



HB 517 Workgroup Presentation

Transit Choices Meeting



January 15, 2026

HB 517 Legislative Background

- **Workgroup Establishment & Core Mandate**
 - The Workgroup is tasked with evaluating alternative reorganization plans, assessing costs and benefits, identifying contractual obligations, and outlining steps to transfer such obligations if necessary.
- **TSO Statewide & Baltimore MTA Oversight**
 - To maintain core Baltimore transit services alongside establishing a statewide transit unit within The Secretary's Office (TSO), while ensuring Baltimore City has appropriate oversight and input.
- **Two reporting deadlines:** Budget Bill JCR Report (Dec. 1, 2025) and HB 517 Report (Dec. 1, 2026)
- **Multi-stakeholder composition**, including legislators, MDOT, MTA, regional boards, and riders



Workgroup Membership

Name	Appointment Type
Delegate Mark Edelson	Chair or Designee, House Appropriations Committee
Delegate Marc Korman	Chair or Designee, House Environment and Transportation Committee
Senator Cory McCray	Chair or Designee, Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
Senator Michael Jackson/Senator Shelly Hettleman	Chair or Designee, Senate Budget and Taxation Committee's Public Safety, Transportation, and Environment Subcommittee
Acting Secretary Samantha J. Biddle	The Secretary of Transportation, or Designee
Administrator Holly Arnold	The Maryland Transit Administrator, or Designee
Jon Laria	Chair or Designee, Baltimore Region Transit Commission
Mike Kelly	Representative or Designee of the local Metropolitan Planning Organization for Baltimore City
Sameer Sidh, Chair	MTA Rider, Appointed by the Governor
Wesley "Wes" Mitchell	MTA Rider, Appointed by the Governor

The Workgroup was staffed by:

- Samuel Quist, Senior Policy Analyst, DLS
- T. Patrick Tracy, Counsel, House Environment and Transportation Committee
- Sean Winkler, Senior Policy Advisor, MDOT



Workgroup Meetings

Five Meetings Conducted between (August - November 2025):

- Meeting 1: MTA Overview & Governance Structure
- Meeting 2: State Rail Administration History & Federal Funding
- Meeting 3: MTA Workforce, Governance Studies & Problem Statements
- Meeting 4: National Transit Governance Models & Options
- Meeting 5: Option C Governance & Final Recommendations

Access all meeting minutes and workgroup materials [MDOT Website](#)



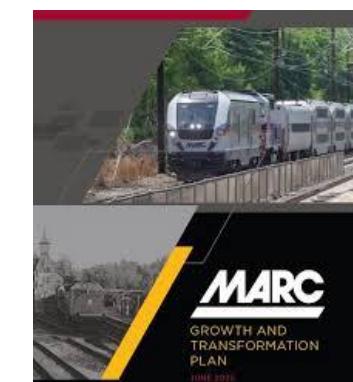
Workgroup Problem Statements

1. Greater Local Control of the Baltimore Region's Transit System

- The Baltimore Region has lacked direct or shared control over transit and governance decisions, including when it comes to capital expansion projects. Enabling more local representation and authority is essential to create successful Baltimore transit operations and prevent detrimental, unilateral decisions such as the Red Line cancellation in 2015.

2. Improvement of MARC Services

- The Workgroup believes MARC commuter rail services could be improved, especially compared to peer and other regional commuter rail transit systems.



Key Report Findings

1. MTA governance reform would enhance transparency and collaboration in decision making.
2. Separating MTA into two modes would not support the state's goals at this time.
3. Nationally, transit governance reform is often tied to increased revenue or cost-sharing with local governments. However, revenue was outside of the direct purview of this Workgroup but is critical to a high-functioning transit system.
4. Creation of an MTA Board of Directors for Baltimore Core Services and an Advisory Board for Commuter Services.
5. There are several personnel enhancements and legislative initiatives that would benefit the operations and functions of the MTA, including additional management personnel authority, tort reform, quick-take authority, and delegated procurement authority for existing fixed-guideway assets.
6. A study should be undertaken to further explore the creation of a rail authority.



Key Report Findings: Two Board Model

Recommended Governance Structure: Create two specialized boards with distinct oversight responsibilities and powers/authorities.

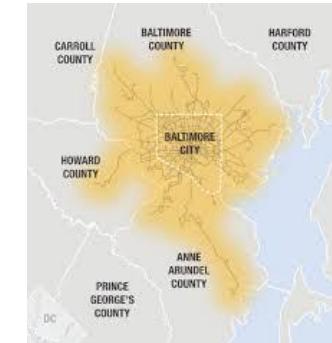
- **Board 1: Baltimore Core Services**
 - Oversees bus, light rail, and local transit in the Baltimore region
- **Board 2: Commuter Services**
 - Oversees MARC and commuter services; intended to be advisory



Baltimore Core Services (BCS) Board

- **General Composition:**

- Appointments would be shared between Governor and Core Service Jurisdictions.
 - The Governor would appoint a majority of the seats and name the Chair.
- Appointees should include a mix of MTA riders, core service residents, representatives for riders with accessibility challenges, and representatives from anchor institutions.
- To be determined – potential direct labor union voting role.
- Terms would be staggered, but Governor may name a Chair at any time.
- MDOT Secretary and MTA Administrator would serve as ex-officio, non-voting members.
- New MTA positions – including a Deputy CEO for Baltimore Core Services – would be created to support the BCS Board.
 - Board would be housed at MTA, and MTA would provide staff support.



Baltimore Core Services (BCS) Board

- **Authorities:**

- Approves major service plans, policies and initiatives for Baltimore Core Services, including advice on major projects.
 - Assumed the BCS Board would take on the duties assigned to the Baltimore Regional Transit Commission (BRTC).
- Provides advice and guidance on the hiring of a BCS Deputy CEO, subject to the approval of the MTA Administrator and MDOT Secretary.
 - BCS Deputy CEO would support the Board and report to the MTA Administrator.
- Review and approval authority of the MTA's capital (pre-draft CTP) and operating budget requests for Baltimore Core Services.
- Review and comment of MTA's draft CTP budget allocation, to be utilized in development of the final CTP.
- Budget requests would be non-binding.
- Timely budget review timeline to be developed.
- Approval authority over a decision by MDOT and MTA to withdraw a New Starts Capital Investment Grant (CIG) for any BCS territory project, once it has been accepted into the Engineering Phase by the Federal Transit Administration.
 - Requires a supermajority of the Board.
- Required annual report to the General Assembly.

Commuter Services (CS) Advisory Board

- **General Composition:**

- Appointments would be made solely by the Governor.
- A certain number of appointees would have to reside in MARC and commuter bus service territories, be MTA riders, or be representatives for riders with accessibility challenges.
- To be determined – potential direct labor union voting role.
- Terms would be staggered, but Governor may name a Chair at any time.
- MDOT Secretary would serve as ex-officio, voting member. MTA Administrator would serve as ex-officio, non-voting member.
- New MTA positions – including a Deputy CEO for Commuter Services – would be created to support the CS Board.
 - Board would be housed at MTA and MTA would provide staff support.



Commuter Services (CS) Advisory Board

- **Authorities:**

- Provide advice and guidance regarding commuter services (MARC/commuter bus), plans and policies and approve major service plans and updates.
- Provide advice and guidance on the hiring of a CS Deputy CEO, subject to the approval of the MTA Administrator and MDOT Secretary.
 - CS Deputy CEO would support the Board and report to the MTA Administrator.
- Review and comment authority of the MTA's pre-draft CTP and operating budget requests for Commuter Services and MTA's draft CTP budget allocation, to be utilized in development of the final CTP.
 - