

Response to Montgomery County, Maryland County Executive Isiah Leggett's Proposal for an Independent Transit Authority/Bus Rapid Transit System

Montgomery County Civic Federation, Inc.
Post Office Box 1123
Bethesda, MD 20827-1123



Serving the Public Interest Since 1925

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Executive Summary

The Montgomery County, Maryland government is considering spending at least \$2.298 Billion on part of a separate fixed-route bus system known as 'Bus Rapid Transit' (BRT).¹ The cost for these four routes alone is currently estimated by the County's consultants to amount to over \$5 Billion, including interest.² Concomitant with the BRT system is County Executive Isiah Leggett's introduction of a proposal to create an Independent Transit Authority (ITA) which would have independent powers of taxation and management responsibilities for a wide range of transportation infrastructure.

As shown in Appendix A, System Map, Montgomery County currently has an extensive public transportation network that includes one station for Amtrak passenger rail, 12 stations for Metrorail, 11 stations for the MARC Commuter Rail Brunswick line, Metrobus service on 17 bus routes, Maryland Transit Administration Commuter Bus service on seven routes, 342 Ride On buses for service at 5,731 bus stops on 78 routes, 18 Park and Ride lots, and 51 Capital Bikeshare stations with 775 dockings/bikes.

Currently 63% of the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) Operating Budget is utilized for Transit Services, so MCDOT is already a transit focused agency. Within the Maryland Department of Transportation's operating budget, 46% of resources are utilized directly for transit services for MTA and WMATA.

Despite an increase in population of over 75,000, both vehicle miles traveled in Montgomery County and trips on Metro, Metrobus and Ride On bus have steadily declined since 2008³. Currently less than 16% of Montgomery County residents utilize public transportation for trips to work.⁴

As part of the development of the BRT scheme, a study was done for the County by The Institute for Transportation and Policy Development (ITPD, 2012). Their conclusion is that *there is not sufficient ridership for a BRT-level of service on any of the proposed*

¹ County Executive's Transit Task Force, Final Report and Recommendations, VHB, PFM Group, Sage Policy Group, Inc., Montgomery County Government, October 2015, Appendix 6a

²Ibid, Appendix 6b

³Appendix B, Montgomery County Vehicle Miles Traveled, Appendix C WMATA Ridership, Appendix D, National Transit Database, Ride On Bus FY 2013

⁴ Appendix E, Trips to Work

routes. For example, the study found that on MD 355 (Rockville Pike), there would be only 250 riders per hour in the peak direction. This study and others raised questions about the purpose of, and need for, a BRT system.

They state further:

“The extent of the network proposed, unique among BRT projects around the world and in the US, resulted from the belief that they would need to build a network that served many parts of the County very quickly in order to secure the necessary votes in the County Council for any new tax measures. As a practical matter of public administration, however, Montgomery County has limited experience with managing projects of this scope, scale, and complexity. Developing even one BRT corridor will be an administrative challenge in Montgomery County, let alone an attempt to develop and deliver multiple corridors simultaneously; a task no other municipality has ever attempted.”⁵

In 2012, Mr. Leggett created a ‘Transit Task Force’ (TTF) to study BRT. He also requested that the TTF reconvene in 2015 to study his proposal for an Independent Transit Authority to finance, build, operate and maintain a Countywide Bus Rapid Transit system. In May 2015, Mr. Leggett requested that the Montgomery County Civic Federation, Inc. (MCCF) review and provide an analysis of the TTF proposal and respond with alternative ways to address the possible increase in traffic congestion caused by continuous approvals of new development all over the County. This Report is the response to Mr. Leggett’s request.

After careful analysis, the MCCF identified a number of much less costly and more sustainable alternatives that can be implemented in a short period of time and will greatly benefit transit riders. MCCF proposes the following solutions:

- **Provide Free Ride-on Bus Service** at a cost of approximately \$21 - 23 Million per year.
- **Work with WMATA** to implement the Q9 MetroExtra limited stop express bus service on Veirs Mill Road between Rockville and Silver Spring via Wheaton, with an estimated cost of \$1-2 Million.
- **Implement the MD 355 Ride On Plus (ROP) Transit Improvements** as proposed by the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) on Route 355 (Rockville Pike) which would cost \$21 Million.

⁵ Demand and Service Planning Report to Montgomery County DOT, ITDP, 2012

- **Increase the free-to-the-County Express Bus Services.** WMATA will implement additional express bus services on Route 29 (Colesville Road) in March 2016. This will not cost the County any money. We also recommend implementation of MetroExtra Service along Route 29 similar to the recently implemented K9 MetroExtra on New Hampshire Avenue which has resulted in a 65% increase in ridership.
- **Implement real time computer traffic signalization** control and/or adaptive signal technology to reduce congestion and enhance bus service, as is being done around the United States. The County's DOT consultants advise this could reduce travel times by 15% which will improve transit travel times on corridors such as Routes 355 and 29.
- **Implement a data driven process to optimize and improve our current system with a flexible, responsive bus transit system.** This may result in changing routes and increasing frequency of Ride On's most heavily used routes, in response to the location of demand. This "reimagining transit service" was done recently in Houston, Texas, providing 15 minute frequency at almost no cost to the taxpayers or local businesses and resulted in 10 to 20 minute faster trip times on 90% of routes. This is also being adopted by Omaha, Los Angeles and other communities. Enhancements should include better passenger amenities, improved bus shelters and accessibility, as well as real time route information updates. As the bus fleet is replaced, we recommend discontinuing the purchase of diesel buses in favor of hybrid or all electric vehicles.
- **Facilitate Implementation of Microtransit Services such as Bridj,** which is an affordable, on-demand, flexible network of express shuttles adaptable in real time and currently operating in the DC Metro area.
- **Prepare for autonomous vehicles,** which are for sale now in Montgomery Mall and in every state in the nation. Self-driving vehicles will radically change our public transit needs, with major implications for planning requirements. Autonomous transportation will impact everything from highway traffic patterns to congestion to parking requirements. Lane markings will have to be improved at locations where they are missing or difficult to see, as the self-driving vehicles will need these markings to be visible so the sensors can read them and vehicles can remain in their lanes.

In analyzing the suggested need for additional publicly-funded transit, MCCF recommends that in keeping with 21st-century technology, knowledge, and population requirements, any new public transit must keep to the important *principle of flexibility*. That is, a fixed-route bus system is not acceptable in the 21st century given changed cultural expectations and available technologies. Furthermore any new transportation projects should be prioritized using performance metrics and measurements of effectiveness for reducing congestion and increasing transit ridership.

In addition, the studies completed to date, and our membership comments and testimony indicate that there is no public support for either a significant tax increase or an independent authority that does not answer to the residents. The Montgomery County Civic Federation opposes an ITA.

“In thirty years the transportation system in the United States will be a fossil – a relic of the 20th century that utterly fails Americans in 2045.”

“For too long, our national dialogue about transportation has been focused on recreating the past. Instead, we need to focus on the trends that are shaping the future.”

-Anthony Foxx, United States Secretary of Transportation, February 2, 2015

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Montgomery County, Maryland government is considering spending at least \$2.298 Billion on four of 11 routes of a fixed-route bus system known as 'Bus Rapid Transit' (BRT) (see Appendix F). According to the County's consultants the eventual cost to taxpayers for four of eleven routes would amount to over \$5 Billion, including interest. Concomitant with the BRT system is County Executive Isiah Leggett's introduction of a proposal for the creation of an Independent Transit Authority (ITA) which would have independent powers of taxation and management responsibilities for a wide range of transportation infrastructure. Both concepts are highly controversial and the majority of residents have voiced their opposition to them at three public hearings before the State Legislature and the Transit Task Force. The proposed ITA and BRT would result in significant increases in real estate taxes, and excise taxes. The true cost of these proposals should be disclosed by the County Executive in advance of any enabling legislation introduced by the Montgomery County Delegates to the State Legislature or in the case that county money alone is proposed to be used.

As shown in Appendix A of this Report, System Map, Montgomery County currently has an extensive public transportation network that includes one station for Amtrak passenger rail, 12 stations for Metrorail, 11 stations for the MARC Commuter Rail Brunswick line, Metrobus service on 17 bus routes, Maryland Transit Administration Commuter Bus service on seven routes, 342 Ride On buses for service at 5,731 bus stops on 78 routes, 18 Park and Ride lots, and 51 Capital Bikeshare stations with 775 dockings/bikes.

Currently 63% of the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) Operating Budget is utilized for Transit Services, so MCDOT is already a transit focused agency. Within the Maryland Department of Transportation's operating budget, 46% of resources are utilized directly for transit services for MTA and WMATA.

Despite an increase in population of over 75,000, both vehicle miles traveled in Montgomery County and trips on Metro, Metrobus and Ride On bus have steadily declined since 2008⁶. Currently less than 16% of Montgomery County residents utilize public transportation for trips to work.

⁶Appendix B, Montgomery County Vehicle Miles Traveled, Appendix C WMATA Ridership, Appendix D, National Transit Database, Ride On Bus FY 2013

In 2015 County Executive Isiah Leggett reconvened a 38-member Transit Task Force (TTF) to review the legislation for the County to create a funding mechanism to finance, build, operate and maintain a Countywide BRT system.

