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/instant/lookup/index.html?appid=b57d3f11b2b847c5a7342e73f5079e98> or scan in the QR code below.



Your testimony does not need to be long and full of research. Tell your experience of taking the bus, walking, rolling, and biking in the County. Your specific story carries weight! You can email ACT Vice President Mike Larkin at michaeljlarin@gmail.com with questions.

Virginia's Proposed Extension of Beltway Toll Lanes into Maryland should be Rejected

By Gary V. Hodge

Virginia's proposed extension of I-495 Southside Express Lanes into Maryland should be rejected by Maryland's elected leaders and the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board.

Maryland commuters don't want to be exploited by toll-road profiteers, or held hostage and manipulated into paying high tolls on highways that fail to deliver on the promise of congestion relief.

Pouring rivers of concrete to create a magic carpet for rich people isn't a solution to the mobility crisis in the fast-growing metropolitan Washington area. We can't pave our way out of this mess by adding more lanes of traffic on the

Beltway that will soon be just as crowded as they are now.

If Maryland gives in to Virginia's pressure to outsource our state highway network to unaccountable privateers and their shareholders, with their hegemonic ambition to harvest tolls across the entire DMV and beyond, our citizens and their elected representatives will lose their ability to make transportation policy and protect the public interest.

This is just the latest chapter in the misbegotten scheme cooked up in 2017 to widen the Beltway and plunder Maryland's commuters. If we've learned anything fighting this proposal for the past eight years, concession agreements to build, operate and manage toll lanes will be bound up in secret interstate accords, P3 deals with foreign investors, and contracts with expensive compensation clauses and penalties that kick in whenever a future transit project that's outside the strict control of the toll regime threatens to actually improve commutes.

The solution to the region's mobility crisis isn't to make congestion and gridlock worse by adding new traffic backups and bottlenecks on local roads wherever the toll lanes begin and end.

The solution is a seamless, interconnected network of fast, safe, and accessible rapid rail transit service, including expanded MARC service, completion of the Purple Line, and the Southern Maryland Rapid Transit (SMRT) project that's being planned in the gridlocked MD5-US301 corridor from the Branch Avenue Metrorail station to Walorf and White Plains.

Until Maryland gets serious about the hard work of developing a long-term strategy for financing rapid rail transit, learning from the lessons of other cities, regions, and states across America, and exceptional light rail and tram systems around the world, we will not be ready to seize the moment when our federal partners come back in the post-Trump era.

When I was a young planner at COG in the early 1970's, and METRO was the biggest infrastructure project in America, we dreamed of a region where the automobile would not be the central organizing principle of our daily lives. A half-century later, instead of shifting our emphasis from highway investment to transit, we see this retrograde proposal to widen the Beltway as a retreat from the region's vision of a sustainable future with mobility and economic opportunity for all.

The writer is President of Regional Policy Advisors, a former elected Charles County (MD) Commissioner, Executive Director and Chairman of the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland, Vice Chair of the Maryland Transit Opportunities Coalition, and a member of ACT.

A summary of this statement was presented at the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board meeting on July 16, 2025.

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ACT Officers/Staff Join ACT/Renew for 2025!

President: Shanika Whitehurst (Gaithersburg)
Vice President: Michael Larkin (Silver Spring)
Vice President: Paul Goldman (Silver Spring)
Vice President: Miriam Schoenbaum (Boyd's)
Treasurer: Chris Farrell (Silver Spring)
Secretary: Elendil Heinrich (Wheaton)
Board Member: Sean Robertson (Kensington)
Board Member: Derick Nabors (Silver Spring)

Ex officio non-voting board members:

- Ralph Bennett (Silver Spring), Purple Line Now chair
- Ben Ross (Bethesda), Maryland Transit Opportunities Coalition chair
- Sebastian Smoot (Burtonsville), East County
- Quon Kwan (Rockville), Editor, *Transit Times*

Bus/BRT Committee Co-Chairs: Jake Goodman and Sizhe Xie

Housing and Land Use Committee Chair: Michael Larkin

Staff: Kathy Jentz, Administrator,
admin@actfortransit.org

We encourage you to renew your membership or join ACT, if you haven't already. Membership dues help us push for better and safer transit, sidewalks, bike facilities, and safer roads. You can join/renew at a level that's comfortable for you:

- \$ 10 – Rider**
- \$ 25 – Activist**
- \$ 50 – Conductor**
- \$100 and above – Engineer**

Mail a check with your contact info to ACT at: Action Committee for Transit, PO Box 7074, Silver Spring, MD 20907. Or you can easily make a onetime or monthly dues payment online at:

<https://www.actfortransit.org/join>

Thank you so much for supporting transit activism! Also check us out online for event updates and the latest news:

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