

Baltimore Regional Transit Commission 2025 Annual Report

November 28, 2025

Baltimore Regional Transit Commission 2025 Membership Roster

Jon Laria, Chair (Baltimore City, appointed by Governor)
D'Andrea L. Walker, Vice-Chair (Baltimore County, appointed by County Executive)

Appointed by Governor

From Anne Arundel County

Markus G. Moore

From Baltimore City

Luis O. Cardona

Lester Davis (thru October)

From Baltimore County

Aaron Tomarchio (thru January)

Toni R. St. John

From Howard County

Lakey Boyd

Appointed by Anne Arundel County Executive

Arjan van Andel (thru September)

Christine M. Anderson (appointed in November)

Appointed by Baltimore City Mayor

Celeste Chavis, Ph.D.

Veronica McBeth

Scot T. Spencer

Appointed by Baltimore County Executive

Michael N. Netzer

Appointed by Howard County Executive

Clarence (Trey) Dickerson

Ex Officio Members

Tony Bridges, designee of Secretary of Transportation (thru August)

Michael McMillan (non-voting), designee of the Amalgamated Transit Union

Baltimore Metropolitan Council Staff to the Workgroup

Don Halligan

Jake Schutt

Ashley Roach

Introduction

Background

In October 2023, the Baltimore Regional Transit Commission was authorized by the General Assembly ([Chapter 504, Acts of 2023](#)).

The BRTC advocates for the Baltimore region public transit systems maintained by the [Maryland Transit Administration](#). It requests and reviews information from the Annual Attainment Report and the Maryland Transit Administration concerning the attainment of Administration goals, including performance goals and metrics. It also evaluates other measures of the performance of the Baltimore region transit system; and issues written recommendations concerning how the results of the BRTC's review and evaluation should influence the Administration's priorities in future years.

On a quarterly basis, the BRTC reviews and comments on Maryland Transit Administration proposals and reports of changes in service. As part of the development of the draft and final Consolidated Transportation Program, the BRTC reviews and comments on the Administration's annual operating and capital budget requests for the Baltimore region, including those for bus, light rail, Metro, commuter bus, MARC service, and paratransit.

Further, the BRTC reviews and approves any update to the Central Maryland Regional Transit Plan; reviews and comments on the Capital Needs Inventory Report; and reviews local transit plans and services in the Baltimore region to ensure coordination between the local transit services and the Maryland Transit Administration. In carrying out its duties, the BRTC strives to ensure that the Maryland Transit Administration's plans, budgets, decisions, policies, goals, priorities, operations, and services address the public transit needs of residents and businesses in the Baltimore region.

The BRTC has seventeen members. The Chair and Vice-Chair are chosen by the BRTC every two years (Code Transportation Article, sec. 7-213).

The BRTC is housed and staffed by the [Baltimore Metropolitan Council](#). All minutes and other proper records are maintained on the Baltimore Metropolitan Council's website (<https://www.baltometro.org/transportation/committees/baltimore-regional-transit-commission>).

Role of the Baltimore Regional Transit Commission

The BRTC's enabling legislation requires it to "engage in advocacy for the Baltimore region public transit systems maintained by the Administration." In pursuing this advocacy, the BRTC "shall endeavor to ensure that the Administration's plans, budgets, decisions, policies, goals, priorities and operations address the public transit needs of residents and businesses in the Baltimore region."

Included in this statutory charge to advocate for and support Baltimore regional transit are six specific tasks to be undertaken by the BRTC each year. These activities are to:

- Review and comment on service change reports and proposals
- Review and comment on the Administration's Annual operating and capital budget request
- Review and approve any update to the Central Maryland Regional Transit Plan

- Review and comment on the capital needs inventory
- Review local transit plans and services in the Baltimore region to ensure coordination between local transit services and the administration

2025 Work Program and Accomplishments

The BRTC continued its ongoing work program that consisted of three major components.

1. Orientation and Organization
2. Completion of Statutory Charges
3. Analysis and Advocacy

Orientation and Organization

Baltimore Regional Transit Commission – Year Two: Deepening Understanding and Strengthening Organization

In its second year, the Baltimore Regional Transit Commission (BRTC) built on its foundation by deepening Commissioners' understanding of transit services, transit operations and determining sound policy positions.

The Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) is one of the 20 largest transit agencies in the United States, operating a complex network of services throughout the Baltimore region. Recognizing the importance of an informed Commission, BRTC staff and leadership prioritized continuing education and engagement for Commissioners.