In May 2015 Mr. Leggett requested that the Montgomery County Civic Federation review and provide an analysis of the BRT/ITA proposal and respond with alternative ways to address the possible increase in traffic congestion caused by continuous approvals of new development all over the County. This Report is the response to Mr. Leggett's request.

Since Mr. Leggett's request, the TTF has released its Final Report.⁷ The Report provides the latest capital cost estimates for four of the eleven routes: Phase 1 of the Corridor Cities Transitway, Route 355, Route 29, and Veirs Mill Road.

With the exception of the estimate for the Corridor Cities Transitway Phase 1, the estimates are not based on any detailed engineering studies which would reflect even higher costs when completed. **The most recent total estimated capital cost for the four routes is \$2,297,900,000.** The estimates do not include the cost for land acquisition at stations and intersections, the cost of any underground work/utilities or the reconstruction of bridges on Route 29. **The estimated annual operating cost for 106 buses in first year of operation is \$93,000,000 and up to \$119,000,000 in subsequent years.**⁸ When financing costs are included, the total estimated cost for the four routes is between \$5 and \$6 billion.⁹

Pre-engineering estimates calculated in 2013 of the capital cost for six additional proposed BRT routes totaled \$1,075,000,000 with additional annual operating costs of \$30,000,000.¹⁰ This estimate does not include Phase 2 of the CCT. The latest TTF Report did not update estimates for those routes but did reduce the number of buses for the four subject routes by 43%, which resulted in lower estimates.

Implementation of the proposed ITA and BRT would require funding resources that would likely result in significant increases in real estate taxes, excise taxes, or other public taxing strategies, as budget projections for the near and mid-term do not include

⁷ County Executive's Transit Task Force, Final Report and Recommendations, VHB, PFM Group, Sage Policy Group, Inc, Montgomery County Government, October 2015

⁸ Ibid, Appendix 6a, 6b

⁹ Ibid, Appendix 6b

¹⁰ VHB Planning Cost Estimate Memo, September 20, 2013

these kind of additional expenses. The funding strategy is not fully defined or presented in the Task Force Report, nor are projections of costs beyond the initial stage described in the Report. The PFM Group in Appendix 6b shows at least \$5,755,224,000 of needed Countywide tax revenues through 2046 to pay for the costs incurred to build this initial part (four of eleven routes) of the BRT System.

In the interest of transparency and fully informing the public of possible tax and other financial liabilities, the true cost of the ITA/RTS implementation should be clearly defined by the County Executive prior to seeking any related legislation from the Maryland State Legislature in the 2016 Session or building any parts of the proposed BRT System with county funds. Note that similar legislation was introduced by the Montgomery County Delegates during the 2015 Legislative Session but was later withdrawn at Mr. Leggett's request.

The MCCF Transportation Committee, chaired by Mr. Jerry Garson, carefully analyzed available public reports regarding transportation, population, and employment growth projections for Montgomery County to determine baseline data for evaluating the scope and transit needs now and in the future. In addition, a variety of alternative public transportation and transit solutions, both locally and nationally were investigated. Rather than focusing solely on a BRT, system as shown in the TTF Report, we focused on identifying the most comprehensive and cost-effective solutions to Montgomery County transportation needs now and in the future. Based on our analysis, MCCF proposes these solutions:

- **Provide Free Ride-on Bus Service** at a cost of approximately \$21 - 23 Million per year. The Ride On bus system is the most accessible transit service in the County.
- **Work with WMATA** to implement the Q9 MetroExtra limited stop express bus service on Veirs Mill Road between Rockville and Silver Spring via Wheaton, with an estimated cost of \$1-2 Million.
- **Implement the MD 355 Ride On Plus (ROP) Transit Improvements** as proposed by the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) on Route 355 (Rockville Pike) which would cost \$21 Million. The proposal includes all electric buses, 17 additional Capital Bikeshare stations, and transit signal priority at 31 intersections.
- **Increase the free-to-the-County Express Bus Services.** WMATA will implement additional express bus services on Route 29 (Colesville Road) in March 2016. This will not cost the County any money. We also recommend implementation of MetroExtra Service along Route 29 similar to the recently implemented K9 MetroExtra on New Hampshire Avenue which has resulted in a 65% increase in ridership
- **Implement real time computer traffic signalization** control and/or adaptive signal technology to reduce congestion and enhance bus service, as is being done around the United States. The County's DOT consultants advise this could reduce travel times by 15% which will improve transit travel times on corridors such as Routes 355 and 29.
- **Implement a data driven process to optimize and improve our current system with a flexible, responsive bus transit system.** This may result in changing routes and increasing frequency of Ride On's most heavily used routes, in response to the location of demand. This "reimagining transit service"

was done recently in Houston, Texas, providing 15 minute frequency at almost no cost to the taxpayers or local businesses and resulted in 10 to 20 minute faster trip times on 90% of routes. This is also being adopted by Omaha, Los Angeles and other communities. Enhancements should include better passenger amenities, improved bus shelters and accessibility, as well as real time route information updates. As the bus fleet is replaced, we recommend discontinuing the purchase of diesel buses in favor of hybrid or all electric vehicles.

- **Facilitate Implementation of Microtransit Services such as Bridj**, which is an affordable, on-demand, flexible network of express shuttles adaptable in real time and currently operating in the DC Metro area.
- **Prepare for autonomous vehicles**, which are for sale now in Montgomery Mall and in every state in the nation. Self-driving vehicles will radically change our public transit needs, with major implications for planning requirements. Autonomous transportation will impact everything from highway traffic patterns to congestion to parking requirements. Lane markings will have to be improved at locations where they are missing or difficult to see, as the self-driving vehicles will need these markings to be visible so the sensors can read them and vehicles can remain in their lanes.
- **Support mobility-on-demand services** with dynamic routing, integrated across all forms of public and shared transit with a single payment system application. The intent is to provide riders with a mix of flexible, accessible, cost-effective mobility options with an integrated payment system.
- **Implement additional traffic demand management** (incentives to reduce congestion).
- **Institute a community transportation planning process** to engage neighborhood residents in documenting transportation needs, holistic planning for the future, and greening our transportation system.
- **Work with WMATA to implement 8-car trains** on the Metrorail Red Line with more trains going directly to Shady Grove during rush hour.
- **Implement legislation so that the Tri-State Oversight Committee for Metro will have enforcement capability** on safety violations with significant fines for violations.

Most important, in analyzing the suggested need for additional publicly-funded transit, MCCF, recommends that in keeping with 21st-century technology, knowledge, and

population requirements, any new public transit must keep to the important *principle of flexibility*. That is, a fixed-route system is not acceptable in the 21st century given changed cultural expectations and available technologies. Furthermore any new transportation projects should be prioritized using performance metrics and measurements of effectiveness for reducing congestion and increasing transit ridership

In addition, the studies completed to date, and our membership comments, indicate that there is no public support for either a significant tax increase or an independent authority that does not answer to the residents. The Montgomery County Civic Federation opposes an ITA.

2.0 BACKGROUND TO THE PROPOSALS

As increasing density is ongoing in Montgomery County, there has been a lag in construction of new infrastructure, and maintenance of existing infrastructure. The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MW-COG) in January 2015 '*State of the Region Infrastructure Report*'¹¹ stated that the region faces a \$58 Billion funding gap in the next 15 years for infrastructure repair due to years of deferred maintenance. Transportation, including roads, bridges, and public transportation, is one element of infrastructure requirements, along with schools, water and sewer, and electric and gas capacity, are all critical sectors of our public infrastructure that have significant deferred maintenance, capacity, and funding gaps. There has been no rail development in the last 15 years, and the Intercounty Connector (ICC) has been the only major increase in transportation connectivity and capacity. Most residents use their private vehicles for transportation within the County.

Our report focuses on transportation, as requested by the County Executive.

Since completion of the ICC, morning congestion is observed on I-495 westbound from Prince George's County at the merge of I-95 southbound, including in Montgomery County, from New Hampshire Ave. to I-270. Congestion also occurs along the entire length of I-270 southbound in the AM. In the afternoon congestion appears on I-495 eastbound, with backups beginning at Tysons Corner, Virginia and extending to the American Legion Bridge and on to Prince George's County. In addition, I-270 northbound congestion occurs at least from Shady Grove Road and extends into Frederick County. Both spurs of I-270 are congested when high occupancy vehicle (HOV) requirements are in effect in the afternoon. Because of this congestion on the interstate routes, motorists then move to local roadways, including MD 355 and Route 29, and out-of-area traffic is introduced on to neighborhood streets. Reducing the hours of HOV operation from 3:30 pm to 6:30 pm, to 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm, and adding EZ Pass high occupancy toll (HOT) lane costing to the existing HOV lanes would reduce congestion.

Last year, the County Executive proposed the creation of a Montgomery County Independent Transit Authority (ITA) to serve as the mechanism to achieve the staged implementation of a Bus Rapid Transit system (BRT). As part of his push to implement the ITA and BRT, Mr. Leggett also constituted a Transit Task Force (TTF). The TTF

¹¹ 2015 State of the Region: Infrastructure Report, Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments.
<http://www.mwcog.org/uploads/pub-documents/pF5bXFw20150115102928.pdf>

met during the early part of 2015. It was then on hiatus and reconstituted in summer 2015 in an attempt to push forward the ITA and BRT.

