

TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE



With its large downtown, dense pattern of development, relatively small land area, and historically strong transit network, Baltimore is a community that is well-suited to the benefits of public transportation. The City is served by an array of transit options and enjoys a transit mode share of 19 percent, higher than any other local jurisdiction in the state. Baltimore's transportation system is full of potential, but it also faces many significant challenges.

Residents in all neighborhoods, and at all income levels, are not getting the most out of their transit system. The City must work to ensure that its transportation options are supporting an equity of opportunity for all of its residents.¹ While staffed by dedicated professionals, the Baltimore City Department of Transportation has not had a clear and comprehensive vision for transportation in Baltimore or stable, long-term departmental leadership. Combined with the City's larger infrastructure challenges, such as the need to improve streets across Baltimore,² this creates a sense of indifference to residents and visitors alike. The public's expectations are for the City to address the many transportation challenges and issues over which it has little or no control (i.e., core transit system, CSX, the Port, and toll roads owned and operated by the state). However, this should not stop Baltimore from creating the world-class transportation system that its residents deserve.

As Baltimore looks toward its future, the Pugh Administration should strive to create the integrated, efficient, and equitable transportation system that is essential to Baltimore City's economic growth and contributes to a high quality of life for all of its residents.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Changing the culture of transit and transportation in Baltimore starts with leadership. The Baltimore City Department of Transportation (DOT) requires consistent leadership that earns and receives the Mayor's stalwart support. A bold leader is needed to guide DOT to increase focus on meeting the City's basic needs while exploring ways to increase travel options. Residents and businesses alike would benefit from a back-to-basics approach, but the City also needs a visionary leader who can help the Mayor modernize DOT and position it as a leading urban transportation agency. When appointing a director of the Department of Transportation, the Mayor should seek an experienced, energetic, and innovative leader.

Along with consistent leadership, the City needs a clear vision and agenda for its transportation system. The Pugh Administration should develop a five-year Comprehensive Transportation Strategic Plan that purposefully targets available resources to achieve desired outcomes, maximizes their impact, and clearly defines the charge and mission of the City's transportation system and the agencies that manage and impact it (e.g., DOT and Planning). The plan should focus on creating opportunities in all neighborhoods and ensuring that all aspects of the system are safe, equitable, inclusive, and accessible for everyone in Baltimore City. At the same time, there must be a strong focus on sustainability, modal diversity, and ensuring that the City is making efficient use of its resources and aggressively pursuing additional resources in order to best serve the growth and success of communities and economic development.

This Strategic Plan must match spending to available resources while also building on Baltimore's strengths, assets, and the progress that has already been made. The plan should include a commitment to adhere to and strengthen the City's 2010 Complete Streets Resolution³ and the 2013 DOT Complete Streets Policy by passing a detailed Complete Streets Ordinance, with best-practice design guidelines, that mandate compliance and contain real accountability. At the same time, this Plan must look forward and embrace a "rider centric" culture that acknowledges transit's importance to Baltimore and serves everyone, ranging from commuters to disabled individuals to students. This means exploring fare reductions and fare-free or reduced zones and corridors to encourage ridership and create economic and other opportunities that enhance the City. The City must also embrace digital solutions, new parking strategies, and strategic collaborations that can support the needs of all its riders. It also means responding to the needs of different populations, such as giving students access to public transportation through the late afternoon and early evening so they can get from their schools to their jobs. Finally, this plan must recognize that the City's streets and public rights-of-way take up more than 2,000 miles of the City's footprint⁴ and maximize their value as useful and vibrant public spaces. A well-drafted Plan will position the City to pursue—and defend—requests for more funding from state, federal, and private sources.