Throughout the year, Commissioners participated in a combination of written briefings, in-person sessions, and meeting presentations focused on MTA's services, structure, operations, and budget. Every Commission meeting included a dedicated agenda segment for deepening knowledge of transit policy, funding, and performance.

A major milestone in Year Two was the formal launch of several standing workgroups, those being: Project & Program Delivery, Employee Hiring/Retention & Recruitment, Rider Experience, and Locally Operated Transit Systems (LOTS). These working groups, created in collaboration with MTA leadership and Commissioners, convened regularly during the year to focus on priority issues of the Commission. The Commission also created an *ad hoc* working group focused on the update of the Central Maryland Regional Transit Plan, and ultimately approved the Plan in September of 2025. The working groups laid the foundation for actionable recommendations to improve service delivery, workforce stability, the rider experience, and LOTS, which are summarized in the following section.

Project and Program Delivery

The Project & Program Delivery working group is focused on reviewing the delivery of major MTA projects and programs and the issues that inhibit its delivery within the core service area. Specifically, this working group has explored the MTA

procurement process, property management, tort liability issues and the progress of the Red Line project, and advocated for the completion of key capital projects delayed due to funding barriers.

The workgroup's 2025 work program focused on ways to streamline project delivery, began to address tort liabilities facing MTA that resulted in Senate Bill 743 of 2025 to limit the liability of the Maryland Transit Administration as to a tort action to \$400,000 to a single claimant for injuries arising from a single incident or occurrence. The workgroup also advocated for staffing and process improvements that streamline procurement processes.

Employee Hiring, Retention & Recruitment (Staffing)

The Staffing workgroup worked to update the 2022 Salary and Staffing Report, evaluating MTA's salary structures, recruitment and retention policies, and examine industry best practices. This report was submitted to MTA in May of 2025.

The 2025 Report provides a comprehensive analysis of hiring and retention challenges at the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA), comparing its performance and compensation with peer agencies such as WMATA, SEPTA, RTD, PRT, and GCRTA. Despite operating with a lean workforce of 3,400 employees, MTA demonstrates high efficiency, ranking second in key metrics like passenger miles and capital expenditures per employee. However, its pay scale—governed by state structures and collective bargaining agreements—lags significantly behind peers, with salaries for department heads, management, and professional staff falling 11% to 26% below average and up to 55% below the highest-paying agencies. This compensation gap, especially against nearby competitors like WMATA and SEPTA, contributes to talent loss and consultant dependence, straining internal capacity.

To address these issues, the report recommends boosting pay and benefits, expanding the workforce, and investing in training and technology. Department-specific strategies include hiring more maintenance staff, strengthening capital project teams, and enhancing transit police support. MTA has made progress since 2022, including wage increases, streamlined hiring, and new apprenticeship programs, but structural barriers—such as fixed staffing allocations and rigid pay scales—limit its flexibility. As ridership rebounds post-pandemic and demand grows, the report emphasizes the need for sustained funding and cross-agency collaboration to build a resilient, well-supported workforce capable of delivering reliable, equitable transit service across Maryland.

By analyzing salary competitiveness and the impact of existing employment incentives, the workgroup aimed to identify areas where MTA can improve compensation and employment conditions, supporting long-term workforce sustainability.

Rider Experience

The Rider Experience workgroup focused on assessing the quality of service provided to MTA's diverse ridership. Key areas of focus of the workgroup included service performance metrics, marketing and communication and the evaluation of proposed service changes. They also focused on MTA services to the Baltimore

City Public School (BCPSS) population. Media attention and public concern regarding the challenges facing students of Baltimore City public schools (e.g. student tardiness, safety issues, and educational inequity) have recently focused on the school system's dependence on MTA services for student transportation. Under Maryland regulation, COMAR 13A.06.07.03 and 13A.06.07.04, local school systems have full responsibility for the safe operation of student transportation within their jurisdictions. However, under a Memorandum of Understanding with BCPSS, MTA provides "tripper service" for students. Tripper service operates on regular public transit routes with minor modifications to accommodate students, such as small route deviations near schools or frequency adjustments. These routes must remain open to the general public as Federal Transit Administration (FTA) regulates how federally funded transit agencies (i.e. MTA) can provide school transportation services. The primary goal is to prevent unfair competition with private school bus operators while ensuring public transit remains accessible. Tripper services are exempted from the core prohibition under 49 CFR Part 605, the section of the federal code that prohibits federally funded transit agencies from providing exclusive school bus services that compete with private operators. The workgroup will continue the conversations about this topic in 2026.