2.1 Bus Rapid Transit Concept

The suggestion for a BRT system or network was reintroduced to the county by Councilmember Marc Elrich, who proposed a network of primarily north-south routes based on other BRT models found in other more high-density locations such as Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The BRT concept was introduced in 2000, as seen in Montgomery County Planning Department documents. The BRT could involve additional bus-only lanes on major roads and would require specially-designed buses with guide wheels, to be kept to a specific route, preferable the center of the road. Large stations would be constructed along the route in the center of the roadway which pedestrians would reach by crossing the street. The system would also require that the buses have the ability to change the signalization to allow preference for the movement of the buses. Plans called for road widening, in some cases within the existing rights-of-way (ROW), although beyond the existing roadbed, and in some cases, beyond the ROW, which would require the county to purchase private property along the routes through a condemnation process called 'quick take.' Stations would be constructed, and existing utilities would be moved to accommodate the new roadbed and stations. Substantial parking lots will also be required, as shown in the current Maryland Transportation Authority (MTA) plans.

For the planned BRT routes, the County would eliminate a quantity of left turns into businesses and side streets, by building dedicated transitway lanes along the middle of the roadways. This conclusion is based on the studies commissioned by County Executive Leggett.¹² The County is considering eliminating one or more traffic lanes along MD Route 355, Veirs Mill Road, and U.S. 29, which would increase traffic congestion on these routes and all surrounding roads and streets as automobile drivers seek faster alternative routes. At the moment there is no additional capacity, for example, on Connecticut Ave. or Old Georgetown Road for traffic relocated from MD 355. Neighborhood 'cut-through' traffic would increase significantly.

¹² Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan, Montgomery County Planning Department, M-NCPPC, December 2013

2.1.1 Potential Impacts to Specific Routes

MD 355 (Rockville Pike)

With the proposals to change an existing general traffic lane on MD 355 to a dedicated BRT-only lane from Shakespeare Boulevard, near Milestone Shopping Center in Germantown, to the Bethesda Metro Station 24/7 to accommodate the limited BRT service proposed, traffic congestion will increase.

The ITDP estimated that only 250 riders per hour would use the Rockville Pike BRT system during the morning rush hour. This is compared with over 25,000 vehicles that use Route 355 each day in each direction. The new BRT route for the MD 355 South area, from Rockville to Bethesda, would add only seven additional BRT stations along Rockville Pike south of Rockville that are not currently WMATA metro stations. In addition, the new route contradicts the existing Master Plan, on which homeowners rely and reference when purchasing homes.

The BRT stops proposed by the Montgomery County Planning Board do not include the Twinbrook Metro station, from which buses to Prince George's County and the eastern part of Montgomery County leave (e.g., the C4). Moreover it will not stop at the Shady Grove Metro station, which connects with 28 bus routes, including the MTA Express Buses, which go to places such as BWI Airport, Fort Meade, Hagerstown, and the City of Frederick. The route also does not connect with the proposed Corridor Cities Transitway. It will not stop at the Lake Forest Transit Center, which is thousands of feet away from the proposed stop, and it does not stop at the Milestone Park-and-Ride. Finally it does not go to the new outlet center in Clarksburg at Exit 18 of I-270 which would be a source of many riders.

U.S. Route 29

General travel lanes and left turns could also be eliminated on Route 29, causing major disruptions for businesses and neighborhood access, significant delays for vehicles accessing I-495, and significant impacts on neighborhoods from cut-through traffic as drivers seek alternative routes.

BRT on this corridor makes little sense because most transit trips are through trips that travel to and from places off the corridor, such as Laurel, Ashton, and several Park and Ride lots that are located away from of Route 29. As ITDP notes, most of the demand is in the lower part of the corridor closest to the Metro Station. There are no bus stops along six miles of the corridor and most of the buses do not stop along Route 29 until they get to the Silver Spring Metro station. As noted by the ITDP study,

“Most of the [transit] trips on US 29 are ‘through trips’ from far-flung suburban areas, so a large number of riders are passing through the entire corridor to the Silver Spring metro. Therefore, relatively few are getting on and off along the corridor. As such, there are relatively few concentrations of boarding and alighting delay other than at the Silver Spring metro. So, the benefits of BRT infrastructure on the US 29 Corridor would not be particularly great.” “As was shown by the boarding and alighting data, the very limited number of boarding and alighting passengers along Route 29 indicates that most of the trips along Route 29 are on express buses, making very few stops until they reach downtown Silver Spring or even continuing on into the District of Colombia. For this corridor, the primary problem that BRT solves - delays due to boarding and alighting – is largely absent except at the Silver Spring metro and downtown Silver Spring.”

“While there are pockets of projected densification along the US 29 corridor, the types of delay that BRT is designed to reduce are not prominent on the US 29 corridor. Because the land-use pattern is largely that typical of land adjacent to a limited access highway, such as strip malls and set-back single family homes, none of these types of delay are typically observed.” “We do not recommend that Route 29 should be included on a short list of future BRT corridors.” ITDP recommends additional express services.¹³

2.2 *Independent Transit Authority Concept*

In January 2015, County Executive Leggett requested new Maryland state legislation that would allow Montgomery County to create an ITA. The new structure would perform an end-run around the County Charter and the County Charter's taxing limits, which had been put in place by voters in 1990 and reaffirmed by a referendum in 2010. That referendum amended Section 305 of the Charter, and required a unanimous vote of the County Councilmembers to levy a tax on real property that will produce revenue that exceeds the annual limit on property tax revenue set in that section, i.e., above the rate of inflation.

If the ITA is implemented, elected representatives would not be the authority that raises taxes for transit purposes. Instead, the ITA would have that authority, with the County Council having veto authority only for a particular increase.

In the January 2015 legislative session, the Montgomery County delegates introduced MC24-15 *Montgomery County – Transit Authority*, which would create a countywide

¹³ Demand and Service Planning Report to Montgomery County DOT, ITDP, 2012

special taxing district and raise taxes above those allowed by the County's Charter. The ITA would be an independent agency run by a five-person board appointed by one person - the County Executive. There would be no direct oversight of the ITA operations, including its own procurement process, the authority to enter into contracts with other governments and private parties, and the authority to take private property through the eminent domain or 'quick take' process. It would be neither answerable to, nor accountable to us – the taxpayers and residents. Most important, the ITA would have the authority to take on significantly more debt. This debt and debt service costs would not appear on our County's books, but would still be paid for by the County residents.

The principal reason for this radical change in the County government is to finance the construction and operation of the proposed BRT system, but the new ITA would have far-reaching powers that would extend to the creation of bridges, ports, subways, tunnels, and any other related projects if it so desired. The extent of the County government's control would be limited to the approval of ITA projects in the County Capital Improvement Program (CIP) budget and provisions in relevant master plans. Project descriptions within the CIP are very short, no more than two or three pages, with little detail. As a result, it is difficult for residents to know how the project might affect them and their property.

The proposed ITA would oversee all Ride On bus system functions; all bus systems, including finance, maintenance, planning, and operations; any transit funded by the public would be run under the proposed ITA which would be completely independent from the Montgomery County Government, and hence, from the people who rely on a representative democracy to ensure the people's business is open and accountable to the public.

Below is the synopsis of the January 2015 bill, according to the Montgomery County Delegation's website, bolding for emphasis only. The bill, MC 24-15, was introduced on January 23, 2015 in the State Legislature as House Bill 104.

At the time of this writing no revised final bill has been sent to the Delegation. To respond to Mr. Leggett's request of the MCCF, we decided to work with the existing bill.

“For the purpose of authorizing the governing body of Montgomery County to create, by local law, a Transit Authority to perform county transit functions as an instrumentality of the county and body corporate and politic and governed by a certain board; authorizing the governing body, by local law, to create a special taxing district to finance the cost of

county transit functions, impose a certain special tax, specify the organization of the Transit Authority, specify certain powers of the Transit Authority, establish a certain budget process for the Transit Authority, and specify certain other matters related to the Transit Authority; providing that provisions of the Montgomery County Charter do not apply to the Transit Authority except under certain circumstances; providing that a certain tax limitation does not apply to certain revenue raised for certain purposes; authorizing the Transit Authority to provide for the issuance of certain revenue bonds for certain purposes, subject to certain conditions and exempt from certain provisions of law.”

A hearing was held on the Bill on Friday January 30, 2015 at 6:00 PM in the Third Floor Hearing Room, Stella Werner Council Office Bldg., 100 Maryland Ave., Rockville, MD.

Based in part on public opposition to the bill, it was later withdrawn by Mr. Leggett.

3.0 MONTGOMERY COUNTY CIVIC FEDERATION RESPONSE

There are significant structural problems with the proposed ITA and BRT. In this section we analyze these issues, and as Mr. Leggett requested of the MCCF, we provide viable cost-effective alternatives which address the possible need for additional transit in the 21st century. We show that a fixed-route diesel-bus system is not the only alternative to a possible need for additional transit. In addition, we show that such a system has been overcome by events, and does not meet the realities of 21st-century expectations for transportation.

As U.S. Secretary of Transportation Foxx has said, “In thirty years the transportation system in the United States will be a fossil – a relic of the 20th century that utterly fails Americans in 2045.” He went on to say, “For too long, our national dialogue about transportation has been focused on recreating the past. Instead, we need to focus on the trends that are shaping the future.”