To ensure all of Baltimore's residents have adequate access to the City's transportation network, equity and inclusion should be at the forefront of the transportation project and policy development. The City should continue to invest in innovative efforts to link neighborhoods to opportunities within the City and throughout the close-in suburbs by strategically advocating for transit improvements from MTA and tactically expanding Baltimore BikeShare and dedicated bicycle lanes. As funding permits, the Charm City Circulator could also be a tool to promote community equity. The Pugh Administration should designate a senior position in the Mayor's Office to be the City's Equity and Inclusion Officer,⁵ who will ensure that the City's policies and plans address the needs and concerns of all residents, particularly those in Baltimore's most underserved communities. This official will also coordinate with agencies to ensure that all City services include equity and accessibility⁶ as global priorities.

The need for increased coordination is a theme relevant to many aspects of transportation planning, development, and policy. First and foremost, the City would greatly benefit from increased coordination between agencies that deal with transportation. At the present time, many different City agencies are home to transportation functions, including DOT, Parking Authority, DPW, Planning, Housing/HCD, and Recreation and Parks.⁷ Effective incorporation and collaboration between these agencies is critical to the overall success of the transportation system. The Pugh Administration should conduct an assessment of the transportation functions in all City agencies and explore how agencies can work together to support common goals and outcomes. These teams should focus on first/last mile issues, TOD/land use, emergency services (snow), and related issues.

Once there is a clear understanding of where transportation functions are housed, the City should utilize interagency teams with members who are responsible for reducing risks, streamlining processes, and speeding up project delivery to drive down costs. These teams can be used in a similar fashion to what is being done to develop the Boston Street Multimodal Corridor Planning Study.⁸

City agencies must also work together more effectively and reach out more frequently to neighborhood stakeholders. Prior to developing the Department of Transportation's annual Capital Improvement Program (CIP), DOT must review adopted area master plans with the City Planning Department and reach out to neighborhood groups about upcoming projects in a manner similar to the state's local "Tours" prior to adoption of the state's Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP). City Planning should regularly involve DOT when developing plans that affect the City transportation system, regardless of mode. Similarly, DOT must be involved in the planning and implementation of economic development/real estate development projects generated by other agencies such as HCD and BDC.

To ensure transportation projects are developed in a timely manner, the City must streamline its procurement process. The Pugh Administration should evaluate the feasibility of making changes to the procurement process. In addition, the City should define appropriate projects where innovative contracting and alternative project-delivery mechanisms can be used to reduce risks to the City, speed up delivery, and drive down cost. Baltimore should also investigate and continue to use alternative contracting methods, as has been tried on Central Avenue.⁹ While that project and its timing created too many demands for these methods to work successfully, DOT should be encouraged to determine where such methods are appropriate and will be successful.



Innovative technology could be an asset when looking at ways to modernize the procurement process, as well as in many other areas of the transportation sector. To better utilize technology in support of transportation, the Pugh Administration should create a Transportation Technology Committee¹⁰ made up of transportation staff, MOIT, representatives from the private sector, the Bloomberg iTeam, and other key City agencies. This group of forward-thinking innovators would help the Mayor identify opportunities for budget savings through better efficiencies; explore opportunities to serve the public and generate revenue as has been done by IKEA in Denver and Kansas City with smart streetlights and public wifi;¹¹ and identify users for underutilized assets in the conduit network.

Responsibilities of the Committee should further include comprehensive research, support, management, and coordination of information, activities, and implementation of transportation-related technologies across City departments. The Committee should also undertake strategic data development, data gathering, analytics, and data sharing. In addition, it should identify opportunities for funding transportation technologies¹² and for the targeting and testing of such technologies and area(s) for such testing (Proving Ground for Automated Vehicles).¹³

Finally, the Technology Committee would help to implement a “smart city”¹⁴ initiative that would illustrate and promote the Administration’s strong commitment to neighborhood revitalization and economic development, as many are striving to do around the globe.



STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Baltimore City’s transportation network is vast and complex, and it will take robust strategic partnerships to tame it. Key partners must be cultivated and encouraged to help the City meet its goals and outcomes, but partnerships are a two-way street—the City must understand and initiate the important steps required to be a good partner. This will require creating an ecosystem that fosters such partnerships and collaborations, and may include: incentives, innovative contracts for services and projects, regulatory and legislative changes, and advocacy to encourage these relationships. Key partnerships and collaborations include those with Maryland Transit Administration (MTA), developers, and private shuttle operators.

The City should establish mechanisms to ensure policy and technical collaboration with MTA. Jointly funding a full-time employee who would report to both the Director of the Baltimore City Department of Transportation and the MTA Administrator will facilitate such collaboration. Ensuring the completion of dedicated bus lanes in priority corridors by the launch of Baltimore Link in June 2017 is one task the City can target to help MTA improve service. In addition, taking steps to evaluate requests that compromise the effectiveness of the lanes, enforcing stopping restrictions at bus stops and in dedicated bus lanes, and using forward-facing bus cameras to identify offenders in partnership with MTA will help deliver quality service.

The City should also urge the MTA and state government to be effective partners in improving service and expanding access. Collecting and reporting data to the City, such as average bus speed, is critical to measuring outcomes of service and should be done with regularity. The City legislative delegation, working with the Hogan Administration, should enact legislation to create a Maryland Transit Commission that would support MTA’s realization of its mission as well as provide a formal mechanism for the City and other local governments to participate in agency governance. One of the Commission’s responsibilities should be an annual report with detailed reporting on performance using established measures. Encouraging MTA to expand the availability of discounted transit fares beyond public school students to other priority populations—such as low-income residents, job seekers, and the formerly incarcerated—can help to expand access.

Working with MTA, the BaltimoreLink effort must be sustained as an ongoing initiative. In light of reports of infrequent and unreliable bus service,¹⁵ it is critical to pursue continuous improvement to deliver the highest quality transit service to riders. The City should urge and work closely with MTA to focus on future iterations that examine the adequacy of schedule frequencies to support current and expanded ridership. It should also examine key origin-destination pairs that are critical to the City but might not otherwise be apparent to MTA based on available data and previous ridership patterns such as Edmondson Village to Amazon.

MTA and non-MTA private shuttles that operate within the City's limits can benefit from increased collaboration with the City and each other. The Pugh Administration should consider establishing a City-led task force to coordinate MTA, Circulator, and private shuttle services—particularly in the downtown area—to save overall operating costs, reduce redundancy, and improve service for all users. Collaborating with other key partners like MTA; private transit operators; and taxi, ride-hail, and ride-share services on new and emerging technologies will help improve travel options. This task force would undertake a study of the private shuttle services in operation throughout the City and asset-map routes currently operating. Working with those operators, they can utilize the data to identify opportunities for greater collaboration and coordination with the goal of reducing costs, increasing efficiency, and decreasing congestion. Best practices include those outlined in “Strategic Analysis Report: The Role of Shuttle Services in San Francisco’s Transportation System,”¹⁶ and the Baltimore Collegetown shuttle.¹⁷

As the City negotiates Community Benefits Agreements with developers as part of future economic development incentive packages, the funding of shuttles or some type of on-demand transportation program should be routinely considered and incorporated as one of the “benefits” to serve the communities most impacted by the proposed development. Additionally, the City should explore partnerships with existing Community Benefits Districts that could dedicate a portion of their tax surcharge or other sources of revenue to fund community shuttles or some type of on-demand transportation services that can improve service.

Transit partnerships are vital to the economic and social health of the City. Looking toward the future, an affordable alternative to the Red Line that provides equal benefits to the region should be established. An initiative led by the City, MDOT, MTA, and the Baltimore Metropolitan Council to update the Baltimore Region Rail System Plan¹⁸ can initiate planning for a workable solution. Additionally, as the City seeks to unite its transportation system with meaningful connections, the same should be done aesthetically. A comprehensive upgrade to standardized wayfinding signage for drivers and pedestrians, including replacement of the 30-year-old blue and green signs, can elevate artistry and improve circulation throughout the City.



RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

The Pugh Administration should commission a Blue Ribbon Task Force to examine current and potential revenue sources for transportation purposes. The goal of such a group would be to explore how transportation revenue can be equitably utilized to implement needed transportation projects and services. Subjects to be covered include: increasing the current level of Highway User Revenues available to the City; innovative financing and service-delivery techniques appropriate for transportation projects and initiatives; and exploring how City bond funding (not currently utilized for transportation) may be used for projects and initiatives. This Task Force can also suggest ways to replace federal aid with more flexible state money in order to avoid lengthy federal processes and speed up project development and delivery. This would ensure local matching funds are available to maximize leverage and cost-effectively improve transit services by embracing transit-oriented development (TOD) opportunities. A special consideration should be given to revenue generated via TOD of City-owned land and/or sale of air rights for private development due to its ability to make new resources available.

Innovation on how to most effectively spend limited dollars on transportation is occurring around the country. Counties in Virginia have established special assessments on commercial and industrial property to upgrade roads and bridges, and improve access to Dulles International Airport. These jurisdictions also found financing mechanisms for Metrorail expansions and station access improvements using recordation and transfer taxes.¹⁹ Moreover, in other jurisdictions around the country, value capture has been used as a means to generate funds for transit within a defined district (i.e., as part of traffic mitigation planning) to fund specific improvements. Best practice examples of innovation in transportation funding can be found in Seattle's Sound Transit-3,²⁰ the Denver Eagle P3 program,²¹ and the Portland Metro TOD program.²²

In keeping with the goals of the Task Force, prior to the beginning of new projects, serious consideration must be given to mechanisms for funding proper maintenance and operations. There is a potential need for increased state participation in this field. Therefore, a study should be conducted to determine how ownership and maintenance obligations of "numbered" highways within City limits can be transferred back to the Maryland State Highway Administration. This study should also determine if these transfers can be done without the loss of Highway User Revenues in order to use savings for maintenance and preservation of the other streets in the City.

Another impactful operation requiring renewed focus and state assistance is the Charm City Circulator. This service has become essential to Baltimore's transit network for residents, employees, and visitors alike. However, it is fiscally unsustainable in its current form. It is incumbent upon the Department of Transportation, under the guidance of the Pugh Administration, to reinvigorate the system so that it performs optimally. The first step in this process is to articulate a clear and bounded mission for the service, defining it as a supplement to MTA service in dense, walkable neighborhoods. The service must then seek to maintain the nexus with the parking tax by limiting service to areas where the tax is collected. It should only provide the amount of service that can be covered by the existing parking tax and state support it receives. Over the long term, the City must consider a more sustainable funding source than the parking tax. For riders, the City should give due credence to working with the operating contractor to maintain reliability and cleanliness.

Both the success of the Circulator and the opportunity presented in developing Red Line alternatives give an opening for the Pugh Administration to further explore public-private partnership opportunities to expand or add new transportation projects or services. The City should study the feasibility of public-private partnerships—such as concession agreements and alternative project-delivery methods—that may offer the City options to construct, reconstruct, operate, and maintain existing and new elements of its transportation system, especially those that might connect to employment and include job centers in the close-in suburbs, as well as economic development opportunities.



GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

- *Appoint an experienced, energetic, innovative leader to run the Department of Transportation, and give the Director strong and stalwart support.*
- *Increase coordination between agencies by creating interagency teams for projects and initiatives to streamline processes and to support common goals and outcomes, such as first/last mile issues, TOD development, and emergency services.*
- *Develop a Comprehensive Transportation Strategic Plan that, at a minimum:*
 - ◆ *Purposefully targets resources and outcomes, and clearly defines the charge and mission of DOT and other relevant City agencies;*
 - ◆ *Identifies and embraces strategic collaborations and partnerships;*
 - ◆ *Identifies parking strategies and defines the purpose of public investment in parking;*
 - ◆ *Establishes strategies for a digital future, using technology to provide solutions to City challenges;*
 - ◆ *Fully embraces transit's importance to Baltimore and enables a "rider centric" culture in City government, including traffic calming and street retrofits near bus stops;*
 - ◆ *Views existing rail and transit stations as priority areas for dense development;*
 - ◆ *Insists on the improvement of transit services provided by MTA to all, especially those with disabilities and public school students, and explores fare reductions and fare-free or reduced zones and corridors to encourage ridership and create economic and other opportunities;*
 - ◆ *Recognizes that the City's streets and public rights-of-way are valuable assets that make up as much as 30 percent of the City's footprint, and develops creative uses that maximize their value as useful and vibrant public spaces.*
- *Strengthen the 2010 Complete Streets Resolution and DOT's 2013 Complete Streets Policy by enacting a detailed Complete Streets Ordinance, with best practice design guidelines, that mandates compliance and contains real accountability.*

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

- *Link neighborhoods to opportunities by advocating with MTA for transit improvements and expanding alternate modes of transportation, such as Bikeshare, bike infrastructure, and, as sustainable funding can be found, the Charm City Circulator.*
- *Designate a City Equity and Inclusion Officer to ensure that the City's policies and plans address the needs and concerns of all residents, particularly those in the most underserved communities.*
- *Streamline the procurement process and define appropriate projects to use innovative contracting and alternative project-delivery mechanisms.*
- *Create a Transportation Technology Committee from both public and private sectors to identify and implement transportation-related technologies across City departments, and prepare and encourage safe testing of technologies that hold promise.*
- *Establish robust strategic partnerships with the MTA and public and private partners to collaborate on service and incentives, innovative and alternative contracts, and regulatory and legislative changes.*
- *Collaborate with MTA and MDOT on policy and technical matters, and jointly fund a full-time employee reporting to DOT and MTA.*
- *Urge the Governor and General Assembly to enact legislation creating a Maryland Transit Commission to support MTA's realization of its mission, and provide a formal mechanism for the City and other local governments to participate in agency governance.*
- *Encourage MTA to expand the availability of discounted transit fares beyond public school students to other priority populations such as low-income residents, job seekers, and formerly incarcerated citizens.*
- *Establish a City-led Task Force to bring together MTA, Circulator, and private shuttle services to study the coordination of public transit and the myriad private shuttle services in operation throughout the City and asset-map routes, and then pursue collaboration and efficiencies to save costs, reduce redundancy, and improve service for all users.*
- *Incorporate shuttles and on-demand transportation as desirable benefits in future Community Benefits Agreements, and work with existing Community Benefits Districts to dedicate a portion of their tax surcharge or other revenue to such uses.*

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

- *Create a Blue Ribbon Commission to equitably seek additional transportation revenues, including increases in existing sources and the development of new funding streams and techniques such as embracing transit-oriented development (TOD) and the value it creates.*
- *Study how ownership and maintenance obligations of "numbered" highways within City limits can be transferred back to the Maryland SHA.*
- *Re-evaluate and restructure the successful but fiscally unsustainable Charm City Circulator services, including clarifying its mission and limiting its geographic area, and identifying a sustainable funding source.*
- *Explore public-private partnership opportunities to expand or add new transportation projects or services via concession agreements and alternative project-delivery methods.*

ECONOMIC AND EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

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- ⁸ Baltimore City Department of Transportation, [Boston Street Multimodal Corridor Planning Study](#).
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- ¹¹ IKE (Interactive Kiosk Experience), [The Smart City Hub](#).
- ¹² U.S. Department of Transportation (2016), [Secretary Foxx Participates in White House Frontiers Conference, Announces Nearly \\$65 Million in Advanced Technology Transportation Grants](#).
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