Locally Operated Transit Systems (LOTS)

In 2025, the BRTC's Locally Operated Transit Systems (LOTS) Workgroup continued its role as a forum for coordination among the region's five locally operated transit systems—Annapolis, Anne Arundel County, Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. The Workgroup focused on understanding the local systems and service in the region as a first step toward determining opportunities to coordinate with one another and with MTA. The group's work also focused on aligning local priorities with the Maryland Department of Transportation's Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP) and strengthening collaboration across jurisdictions.

The Workgroup members reviewed each other's Transit Development Plans and assets, discussed regional efforts, and shared strategies on electric vehicle procurement, charging infrastructure, and workforce training. They endorsed working together to better coordinate maintenance facilities and pursue grant opportunities.

Overall, the LOTS Workgroup's 2025 efforts strengthened alignment between state funding decisions and local priorities, advanced planning for fleet electrification, and established new tools for regional coordination. The group's work laid a strong foundation for the continued modernization of locally operated transit services across the Baltimore region.

BRTC Newsletter

In 2025, the Commission launched the Baltimore Regional Transit Commission Newsletter, a monthly email update designed to keep the public informed and involved in regional transit. The first issue went out on November 10th to over 700 recipients. More than 60% of recipients opened the email, and several dozen clicked links to explore the stories further. Each edition will include updates about the Commission's work, news from local transit providers, legislative changes, and

ways for the public to give input. The newsletter helps support the BRTC's goal of improving transparency and strengthening connections across the region.

Completion of Statutory Charges (2025)

1. Annual Attainment Report (AR)

- BRTC reviewed the Maryland Department of Transportation's [Annual Attainment Report](#) and MTA's [Customer Experience Dashboard](#) with focus on service delivery, on-time performance, and ridership. The delivery of performance metrics from August thru the fall of 2025 was hampered by a cybersecurity incident limiting the analysis. However, the region's transit system shows cautiously optimistic trends: reliability is improving incrementally, service is stabilizing, and ridership is recovering. Routine analysis of the granular data could enable a greater understanding of how these improvements are distributed across different communities. The current trajectory justifies sustained support for critical investments while underscoring the importance of enhanced data transparency for equity-driven planning.
 - MDOT's Attainment Report identifies on-time performance (OTP) as a core metric under the "Deliver System Quality" goal, demonstrating that reliability is central to system objectives.
 - MTA has maintained a Customer Experience Dashboard that publicly tracks OTP, service delivery, ridership, and real-time information availability. This platform provides stakeholder accountability, though data remain aggregated at system or mode levels.
 - Available data indicate most scheduled service operates at high consistency levels, suggesting growing operational stability. A very large amount of data is available that provides complete mode and route specific breakdowns of scheduled service delivery percentages on their Customer Experience dashboard. This platform had cyber security issues preventing data past July of 2025 to be available.
 - MTA sets OTP targets at 80% for core bus, 95% for Metro and Light Rail, and lower thresholds for other modes. The AR shows system-wide OTP improvements over past baselines, reflecting incremental but real gains.
 - System-level ridership data from MTA show upward trends consistent with broader transit recovery patterns, suggesting that reliability investments are supporting regained customer demand.
- Noted Performance Improvements
 - In Fall 2025, MTA proposed service changes explicitly designed to improve access in historically underserved areas, reduce travel times, and enhance service stability—directly aligning service planning with equity goals.
 - MDOT's 2025–2030 Consolidated Transportation Program and MTA's updated 10-year Capital Needs Inventory prioritize bringing

assets into a state of good repair, which is essential for reducing service disruptions and improving OTP.

- OTP improvements and service stabilization support continued investment in infrastructure (state of good repair) and operations (operator hiring, preventative maintenance). These investments align with MDOT's stated goals and MTA's Customer Experience Action Plan.

2. Service Change Reports

- MTA's Fall 2025 Service Changes were reviewed in detail, including proposed and implemented changes to LocalLink, CityLink, QuickLink, and express/connection routes. Key items include:
 - Extension of certain routes (QuickLink 40, LocalLink 34, etc.) to better serve employment, medical, and retail destinations. [MTA bus route extensions fall 2025](#)
 - Increased frequency on select routes: for example, LocalLink 91 weekday service every **15 minutes** (4 a.m.–10 p.m.), weekend service improved to every **20 minutes**, and peak-period improvements on corridors like LocalLink 34. [MTA increased bus frequency fall 2025](#)
 - Route adjustments intended to improve reliability (shortening or restructuring parts of routes such as CityLink Yellow, incorporation of sections into LocalLink 91) to reduce delays and improve schedule adherence. [MTA bus route adjustments fall 2025](#)
- BRTC comments applauded MTA improvements in connectivity and recognition of rider feedback, but urged caution on the cumulative burden of route shortening or transfer increases, particularly for transit-dependent riders. BRTC also requested post-implementation monitoring of whether the promised reliability improvements materialize.