The MCCF believes that the proposed ITA power over infrastructure and pocketbooks is, in our opinion, too broad. An ITA or a BRT should not be approved or implemented.

3.1 Cost Analysis

The MCCF Transportation Committee has reviewed the proposals by the County Executive’s TTF¹⁴ for the proposed BRT routes along MD 355 (Rockville Pike), Route 29, Veirs Mill Road and Phase 1 of the CCT. In addition members of the Transportation Committee attended most of the meetings of the TTF, and MCCF First Vice President James Zepp served as a member of the TTF.

Costs will include construction costs; debt service; and maintenance and operations costs, all to be borne by taxpayers.

The pre-engineering estimated capital costs for four of the total eleven BRT routes alone amount to almost \$2.3 billion. This expense will require \$147 million to \$157 million in annual principal and interest cost, known as the ‘debt service,’ as the money

¹⁴ County Executive’s Transit Task Force Public Draft Report and Recommendations, Transit Task Force, VHB PFM Group, Sage Policy Group, Inc., Montgomery County Government, Sept 2015
<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/transit-task-force-2015/report.html>

will have to be borrowed by the county taxpayers, and the debt repaid over the decades. This could change depending on the term of the bond issuance. Normally Montgomery County issues 20-year or less maturity bonds. However, any other term of financing could affect the actual amount of the debt service per year.

Adding to this amount is the annual operations and maintenance cost for the BRT routes, estimated to be \$93 million in the initial year of operation ¹⁵ and continuing to increase to \$118.5 million. The total estimated cost for the four routes at this time, with no inflation beyond the first year of construction, is \$5.7 Billion - \$6.2 Billion over the assumed 30-year life of the project.¹⁶ These costs would be in addition to the cost of the Ride On Bus system.

Maintenance and Operations

The annual maintenance and operations costs are estimated at \$118.5 million for these four projects alone. Since parts of this project are not scheduled to be completed until June 2027, it is very hard to estimate the cost for maintenance and operations that far out, especially as we do not know the design details or inflation details for the next twelve years. The estimated annual cost to the Real Property Taxpayers could be over \$200 million. The current projected Real Property Tax Revenue for Fiscal Year 2016 is \$1.6 billion.¹⁷ In sum, this cost alone will result in about a 13% increase in real estate taxes for residents and businesses.

When the CCT Phase 2 is added to this cost, the annual maintenance and operations cost is estimated to be increased by an additional \$11.6 million.

Additional Seven BRT Routes – Project Costs

Real property tax increases of 37% or more, or a mix of other taxes, can easily occur in the foreseeable future, if the full BRT and, the full CCT, are implemented.

¹⁵County Executive's Transit Task Force, Final Report and Recommendations, VHB, PFM Group, Sage Policy Group, Inc, Montgomery County Government, October 2015, Appendix 6a

¹⁶ Ibid, Appendix 6a, 6b

¹⁷ Online Publication of the Operating Budget, Montgomery County Office of Management and Budget, https://reports.data.montgomerycountymd.gov/reports/BB_FY16_APPR/BO_REVENUES

Questions on Employment Forecasts

As part of the argument for the substantial rise in taxes and implementation of the BRT, the MWCOG has used specific forecasting models, stating there will be a large increase in employment.

MCCF questions the numbers stated in the MWCOG forecasts that are used to account for the large planned increase in employment.¹⁸

In reviewing the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation data (see Table below) in the last 10 years, from 2005 to 2014, we note that employment in Montgomery County has dropped by 3,325 people; from a total of 458,668 to 455,343. It is difficult to accept that employment will jump by 183,100 in the next 25 years by a solid 6.1% every 5 years as stated in the forecast shown in Table 3-1.

Table 3-1. Five-Year Employment Forecast Summary, Montgomery County 2010-2040¹⁹

Year	Total Population	5-Year Increase	Percent increase	Households	5-Year Increase	Percent Increase	Jobs	5-year Increase	Percent Increase
2010	972,500	-	-	361,100	-	-	510,300	-	-
2015	1,020,200	47,700	4.9%	377,600	16,500	4.6%	532,000	21,700	4.3%
2020	1,067,300	47,100	4.6%	397,100	19,500	5.2%	564,400	32,400	6.1%
2025	1,109,700	42,400	4.0%	414,600	17,500	4.4%	598,800	34,400	6.1%
2030	1,154,200	44,500	4.0%	434,700	20,100	4.8%	635,300	36,500	6.1%
2035	1,184,700	30,500	2.6%	449,800	15,100	3.5%	674,000	38,700	6.1%
2040	1,203,100	18,400	1.6%	460,100	10,300	2.3%	715,100	41,100	6.1%

In contrast to the above data, the *Office Market Assessment Montgomery County, Maryland* report which was prepared for the Montgomery County Planning Department (June 18, 2015), shows different data. According to that report, from 2004 to 2013 Montgomery County only added 3,027 new jobs. The data from that report are partly shown below. The table is reproduced and contains updated data from 2005-2014, in Table 3-2.

Please note that in 2010 there were only 441,583 jobs in Montgomery County, based on the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation reports, not the 510,300 stated in Round 8.3 of the MWCOG Forecast.

We do not see how it is probable that Montgomery County will add 214,800 jobs from 2010 by the year 2040, as in the 10 years from 2005 to 2014 the County actually **lost** 3,325 jobs.

¹⁸ Round 8.3 Cooperative Forecasting, Population and Household Forecasts to 2040 by Traffic Analysis Zone, Department of Community Planning and Services, Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, 2014.

<https://www.mwcog.org/uploads/pub-documents/oV5bXlc20141015131835.pdf>

¹⁹ Ibid.

Change

Table 3-2. Employment Trends, Montgomery County, 2005-2014

Table 3-2. Employment Trends, Montgomery County, 2005-2014					Average Annual Payroll						2014
Industry	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	from
Government											2005
Federal Government	39,968	39,785	40,319	41,543	43,158	45,072	46,460	47,080	46,854	46,678	6,710
State Government	1,043	1,068	1,066	1,080	1,029	1,199	1,186	1,232	1,122	1,207	164
Local Government	36,935	37,397	37,469	37,860	37,834	37,140	38,450	39,669	40,707	41,695	4,760
Total Government	77,946	78,250	78,854	80,483	82,021	83,411	86,096	87,981	88,683	89,580	11,634
Private-Sector Employment											
Goods-Producing Services											
Natural Resources and Mining	709	745	806	873	719	796	620	393	258	304	(405)
Construction	29,444	30,891	30,449	28,503	24,223	22,291	23,425	23,263	23,363	23,662	(5,782)
Manufacturing	14,714	14,303	14,563	14,459	13,431	12,356	11,787	11,435	11,219	11,304	(3,410)
Total Goods-Producing	44,867	45,939	45,818	43,835	38,373	35,443	35,832	35,091	34,840	35,270	(9,597)
Service-Producing Sectors											
Trade, Transportation and Utilities	64,990	64,349	62,631	61,075	56,566	57,287	57,440	58,193	57,607	57,824	(7,166)
Information	15,105	15,208	14,089	14,335	14,117	12,818	12,634	12,232	12,359	12,608	(2,497)
Financial Activities	36,127	35,797	35,371	34,312	31,908	30,830	30,474	30,586	30,479	30,040	(6,087)
Professional and Business Services	101,111	106,477	103,189	102,413	99,577	100,075	101,751	99,317	98,510	98,782	(2,329)
Education and Health Services	56,698	58,365	58,983	60,422	61,977	63,188	64,234	65,780	66,767	67,618	10,920
Leisure and Hospitality	39,505	37,878	37,614	38,133	37,133	36,894	37,523	39,115	40,257	41,005	1,500
Other Services	21,701	21,962	22,125	21,918	21,460	21,637	21,800	22,579	22,307	22,616	915
Total Service-Producing	335,237	340,036	334,002	332,608	322,738	322,729	325,856	327,802	328,286	330,493	(4,744)
Unclassified	618	608	672	592	173	0	0	6	0	0	(618)
Total Private Employment	380,722	386,583	380,492	377,035	361,284	358,172	361,688	362,899	363,126	365,763	(14,959)
Total Employment											
Total Employment	458,668	464,833	459,346	457,518	443,305	441,583	447,784	450,880	451,809	455,343	(3,325)
Loss of Jobs 2005 to 2014		(3,325)									
Loss of Private Sector Employment		(14,959)									
Gain in Local Government Employment		4,760									
Source: Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation											

Source: Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation

Page 4 of the Regional Employment Trends report²⁰ states:

“Metropolitan Washington and Montgomery County weathered the Great Recession much better than the rest of the country. The region’s concentration of federal government functions and its extensive base of contractors and suppliers positioned it to benefit from the government’s relative employment stability and stimulus spending. Employment declined only 1.6 percent (45,000 jobs) from 2008 to 2009 and then expanded 1.8 percent, adding 50,000 jobs to 2011.

The region’s relatively strong economic performance in contrast with many other parts of the country made it a magnet for in-migration, particularly among younger millennial workers leaving college and getting started in their careers. Since then, the expiration of the stimulus programs, drawdown of American actions in Iraq and Afghanistan, budget wars on Capitol Hill, sequestration and the government shutdown have taken their toll. The 2013 sequestration imposed significant cuts in government contracting. Failure to reach a comprehensive budget accord for more than three years created great overall uncertainty regarding existing and future Federal government contracts and directly impacted contractors’ employment levels and their willingness to commit to long-term leases. With the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013, the uncertainty has been reduced somewhat, but the budget wars continue to influence the regional economy.

The region’s employment growth has slowed from 1.4 and 1.3 percent annual growth in 2011 and 2012, respectively, to 1.0 percent in 2013 and 0.5 percent for the 12 months from August 2013 through July 2014. Higher-wage jobs traditionally based in office space are growing more slowly than lower-wage service jobs in restaurants, retailing and hospitals. Federal government employment is down by 1.8% since 2010. Information employment fell by 5.0 percent while professional, scientific and technical services grew 3.9% with the economic recovery. (Annual employment data are shown in Appendix Table A-5 of that document, and in the previous table of this report, Table 3-2.)

Three sectors – leisure and hospitality, education and health services, and trade and transportation, and utilities – added 87,200 jobs from 2010 to 2013 as compared with only 34,200 in traditional office using categories of professional and business services, information, and financial services. Economic performance over the 12 month from July 2013 to July 2014 showed an even greater shift to lower-wage industries.”²¹ This shows that employment in the County in fact is not growing.

²⁰ Partners for Economic Solutions, Office Market Assessment, Montgomery County, Maryland. June 18, 2015. <http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/viewer.shtm#http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/research/documents/MontgomeryCountyOfficeFinalReport061815.pdf>

3.1.1. Ridership Forecasts

Despite rapid growth in the region and in the County in the last 10 years, ridership on Metrorail, Metrobus and Ride On has continued to decline, as shown below in Table 3-3 and Appendices B and C.

Metrorail ridership peaked at 745,000 boardings per day in 2008. In 2015 there are 700,000 boardings per day. Metrorail ridership has declined 5% in the last 5 years. Bus ridership peaked in 2003 at 500,000 boardings per day. In 2015 there are 450,000 Metrobus boardings. The decline in ridership has contributed to WMATA's financial problems and they are considering another fare increase, a proposal we believe would be counter-productive.

Despite rapid growth in Montgomery County, total vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per 100,000 has also continued on a steady decline. VMT in the County has declined from 803,598 miles in 2006 to 729,632 miles in 2013.²²

Advances in technology, teleworking, online shopping, and flexible work schedules have all contributed to changing travel patterns nationwide and in Montgomery County. Transportation technology is not only changing how we get from point A to point B but it will also require altering the underlying transportation and communications infrastructure of the County. Given the amount of capital investment that will be required to implement these technology changes, as well as needed capital to address deferred maintenance of other infrastructure, *MCCF does not believe that investing \$5 to \$10 billion in another fixed-route bus system is the best use of scarce resources.*

²¹ Ibid.

²² Regional Indicator Vehicle Miles Traveled Data, Montgomery County
<https://reports.data.montgomerycountymd.gov/dataset/Regional-Indicator-Vehicle-Miles-Traveled-Data/b4zy-t4ih>

Table 3-3. Metrorail Average Weekday Passenger Boardings.

Montgomery County WMATA

Ridership											Change	Change
Metrorail Average Weekday Passenger Boardings											2009	2006
Station	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2015	2015
Bethesda MD 355	10,530	10,738	10,968	10,730	10,605	10,765	10,888	10,608	10,875	10,708	(22)	178
Forest Glen	2,170	2,302	2,409	2,514	2,366	2,365	2,448	2,443	2,442	2,382	(132)	212
Friendship Heights MD 355	9,771	9,713	10,189	9,696	9,804	9,957	9,671	9,703	9,620	9,466	(230)	(305)
Glenmont	5,944	6,096	6,117	5,966	5,857	5,850	6,190	6,149	6,270	6,185	219	241
Grosvenor MD 355	5,578	5,642	5,817	5,948	5,843	5,876	5,862	5,857	5,795	5,557	(391)	(21)
Medical Center MD 355	5,100	5,256	5,346	5,627	5,574	5,866	6,010	6,221	5,988	5,663	36	563
Rockville MD 355	4,365	4,572	4,736	4,880	4,927	4,812	4,834	4,900	4,769	4,424	(456)	59
Shady Grove near MD 355	13,894	14,439	14,390	14,107	13,945	13,856	13,870	13,444	13,308	12,609	(1,498)	(1,285)
Silver Spring	14,032	14,777	15,155	14,077	13,421	13,471	13,621	13,057	13,195	13,008	(1,069)	(1,024)
Takoma	6,362	6,466	6,664	6,811	6,685	6,488	6,143	5,823	5,813	5,774	(1,037)	(588)
Twinbrook near MD 355	4,763	4,805	4,943	4,628	4,587	4,773	4,632	4,569	4,470	4,443	(185)	(320)
Wheaton	4,887	4,874	4,754	4,653	4,543	4,472	4,374	4,094	4,227	4,231	(422)	(656)
White Flint MD 355	3,714	4,010	4,097	4,096	4,210	4,266	4,151	3,951	3,889	3,855	(241)	141
Total Montgomery County	91,110	93,690	95,585	93,733	92,367	92,817	92,694	90,819	90,661	88,305	(5,428)	(2,805)
Total All Stations												
Regionwide	713,703	724,667	750,431	746,017	748,929	743,962	744,918	725,770	721,804	712,843	(33,174)	(860)
Source WMATA												

All Daily Passenger Boardings were taken in May unless noted otherwise.

http://www.wmata.com/about_metro/public_rr.cfm?

3.2 Alternatives to the Proposed BRT

MCCF has identified alternatives that are easier to implement and much less expensive than the proposed BRT. These are as follows.

- **Implement free Ride On bus services in Montgomery County with a review of, and changes to, the current routes to make them more direct and to reflect current ridership patterns.** Free Ride On bus services would provide more mobility at less than 10% of the cost of the proposed BRT lines. The cost in 2014 for this free service would have been \$22 million. Next year it probably will be \$23 million. This cost is based on the amount of fare contribution made by riders. Free Ride On services will increase the speed of the buses as both doors can be used and there is no time needed for fare collection. In addition free bus service will attract sustained ridership and substantial new ridership.

The MCCF Transportation Committee recommends provide free Ride On bus services for a trial period to County residents.

The fare revenue on Ride On buses in Fiscal Year 2014 was \$21,655,986. Currently seniors can ride free Monday – Friday between 9:30 AM and 3:00 PM. Children with ID can ride free from 2:00 PM-8:00 PM Monday-Friday.

The cost for free Countywide Ride On bus service, would be less than 10% of the cost of the proposed BRT lines on Route 355 (Rockville Pike), Route 29 (Colesville Road) and Veirs Mill Road, and would benefit the entire County, not just three roadway corridors.²³ Ride On is the most accessible transit mode in the County.

Some jurisdictions, including Vero Beach, FL, and Commerce, CA, as well as numerous European towns that have done this have had as much as a 60% increase in ridership without other inducements or improvements.²⁴

By eliminating fare collection, the bus rides would be speeded up and additional service could be provided at no significant cost.

²³ http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/transit-task-force-2015/Resources/Files/Public_Draft_Montgomery_County_Transit_Task_Force_Report_09-16-15.pdf

²⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_public_transport

- **Work with WMATA to implement the Q9 MetroExtra** limited stop express bus service on Veirs Mill Road between Rockville and Silver Spring via Wheaton, with an estimated cost of \$1-2 Million.
- **Implement the MD 355 Ride On Plus (ROP) Transit Improvements** as proposed by the Montgomery County Department of Transportation.

According to a May 13, 2015 article in *Bethesda Beat*,

“Montgomery County officials think they have a good shot at getting federal funding for a “premium” bus route that would run with all-electric vehicles along some of the most congested portions of Rockville Pike.

Gary Erenrich, the county’s Acting Deputy Director for Transportation Policy, said the route would have 14 buses that would provide more frequent service with fewer stops between Lakeforest Mall in Gaithersburg and the Grosvenor-Strathmore Metro station in North Bethesda. The bus route would cost a total of \$21 million.”²⁵

(*Bethesda Beat* May 13, 2015)

- **Increase the free-to-the-County Express Bus Services.** WMATA will implement additional express bus services on Route 29 (Colesville Road) in March 2016. This will not cost the County any money. We also recommend implementation of MetroExtra Service along Route 29 similar to the recently implemented K9 MetroExtra on New Hampshire Avenue which has resulted in a 65% increase in ridership
- **Implement real time computer traffic signalization** control and/or adaptive signal technology to reduce congestion and enhance bus service, as is being done around the United States. The County’s DOT consultants advise this could reduce travel times by 15% which will improve transit travel times on corridors such as Routes 355 and 29.
- **Implement a data driven process to optimize and improve our current system with a flexible, responsive bus transit system.** This may result in changing routes and increasing frequency of Ride On’s most heavily used routes, in response to the location of demand. This “reimagining transit service”

²⁵ ‘Premium Bus Service’ Could be Coming to Rockville Pike. *Bethesda Beat*, Aaron Kraut, May 13, 2015

was done recently in Houston, Texas, providing 15 minute frequency at almost no cost to the taxpayers or local businesses and resulted in 10 to 20 minute faster trip times on 90% of routes. This is also being adopted by Omaha, Los Angeles and other communities. Enhancements should include better passenger amenities, improved bus shelters and accessibility, as well as real time route information updates. As the bus fleet is replaced, we recommend discontinuing the purchase of diesel buses in favor of hybrid or all electric vehicles.

- **Facilitate Implementation of Microtransit Services such as Bridj**, which is an affordable, on-demand, flexible network of express shuttles adaptable in real time and currently operating in the DC Metro area.
- **Prepare for autonomous vehicles**, which are for sale now in Montgomery Mall and in every state in the nation. Self-driving vehicles will radically change our public transit needs, with major implications for planning requirements. Autonomous transportation will impact everything from highway traffic patterns to congestion to parking requirements. . Lane markings will have to be improved at locations where they are missing or difficult to see, as the self-driving vehicles will need these markings to be visible so the sensors can read them and vehicles can remain in their lanes.
- **Support mobility-on-demand services** with dynamic routing, integrated across all forms of public and shared transit with a single payment system application. The intent is to provide riders with a mix of flexible, accessible, cost-effective mobility options with an integrated payment system. This could be accomplished with self-driving vehicles that would pick up riders at their house and take them directly to their destination.
- **Implement additional traffic demand management** (incentives to reduce congestion).
- **Institute a community transportation planning process** to engage neighborhood residents in documenting transportation needs, holistic planning for the future, and greening our transportation system.
- **Work with WMATA to implement 8-car trains** on the Metrorail Red Line with more trains going directly to Shady Grove during rush hour.
- **Implement legislation so that the Tri-State Oversight Committee for Metro will have enforcement capability** on safety violations with significant fines for violations.

In analyzing the suggested need for additional publicly-funded transit, MCCF, recommends that in keeping with 21st-century technology, knowledge, and population requirements, any new public transit must keep to the important *principle of flexibility*. That is, a fixed-route system is not acceptable in the 21st century given changed cultural expectations and available technologies. Furthermore, any new transportation projects should be prioritized using performance metrics and measurements of effectiveness for reducing congestion and increasing transit ridership.

In addition, the studies completed to date, and our membership comments, indicate that there is no public support for either a significant tax increase or an independent authority that does not answer to the residents. The Montgomery County Civic Federation opposes an ITA.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In summary, the MCCF Transportation Committee recommends Montgomery County look for more cost-effective and more immediate methods of reducing traffic congestion in the county.

Free Ride On bus service, and capacity increases combined with the Houston, Texas approach of redesigning bus routes to be more efficient and effective in serving their County's residents, could substantially increase ridership while improving the quality of local bus service provided County-wide.

Components of a Comprehensive County Transit Improvement Plan:

- Through data-driven analyses, significantly increase Ride On service frequency, reliability, and trip speeds by complete redesign of routes for the County's current population and job/destination centers.
- Increase overall ridership by eliminating fares on Ride On busses.
- Add WMATA Metro Extra enhanced bus service similar to the K9 bus route which is already in service on selected segments of County corridors, and
- Expand MTA express bus services on I-95 and I-270.

Montgomery County already has a multi-faceted public transit system (Metrorail, MARC Rail, WMATA Bus and Ride-On Bus), some elements of which are heavily utilized and others of which are seriously under-utilized, but all of which can be improved.

All of our research points to the combination of the above initiatives which can be implemented relatively quickly and at no significant cost. Acting on these initiatives will improve our transportation system, increase ridership, reduce auto trips, stimulate our economy and improve our quality of life without creating a separate independent agency or significantly increasing taxes.

The MCCF also recommends considering the following questions when seeking solutions to congestion.

Is a BRT system the best way to address traffic congestion and provide transit or is it a solution in search of a problem? Should it really be the only solution considered? What are the total costs and related benefits? A full analysis of these proposals' costs and the benefits has not been performed or provided to residents and businesses.

Is an ITA needed to meet the above goals or is it just a way to borrow beyond the County's means and a way to provide decision-makers with political cover?

How can existing transit riders be best served?

Which solutions work best in which areas?

How can increased transit ridership be achieved?

What can the County afford (especially during times of falling revenue)?

How can single-occupant car trips and traffic congestion be reduced?

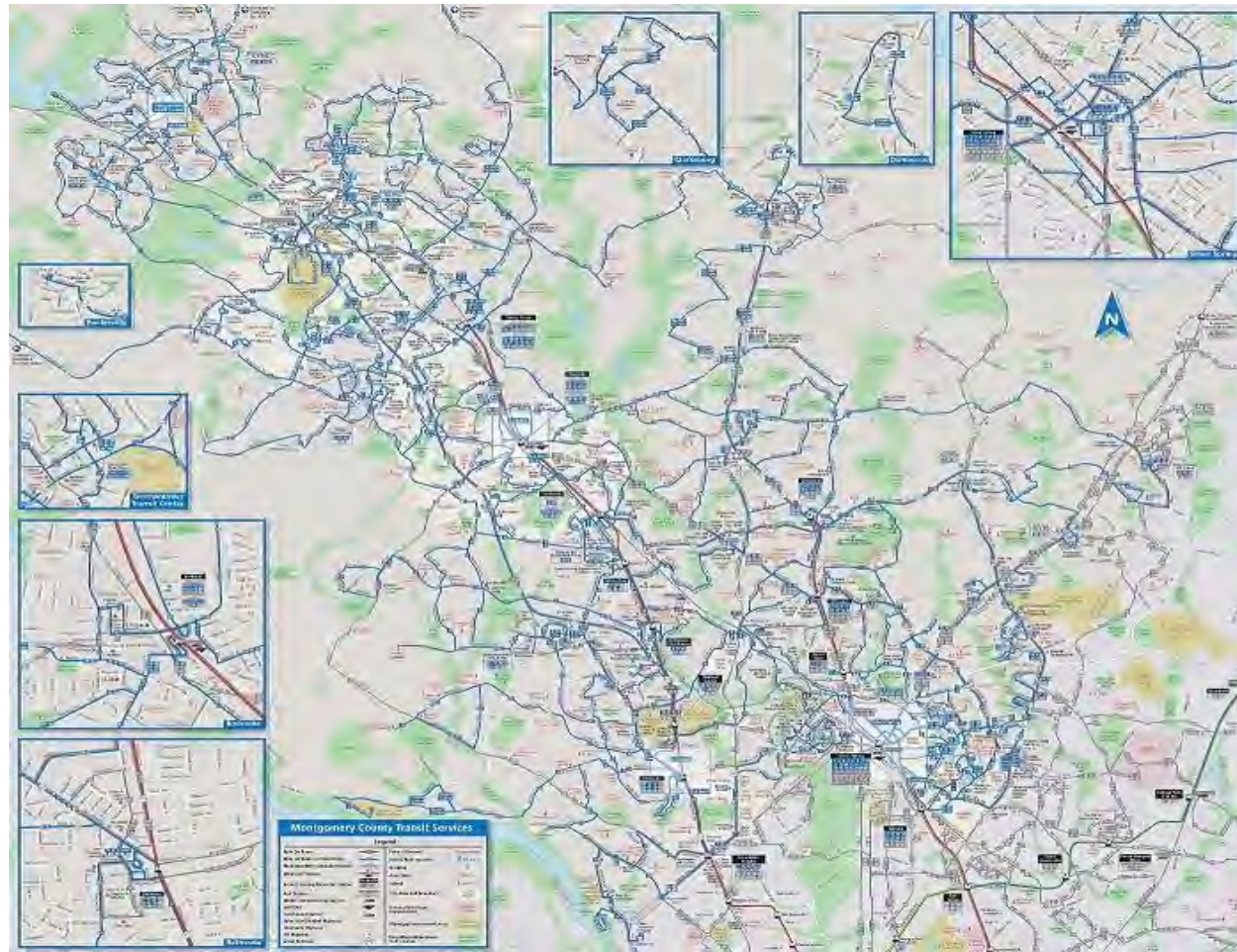
How can the County take advantage of emerging transportation technologies?

How can the County take advantage of emerging shared vehicle economies?

Can reducing the hours of HOV operation on I-270 reduce congestion on local roads?

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Montgomery County Transit System Map



Source: Montgomery County Department of Transportation,
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/DOT-Transit/Resources/Files/SystemMapJul2011.pdf>

APPENDIX B: Decrease in Montgomery County Vehicle Miles Traveled, 2006 to 2013

Regional Indicator - Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT)

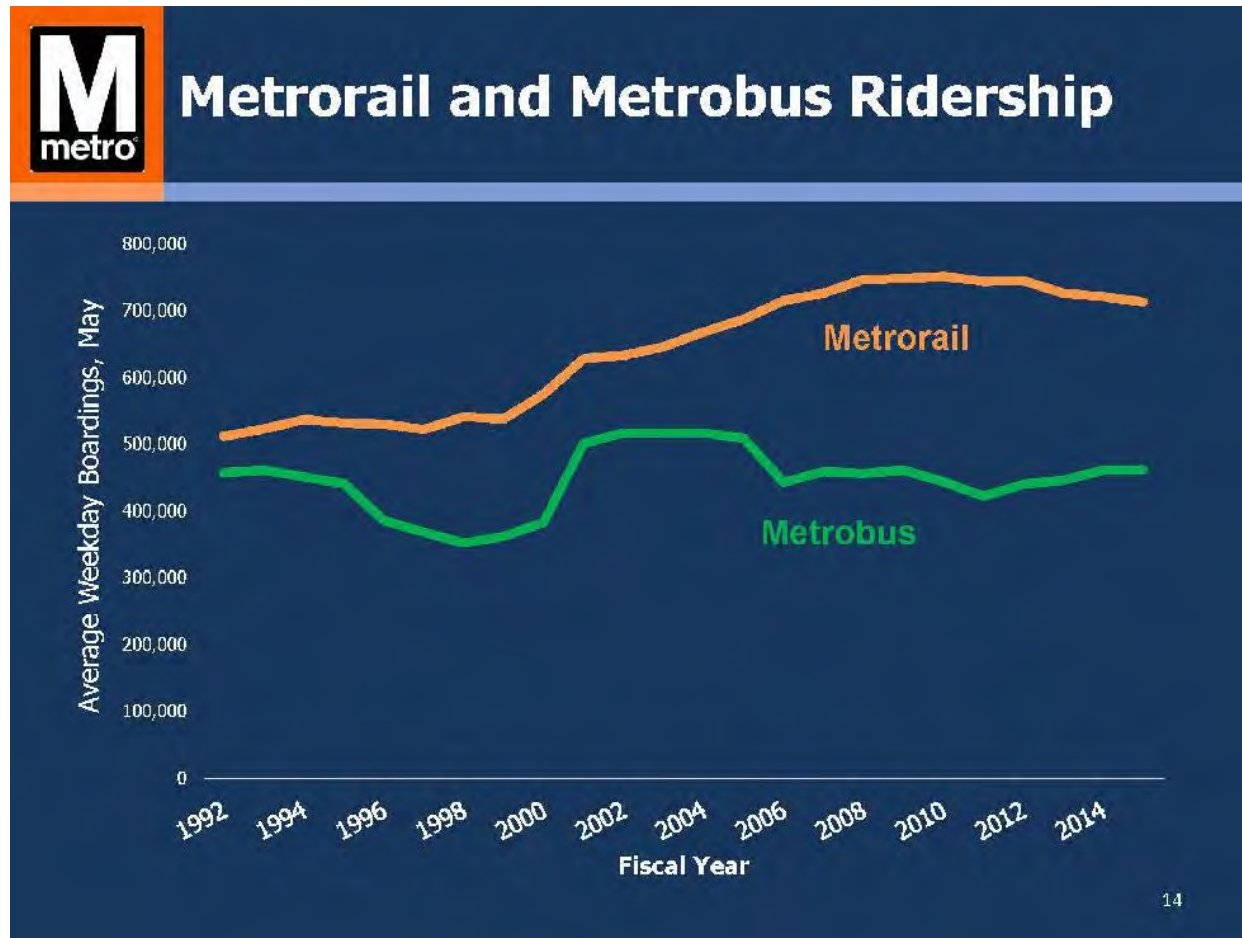
Based on An Effective And Efficient Transportation Network Indicator Summary

Year	Montgomery County-Number
2006	803599
2007	793741
2008	780446
2009	758337
2010	757629
2011	748641
2012	729365
2013	729632
2014	

Source:: Montgomery County CountyStat, Performance Measurement and Management and Maryland State Highway Administration, (as of June 2013).

<https://reports.data.montgomerycountymd.gov/en/stat/goals/pxi6-z29f/pt3m-2b28/8zm5-6a4x>

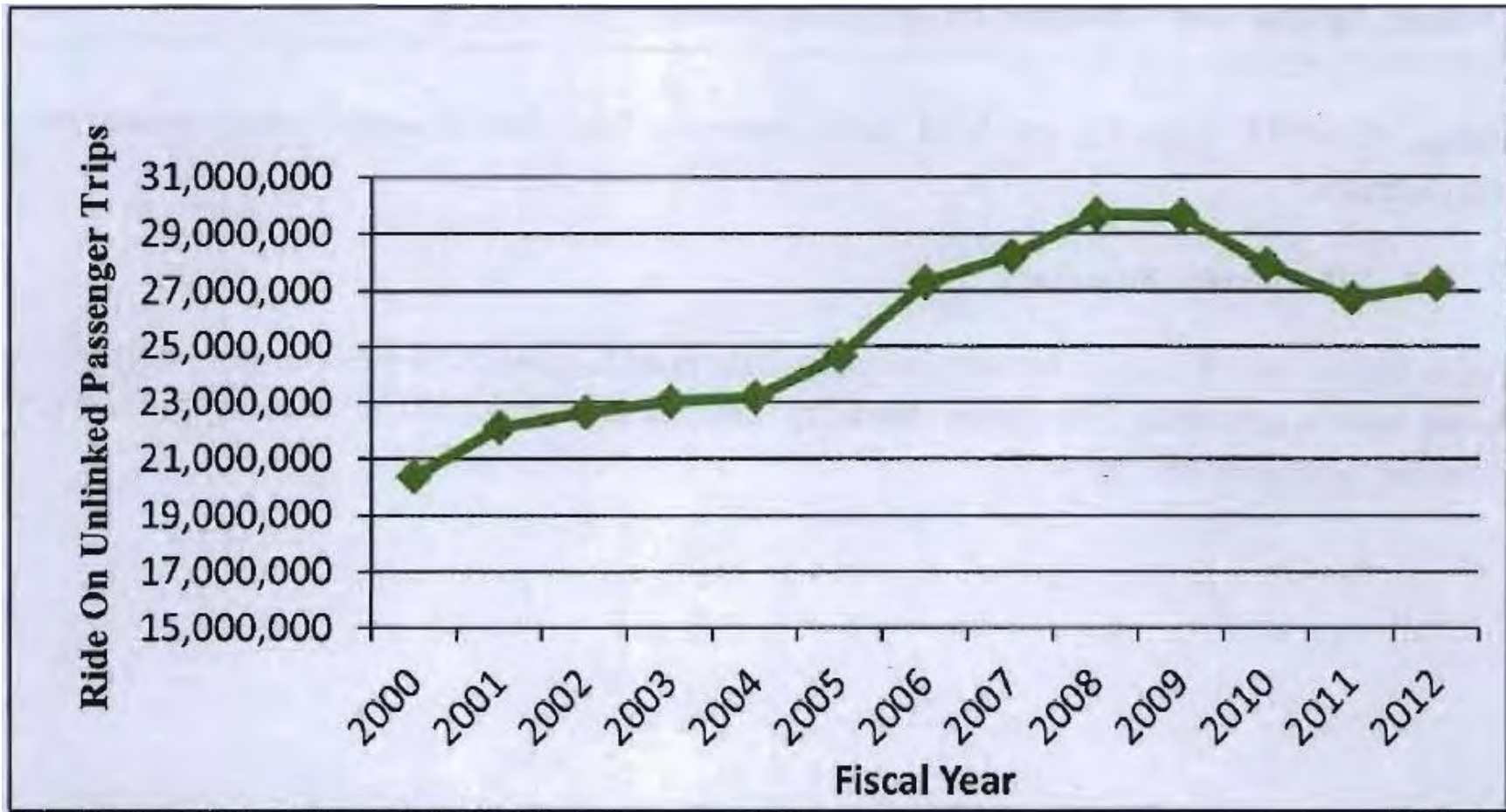
APPENDIX C: WMATA Ridership From 1992 to 2014



Source: Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, Metro Fundamentals, Presentation to the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board, November 18, 2015, page 14.

<http://www.mwcog.org/uploads/committee-documents/alxfV1xZ20151112142622.pdf>

APPENDIX D: Montgomery County Ride On Unlinked Passenger Trips 2000 to 2012



Source: Ride On Bus Fleet Management Plan, Maryland Transit Administration, June 30, 2014, and National Transit Database

APPENDIX E: Percent of Montgomery County Residents Who Take Public Transit to Work

National Indicator - Percent Taking Public Transit to Work

Based on An Effective And Efficient Transportation Network. Indicator Summary

Montgomery County-Percent	Year
15.3%	2006
14.6%	2007
14.6%	2008
15.2%	2009
15.1%	2010
15.8%	2011
15.8%	2012
15.6%	2013
	2014

Source: Montgomery County CountyStat, U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (as of June, 2013)
<https://reports.data.montgomerycountymd.gov/en/stat/goals/pxi6-z29f/pt3m-2b28/nrv6-hb5m>

APPENDIX F: Bus Rapid Transit Cost Estimates for Four Routes*

PFM Financial Analysis Page 6

All \$ are Millions of Dollars

Corridor	Construction Period (FY)	Capital Cost	Maintenance Facility		Total	Operations and Maintenance	
			Year of Expenditure	Year of Expenditure		Year of Expenditure	
		2015	Cost	Allocated Capital Cost	2015	Cost	Initial Year Initial Cost
CCT	2016-2020	\$634.5	\$653.5		\$634.5	\$653.5	2021 \$14.1
Veirs Mill Road	2016-2022	\$276.3	\$284.5	\$13.7	\$290.0	\$299.1	2023 \$10.3
US 29	2016-2023	\$200.0	\$205.9	\$9.9	\$209.9	\$216.5	2024 \$19.2
355 North	2017-2026	\$619.6	\$638.2	\$30.8	\$650.4	\$670.9	2027 \$25.4
355 South	2016-2024	\$422.8	\$435.5	\$21.0	\$443.8	\$457.8	2025 \$23.9
		\$2,153.1	\$2,217.7	\$75.6	\$2,228.7	\$2,297.9	

*Note: **These preliminary pre-engineering cost estimates** do not include estimated land acquisition costs at stations and intersections, underground work, underground utilities, or road reconstruction for four bridges along Route 29: over Paint Branch, MD 650, Northwest Branch, and Sligo Creek. Source: http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/transit-task-force-2015/Resources/Files/Appendix_6a_PFM_Financial%20Analysis_Summary_9-10-2015_Final.pdf

Transit Task Force Report Pages 63-64

Corridor		Number of Buses	Bus Costs	Land Acquisition	Mobilization & Soft Costs	Total Cost
CCT	\$600.0	18			\$34.5	\$634.5
Veirs Mill Road	\$164.1	14	\$16.8	\$16.7	\$87.9	\$285.5
US 29	\$108.4	26	\$31.2	\$0.2	\$60.0	\$199.9
355 North	\$328.5	30	\$36.0	\$79.1	\$176.0	\$619.6
355 South	\$242.1	18	\$21.6	\$29.9	\$129.2	\$422.8
Maint Facility	\$57.0				\$18.6	\$75.6
	\$1,500.1	106	\$105.6	\$125.9	\$506.2	\$2,237.9

*Note: These **preliminary pre-engineering estimates** do not include land acquisition costs at stations and intersections, underground work/utilities, or road reconstruction for four bridges along Route 29 over: Paint Branch, MD 650, Northwest Branch, and Sligo Creek. Land acquisition depends on type of station construction and is probably not this low. With purchase of only 106 buses there is a limit on short time between headways.

Source: http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/transit-task-force-2015/Resources/Files/FINAL_MC_Transit_Task%20Force_Report_10222015.pdf

Appendix G: Legal – Regulatory Issues

Adequate Public Facilities and the Law

“Zoning or rezoning, in order to be supported as a valid enactment of the police power, must be in the general public interest for the promotion of the health, safety, and welfare of the community. Since local governments act in the public interest to provide necessary public facilities such as schools, roads, parks, sewer and water facilities, it is equally imperative and proper that government, in considering a zoning, special exception or subdivision application, assess its probable effect on these facilities, both existing and proposed.”

“The necessity for considering the effect of a land use application upon public facilities is threefold. First, in order to assure protection of the health, safety and welfare of the community, it is appropriate to determine at the time of rezoning or other land use action whether the existing conditions and characteristics of the public facilities which serve the present community and which are intended to serve the development proposed are reasonable for the property under consideration. That a rezoning or other land use action will ultimately lead to a land use which will NOT....have a detrimental effect upon roads, sanitary and other public facilities, is at least a material indication that the decision would be in the public interest. Conversely, where evidence is adduced that the zoning can produce deleterious results in the form of traffic congestion and safety problems in connection with existing road facilities.....the public interest would not be served and the lack of justification for granting the request would be apparent. Secondly, the introduction of large quantities of traffic, population...may be an indication of the lack of compatibility of the proposed project with the character of the surrounding community, which is a vital consideration in all “floating” zone cases. Finally, not only the impact but the availability of these public facilities can indicate whether a zoning or other requested land use approval and the intended development is premature or whether it may constitute “spot” zoning. Project approval which causes large public investment and has a possible deleterious effect upon proper land use and capital planning and programming by requiring the premature extension of roads...to serve a particular property in a remote area where these facilities either do not exist or are marginal at best, cannot be said to be an example of zoning in the public interest.”

“Consequently, these considerations are valid factors in an application to rezone property or approve development projects which require special exception or subdivision approval. To be given proper consideration, both expert and lay evidence, whether in the form of oral testimony, written reports or analysis by public agencies, are useful and often necessary to the ultimate determination of any given zoning application. Zoning authorities need not stop at the basic issues of “change-mistake” or

“compatibility”, but can and should go beyond these essential legal requirements and analyze the effect of the zoning on other aspects relating to the public interest.”

“More recently and perhaps more critical, public facilities issues have become important in the subdivision review process with the advent of “adequate public facility” ordinances and tests. These ordinances, which are part of the subdivision regulations, can still provide reason for denying development permitted under a property’s current zoning category.”

Relevant case law:

Montgomery County v. Greater Colesville Citizens Association, 70 Md. App. 374, 521 A. 2d 770 (1987)

Aspen Hill Venture v. Montgomery County Council, 265 Md. 303, 314, 287 A.2d 303, 308 (1972)

Templeton v. County Council of Prince George’s County, 21 Md. App. 636, 321 A. 2d 778 (1974)

Plant v. Board of County Commissioners for Prince George’s County, 262 Md. 120, 125, 127, 277 A. 2d 77,80 (1971)

APPENDIX H:

MCCF Statement Regarding Transit Task Force Recommendations²⁶



Members of the Montgomery County Civic Federation (MCCF) represent over 150,000 households from civic and homeowners associations across Montgomery County. MCCF appreciates the work of the Task Force and the opportunity to express our views.

While the Task Force Report discusses many important issues regarding transportation challenges the County is facing, MCCF does not support the conclusions and recommendations of the Task Force Report which was approved **by only 12** of the 33 voting members.

- MCCF does not recommend creating an Independent Transit Authority (ITA) to finance, build, operate and maintain a bus rapid transit (BRT) system.
- MCCF believes the Task Force Report presents a false choice for improving our transit systems, between establishing an ITA for BRT OR no improvements, and the Report focuses narrowly on only the one option.
- MCCF supports improvements to our transit systems that can be done now which will increase transit ridership, reduce single occupancy vehicle trips, help improve the environment and increase mode share for economic development goals. **These improvements include but are not limited to WMATA's proposed limited stop services on Veirs Mill Road and Route 29, the proposed Ride On express service on Route 355, and fare-free Ride On service.**
- These cost-effective and flexible alternatives **to a proposed \$6-10 billion investment for a BRT system and new agency** would not circumvent voter approved annual charter limits as the proposal in the Task Force Report would require.

MCCF appreciates the opportunity to provide a summary of our views. **Based on data analysis, feedback from our members and public testimony at three public hearings, we will be providing County Executive Leggett with a separate report with our detailed recommendations and list of alternatives.** We thank the Chairman of the Task Force and all members for their work over these last few months.

²⁶ County Executive's Transit Task Force Final Report and Recommendations, Page 113

APPENDIX I: MCCF Online Questionnaire to Active Members (Responses via Survey Monkey 9/9/15 to 10/9/15)

The purpose of this questionnaire is to get feedback from you on the County Executive's proposal to create and finance an Independent Transit Authority (ITA). The new agency would require new annual property tax increases above the Charter limit and may include increases in other taxes as well. The County Executive will likely resubmit enabling legislation to the State this fall to request authorization for the creation of this new independent agency outside of County government. Under the proposal, the agency would ultimately finance, build, operate, and maintain a new 100 mile County Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) transit system as well as other transit projects.

Q1. *Do you support overriding the voter-approved Charter limits on property taxes without a voter referendum for the purpose of funding this new independent agency?* **Yes 8% | No 92%**

Q2. *Do you support this model for the creation of a new Independent Transit Authority for Montgomery County?* **Yes 8% | No 92%**

Q3. *Does your neighborhood have access within a half mile to: (Select all that apply)*

**Ride On Bus 96% | Metrobus 66% | MARC Train 16% | Metrorail 28% |
No Access within half mile 2%**

Q4. *What improvements to our existing bus transit systems, such as Ride On and Metrobus do you support? (Select all that apply)*

Increase frequency of buses during rush hour: **48%**

Increase frequency of buses off peak and weekends: **42%**

More express or limited stop bus service: **46%**

Add/Modify Routes: **50%**

None: **18%**

Q5. *If the County were to make the current Ride On transit system free for all routes, which could increase ridership and decrease boarding and travel time, it would cost the County an additional \$21 million annually. Would you support providing Ride On service for free?*

Yes: 56% | No: 44 %

Q6. *Montgomery County has many needs including addressing school overcrowding. Budget forecasts are constrained and the County Executive has announced that there will likely be a property tax increase beyond the Charter limit for 2016 just to keep current spending levels. In light of these constraints, do you think the top transportation priority for the County should be:*

To create a new and in some places, redundant, independent bus transit system, separate from WMATA, the regional transit authority, and separate from the County government: **8%**

Work to enhance the local Ride On bus service within the current County Department of Transportation and work within the existing WMATA infrastructure to improve regional service, including Metrobus and Metrorail: **80%**

No change to current transit services: **12%**

Prepared By Members of the MCCF Transportation Committee

All Preparers are volunteers and are not paid by any organization or company related to real estate development or transportation in Montgomery County.

Members of the Montgomery County Civic Federation Transportation Committee, 2015-16

Paula Bienenfeld, Ph.D., MCCF President, Ex Officio Member, Transportation Committee

Jerry Garson, CPA, Chair, MCCF Transportation Committee

Nancy Abeles, Member, MWCOG Transportation Planning Board Citizens Advisory Committee

Carole Anne Barth, MCCF Immediate Past President

Peggy Dennis, MCCF Past President

Cary Lamari, MCCF Past President

Harriet Quinn, MCCF Planning and Land Use Committee

Virginia Sheard Chair, MCCF Planning and Land Use Committee

James Zepp, MCCF First Vice-President, Member, Transit Task Force and WMATA Riders Advisory Council