

Executive Summary



ARE WE BETTER OFF? *Assessing BaltimoreLink's Promises One Year Later*

June 18, 2018 marked the 1-year anniversary of BaltimoreLink, the Maryland Transit Administration's (MTA's) complete overhaul of its network of bus routes.

This report evaluates whether BaltimoreLink resulted in people being better off. It also recommends ways to improve public transportation in greater Baltimore going forward. The entire region benefits from the role the MTA performs. BaltimoreLink was an opportunity to improve the MTA's performance. Governor Hogan, the Maryland Secretary of Transportation Pete Rahn, and the MTA made many promises that BaltimoreLink would produce "dramatic," "transformative" improvements.

We offer this report based on the principle from business management that you can't improve what you can't measure. We have boiled it down to five aspects of bus and train service that are most important to riders and should be measured accurately and continually:



Fast

People value time on buses or trains differently from time behind the wheel, but door-to-door travel time via transit must be close to what it would be for driving if it is to attract many users. On corridors that get congested during rush hour restricted lanes and signal priority can move buses and trains faster than traffic.



Frequent

Frequent buses and trains reduce wait times and as a result reduce overall trip times. They also provide freedom to people to depart and arrive when convenient as opposed to adhering to a schedule.



Reliable

When Rate Your Ride participants reported problems with their transit experience, by far the issue most commonly cited was lateness. Conversely, those who stated that they had a positive experience cited "on time" performance as the reason.



Connected

Transit doesn't get me where I need to go was the top reason given by Baltimore area residents for not using public transportation more often. Access to jobs, schools and services is a measure of how useful a transit system is.



Walkable

Baltimore City compares favorably with many U.S. cities for walkability, but many workers commuting to mid-skill, family-supporting jobs outside the city are forced to walk long stretches with no sidewalks, unsafe street-crossings, and auto-oriented design to get from a bus stop or train station to the place of work.

In this report we use these five basics to evaluate BaltimoreLink on its one-year anniversary.

DID BALTIMORELINK RESULT IN PEOPLE GETTING TO THEIR DESTINATIONS FASTER?

- Governor Hogan, MDOT and the MTA promised the public that BaltimoreLink would make transit faster.
- We call on the MTA to publish data on transit speed. Without this data we are unable to answer this important question.
- With additional resources we could use the MTA's real-time data to evaluate whether priority lanes and transit signal priority are making transit faster in key corridors.

DO MORE PEOPLE LIVE NEAR TRANSIT THAT RUNS FREQUENTLY AS A RESULT OF BALTIMORELINK?

- The MTA made the “frequent transit network” one of the selling points of BaltimoreLink.
- We found that BaltimoreLink resulted in more people living near buses or trains scheduled to run with high frequency between 7 am and 10 pm.

IS BUS SERVICE MORE RELIABLE SINCE BALTIMORELINK WAS IMPLEMENTED?

- Governor Hogan, MDOT and the MTA promised the public that BaltimoreLink would improve reliability.
- We did not find any hard evidence that buses perform more reliably as a result of BaltimoreLink.
- MTA's claim of improved reliability can't be evaluated because MTA changed both its definition of On-Time Performance (OTP) and its method of measuring and calculating OTP.
- Our observational data does not indicate a reliability improvement.

DOES BALTIMORELINK CONNECT PEOPLE TO MORE DESTINATIONS?

- Governor Hogan, MDOT and the MTA promised the public that BaltimoreLink would improve access to jobs.
- We found a marginal improvement in access to high-opportunity jobs and a marginal decrease in access to all jobs.
- We found that BaltimoreLink did not connect more people to designated Maryland Employment Centers.
- On average, students in Baltimore City can get to about the same number of high schools and middle schools.
- Improving walkability around transit stops was not a stated goal for BaltimoreLink.
- We recommend more concerted efforts by local governments, the Maryland State Highway Administration and the MTA to improve walkability near transit stops.



In summary, we do not find evidence that BaltimoreLink delivered on promises including “faster, more reliable service,” “reducing congestion more,” or “transforming the way people get to work.”

WE MAKE FIVE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WORKING TOWARDS THOSE RESULTS:

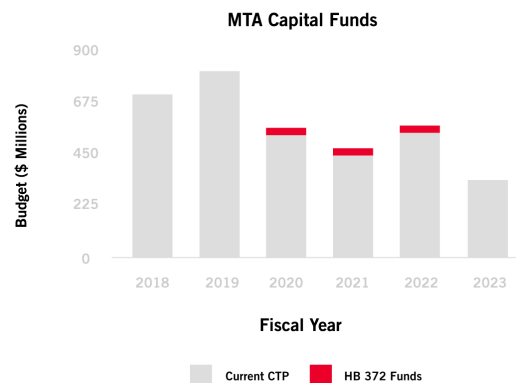
- 1.** Improve Transparency and Open Data (MTA): report on the aspects of transit that matter most to riders; Fast, Frequent, Reliable, Connected, and Walkable; publish methodologies for measuring performance.
- 2.** Prioritize Transit (Baltimore City and MTA): openly evaluate bus priority lanes and TSP; develop a memorandum of understanding or other agreement document to prioritize moving people, coordinate implementation and enforcement, and create accountability.
- 3.** Focus on Frequency (MTA): maintain the headway levels promised in the high frequency network; identify corridors for expanding new or enhancing existing frequency; ensure that the entirety of each CityLink route provides high-frequency service.
- 4.** Reverse MTA Budget Cuts (Governor Hogan and Maryland Department of Transportation): restore capital funding to the MTA which is currently slated to see a 58% cut from FY19 to FY23.
- 5.** Produce an Excellent Central Maryland Regional Transit Plan (MTA and Local Governments): produce a plan that is goal-oriented and multi-modal plan through meaningful public involvement and stakeholder engagement; program it into regional transportation plans.

Maryland Transit Funding Act

Fiscal Years 2020 - 2022

The General Assembly mandated that MTA's capital budget receive an additional **\$29.1 million** each year.

Over the course of the current CTP, by FY 2023 MTA's total capital budget is projected to **decrease by 52%** compared to FY 2018.





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