

American Public Transportation Association (APTA)

Local Coalition Grant – 2025

Final Report

September 30, 2025



Executive Summary

Over the month of September, Transit Choices executed a paid social media campaign on Facebook and Instagram utilizing A/B message testing to survey Baltimoreans on general transit concepts, specific capital projects, and potential transit funding mechanisms. Over the course of the approximately three-week campaign, Transit Choices generated over 119,000 views of its advertisements, reached over 24,000 individual accounts, and received over 1,200 survey responses. The survey data revealed that 49% of respondents identified transit frequency as the factor that would make them ride more, 65% identified the building of the Red Line as their top major capital priority, and 45% would support additional statewide revenue measures to support transit. The data and attention generated by this campaign will assist Transit Choices, as well as the larger transit advocacy community, in developing strategic public messages to advance key transit public policy and funding objectives.

Campaign Background

In its application to APTA, Transit Choices outlined a social media campaign to gather data on key transit concepts such as frequency and reliability, major capital projects, and funding mechanisms. For major capital projects, Transit Choices was interested in getting public feedback on the Red Line project as well as the Maryland Transit Administration's (MTA) BMORE BUS Plan, which proposes building a fifth bus division to expand service and

has generated recent support from public officials.¹ On funding, Transit Choices was interested in generating public feedback on statewide revenue measures, the current funding mechanism for transit in the State of Maryland, and the idea of a new regional sales tax, as the Maryland General Assembly (MGA) continues to introduce legislation on regional transit authorities.² Transit Choices proposed utilizing A|B tests to garner greater insights into what messages and graphics may be more effective at generating engagement across these themes. Transit Choices developed the following messages and graphics over its campaign:

Week 1: September 1 to September 6 – Frequency or Reliability

Reliability Message: Tell us what would make you use transit more in Baltimore! Reliability means your bus or train arrives when it is supposed to and takes you where you need to go without delay, whether that's to the doctor, to school or to work. We should invest more in infrastructure and maintenance that ensures buses and trains arrive on time.

Graphic 1:



Graphic 2:



Frequency Message: Tell us what would make you use transit more in Baltimore! Frequency means your bus or train comes more often. Since your bus or train comes every 15 minutes, you have more time to help get your family out the door in the morning or know

¹ Zawodny, Daniel. *City Hall and transportation advocates rally around proposal to expand MTA bus service*. The Baltimore Banner. September 15, 2025. <https://www.thebanner.com/community/transportation/baltimore-mta-bus-service-schools-students-BNXTU3KIAVA55ML2OGTX4ZQ3Y/>.

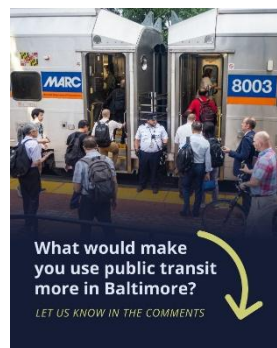
² HB 1370: Regional Transportation Authorities. 2025. <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Legislation/Details/hb1370?ys=2025RS>.

you can still get home even if you must work late. We should invest more in trained operators, buses, and trains to ensure there is more frequent transit in our region.

Graphic 1:



Graphic 2:



Week 2: September 15 – September 21 – Transit Expansion/Major Capital

Red Line Message: Governor Wes Moore's budget is making critical investments to make our transit system safe and in a state of good repair for generations to come. But we must continue to grow and expand our transit network for all Baltimoreans. We must build the Baltimore Red Line to create high-quality, affordable east-west transit through the city to connect residents to growing job centers and educational opportunities and to spur reinvestment.

Graphic 1:



Graphic 2:



BMORE BUS Message: Governor Wes Moore’s budget is making critical investments to make our transit system safe and in a state of good repair for generations to come. But we must continue to grow and expand our transit network for all Baltimoreans. Building a fifth Maryland Transit Administration bus division will provide Baltimoreans with every ten-minute service on core routes, new weekend, express and late-night bus services, and new access to key regional destinations like White Marsh, Baltimore Penn Station, and Catonsville.