3. Budget Oversight

- In 2025, BRTC reviewed the draft and final Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP), and examined MTA's operating and capital budget requests. Major points for both the final FY2025-FY2030 CTP (from January 2025) and the draft FY2026-FY 2031 CTP (September 2025) include:
 - ***Concerns about state of good repair:*** Cost estimates in the recently updated [Capital Needs Inventory](#) show growing backlogs in maintenance of infrastructure (tracks, signals, stations) and in fleet replacement, especially for bus and rail vehicles. BRTC emphasized that deferred maintenance could exacerbate service reliability and equity concerns. (See CTP briefing via BRTC materials and comments on the Draft CTP released in November 2025.) [Baltimore Regional Transit Commission - letter to MDOT Draft CTP](#)
 - ***Funding cuts or constraints:*** BRTC expressed concern about insufficient capital funding, especially in light of ambitious expansions or extensions in service. Operating budgets faced pressure due to rising labor, fuel, and maintenance costs. Some proposed budget items (e.g. for new service frequencies or route

extensions) risk being scaled back without additional revenue sources. BRTC [shared its priorities](#) and urged the administration and legislature to prioritize stable funding for both operating and capital, to avoid rollback of gains.

- ***Red Line implications:*** Though the Red Line project continues its planning phase, BRTC in its budget oversight called for clarity on how prior Red Line commitments (in terms of planning, rights-of-way, etc.) are being managed, and how public discussions on the next steps for the project are required.
- ***Essential Facilities:*** The BRTC unanimously endorsed the BMORE BUS and Central Maryland Regional Transit plans in September, recognizing that both identify a fifth bus division and downtown transfer facilities as essential prerequisites for expanding bus service and urged MDOT to begin to implement these important elements.

4. **Regional Transit Plan (RTP)**

- The 2025 RTP update (Central Maryland Regional Transit Plan) progressed through several milestones along its way to approval: transit market & demand analysis (Spring 2025), corridor identification (Summer 2025), mode suitability assessments, and facility needs analyses, and final approval in September of 2025. [BRTC CMRTP 1](#)
- BRTC has played an active role in stakeholder/outreach efforts, including public hearings and coordination with local jurisdictions. It has also participated in evaluating corridor prioritization, particularly focusing on corridors that would improve access for historically underserved communities. [BRTC CMRTP 2](#)
- The BRTC approval of the RTP in September of 2025 includes recommended capital and service investments, cost estimates, phasing, and metrics for evaluating progress. BRTC urged that the RTP explicitly tie proposed projects to equity metrics (e.g. transit dependency, low-income populations, persons with disabilities).

5. **[Capital Needs Inventory \(CNI\)](#)**

- In 2025, BRTC received an updated CNI from MDOT/MTA. The inventory shows increased cost estimates compared to previous versions: rising material, labor, and permitting costs have pushed up estimates for replacement or rehabilitation of rail infrastructure, vehicles, and stations. Some key numbers: the bus fleet replacement backlog is estimated at several hundred million dollars; rail signal and track work similarly in the multi-hundreds of millions. [Baltimore Regional Transit Commission CNI doc](#)
- ***Implications:*** Without accelerated capital investment, BRTC notes risk of worsening service reliability and equity gaps, especially in outer suburbs and for modes with higher capital intensity (rail). BRTC has stressed that current and anticipated state funding must incorporate inflation, lifecycle costs, and prioritize state of good repair before expansion.

6. **Local Transit Coordination (LOTS)**

- LOTS (Locally Operated Transit Systems) coordination has been a continuing focus in 2025. BRTC reviewed workgroup updates that are refining allocation formulas, improving scheduling and transfer

- coordination, and assessing shared functions (e.g. maintenance, procurement) to improve efficiency. [BRTC LOTS 1](#)
- Stakeholder concerns emerged about formula fairness, particularly for smaller LOTS operators who serve low-density or rural communities and whose costs per passenger are higher. BRTC has asked that any formula revisions take into account equity of service access, not just cost per unit.

Analysis and Advocacy

Advocacy for Baltimore Area Transit

In 2025 the BRTC was an active transit advocate and continued to expand its role as an advocate for and supporter of public transportation in our region.

The Chairman testified on several bills during the legislative session and made efforts to introduce the BRTC to legislators and chamber leadership. Much of the focus during the legislative session was on MTA's capital needs and the CTP.

Beyond Annapolis, the Commission worked closely with the member jurisdictions of the Baltimore Metropolitan Council, participated in a host of transit-related public forums, and worked to leverage the strength and support of our region's business community.

Throughout the year, BRTC staff and leadership met with senior MTA and MDOT officials on numerous issues within the BRTC's purview.

This work will continue in 2026.

Recommendations and Conclusion

In its second year of operation, the Baltimore Regional Transit Commission (BRTC) has again pursued a robust work program—reviewing MTA performance, budget and capital plans, the Regional Transit Plan, and equity in LOTS coordination. The BRTC is grateful for the ongoing support of the Baltimore Metropolitan Council staff, and for the partnership of the Maryland Transit Administration and the Maryland Department of Transportation.

The Commission continues to recognize that MTA performs essential and often admirable work under highly constrained conditions. Aging assets, deferred maintenance, workforce shortages, rising costs (materials, energy, labor), and competing funding demands have pushed the Baltimore region’s transit system toward growing fragility.

Recommendations

The BRTC offers the following recommendations to the Administration, the General Assembly, and other partners. These are grounded in 2025 observations and intended to stabilize, restore, and advance transit service, with reliability and equity as central goals.

1. Continue to Urgently Address the State of Good Repair (SGR) Backlog

- Fully fund the gaps in outlined in the revised Capital Needs Inventory (CNI). Rising estimates show that without sufficient investment in rail, bus fleet replacement, signals, stations, and traction power, service reliability and safety will decline further.
- Ensure that the Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP) and the Operating budgets for MTA are allocated enough money in early years to prevent deferred maintenance from ballooning—especially on Light Rail, Metro, and bus infrastructure.

2. Restore and Enhance Operating Funding

- Avoid year-over-year cuts to the MTA operating budget proposed in the recently released September 2025 Operating Allocation when compared to the January 2025 financial forecast, especially any cuts may create impacts to service frequency, route extensions, and QuickLink / LocalLink adjustments proposed.
- Increase state funding or seek alternative revenue (federal, local, user) to support expansion of service in underserved and transit-dependent neighborhoods, especially during off-peak and weekend hours.
- Prioritize funding for workforce development and retention (operators, maintenance staff, signal and track specialists) to reduce any reliability gaps tied to labor shortages.

3. Governance, Oversight, and Budget Process Improvements

- Continue meetings of the Workgroup on the Reorganization of the Maryland Transit Administration to ensure parity in statutory treatment.

- Continue to address inequities in legal exposure (e.g., the Tort Claims Act), procurement status, and regulatory burdens that disadvantage MTA relative to other MDOT modes and WMATA.

4. Equity-Focused Funding Decisions

- Continue to advocate for solutions to student transportation issues in Baltimore City.

5. Advance the Regional Transit Plan (RTP) as a Tool for Prioritization & Phasing

- The MTA should consider the adoption of phasing schedules and cost estimates within the RTP that reflect realistic funding availability and allow rapid action on high-impact corridors.
- The BRTC will use the RTP to guide recommendations for decisions on investment trade-offs, ensuring that expansions or service changes do not worsen equity or reliability for existing core services.

6. Transparent Reporting & Monitoring

- The BRTC appreciates the Customer Experience dashboard and Performance Improvement webpages that MTA developed to publish regular, accessible performance updates.

Conclusion

The Commission finds the magnitude of the challenges facing Baltimore’s core transit system to be significant but not without remedy. The nearly doubling of the 10-year state of good repair needs (versus 2022), combined with proposed reductions in the near term of the operating budget and lack of funded capital projects essential to core infrastructure, pose real risks: loss of service reliability, diminished accessibility (especially for low-income, transit-dependent and disabled riders), and widening equity gaps.

While the BRTC supports robust transit investment across Maryland, the Baltimore region’s transit network must be treated equitably. Existing commitments to transit expansion, accessibility, and reliable service must be upheld and expanded, to prevent long-term impact on system trust and ridership recovery.

Governance and statutory reform remain essential. Budget and major capital decisions should have meaningful regional and local input. For the benefits of transit—reduced congestion, increased economic opportunity, environmental gains, equity—to be fully realized, structural change is needed in how decisions are made and who participates.

The BRTC emphasizes that the 2026 capital and operating budgets are pivotal if recent progress and momentum are to continue.

The Commission implores the Administration, General Assembly, local jurisdictions, and stakeholders to act swiftly on the recommendations above. We stand ready to assist, monitor, and contribute constructively to those efforts.