Graphic 1:



Graphic 2:



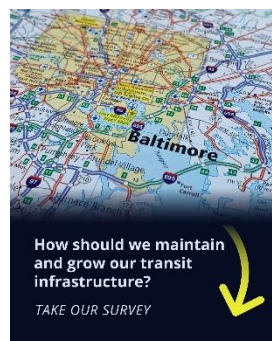
Week 3: September 21 – September 27 – Revenue Sources

Regional Revenue Message: Maryland's transportation funding is failing to keep up with our needs. For Baltimore to succeed, we need to continue to invest in our transportation network to safely and affordably connect residents to jobs. I would support a regional sales tax dedicated to specific transportation projects and improvements that will grow our economy, create affordable commuting options, and provide the Baltimore region with more control of its transportation network.

Graphic 1:



Graphic 2:



Statewide Revenue Message: Maryland's transportation funding is failing to keep pace with our needs. For Baltimore to succeed, we need to continue to invest in our transportation network to safely and affordably connect residents to jobs. I would support new, sustainable statewide transportation revenues that are connected to how much companies or individuals use the transportation network. These new revenues would ensure that everyone pays their fair share to safely maintain our transportation network, spur economic growth at the port and airport, and ensure affordable transportation options.

Graphic 1:



Graphic 2:



Audience Background

Utilizing Facebook and Instagram's audience targeting, the campaign's audience was set to approximate the Baltimore Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which includes Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Anne Arundel County, Howard County, Harford County and portions of Carroll and Queen Anne's Counties. The campaign utilized a survey question requesting zip code information to confirm this audience. Based on the 1225 survey responses received, the primary responding audience lived in either Baltimore City or County. Additional responses included Anne Arundel, Howard, and Montgomery Counties. The most represented zip codes in the survey data are West Baltimore (62), East Baltimore (74), South Baltimore (64), and Northwest Baltimore (66). Based on the data received, the

survey data likely overrepresents Baltimore City and higher income neighborhoods, but it does provide a good sample of West Baltimore City and Eastern Baltimore County residents, more diverse and representative areas of the broader region.

The survey also gathered data on the audience's age. The median age of the audience was 41.2 years old, and the average age was 35. This is slightly older than the median age of Baltimore City and County but is roughly in line with the median age of the State of Maryland.

Campaign Results

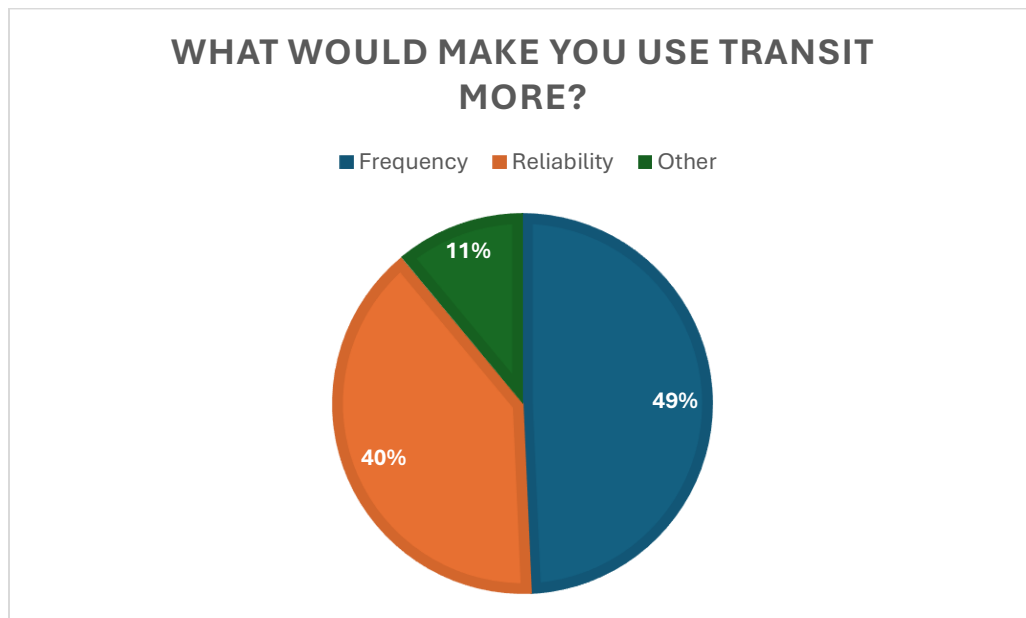
Overall, the campaign took place from September 1 to September 27. The first week of the campaign took place from September 1 to September 6. This week generated 19,600 views and reached 3,063 unique individual accounts. Week two of the campaign took place from September 15 to September 21. It generated 30,364 views and reached 11,772 unique individual accounts. In addition to the paid advertisements, this week generated additional organic engagement due to increased engagement and interactions with content relating to the Red Line project. The final week of the campaign took place from September 21 to September 27. It generated 71,891 views and reached 10,555 unique accounts. The messaging on revenues generated a lot of comments that likely increased views but did not outperform the reach of the capital project related ad set. Over the course of the approximately three-week campaign, Transit Choices **generated over 119,000 views** of its advertisements, **reached over 24,000 individual accounts in the Baltimore region**, and **received over 1,200 survey responses**.

Survey Design and Results

Utilizing Facebook and Instagram's Instant Forms feature, individuals that engaged with and clicked on an advertisement were asked to complete a survey. The survey requested basic contact information, zip code, and age. It also surveyed respondents on three questions related to the campaign and provided pre-populated answers based on the campaign messaging:

1. What would make you use transit more in Baltimore?
 - Frequency
 - Reliability
 - Other
2. What major project should we invest in to grow our transit system?
 - Red Line
 - Fifth Bus Division
 - Other
3. How should we fund major transit investments?
 - Statewide Revenues
 - Regional Revenues
 - Other

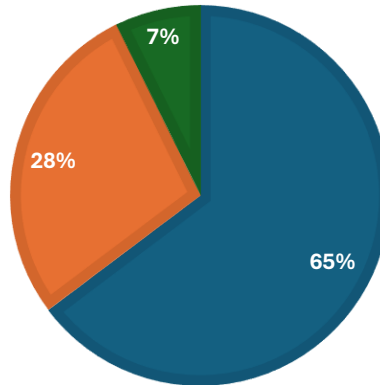
In total, the survey received **1,225 responses** from individuals primarily in the **Baltimore region**. For question 1, 600 individuals noted frequency as what would make them use transit more, 482 individuals noted reliability and 143 responded other. Of the other responses, 43 individuals noted safety or cleanliness, 18 noted access (transit stop closer to home or work), 15 said both frequency and reliability, and 5 said they would use transit more if it cost less or were free.



For question 2, 793 respondents noted the Red Line as the major capital project to invest in, followed by the BMORE BUS plan's fifth bus division at 343, and other at 89 responses. Of the other responses, 25 individuals said MARC/Amtrak or intercity passenger rail projects should be the top priority, 10 noted better rolling stock, and 5 said technology improvements (website, payment, app) should be the top priority.

WHAT MAJOR PROJECT SHOULD WE INVEST IN TO GROW OUR TRANSIT SYSTEM?

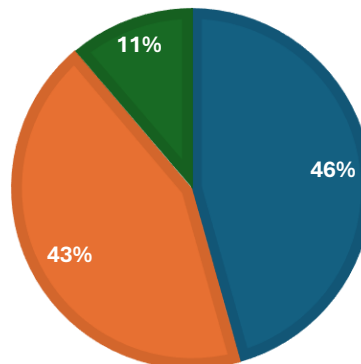
■ Red Line ■ Fifth Bus Division ■ Other



For question 3, 559 individuals expressed support for new statewide revenues to support transit, 529 supported a regional sales tax, and 137 noted other. Of the other responses, 20 responses supported additional taxes on corporations or the wealthy, 15 supported increased farebox recovery efforts, 15 were not supportive of any new taxes for transit, and 10 noted support for fees on real estate developments near transit.

HOW SHOULD WE FUND MAJOR TRANSIT INVESTMENTS?

■ Statewide Revenues ■ Regional Sales Tax ■ Other



Conclusion(s)

The APTA funding enabled Transit Choices to gather direct public feedback on key transit concepts and issues facing the Baltimore region and the State of Maryland. Based on the

survey responses received, the Red Line transit expansion project is the clear preference of the region for expansion. However, the BMORE BUS plan and the fifth bus division would directly align with the desires of 49% of respondents that indicated increased transit frequencies would make them ride more. The respondents were generally split on their preferred transit funding mechanism(s), but the State of Maryland and the Baltimore region will have to consider all options as the buying power of the state's motor fuel tax continues to decline.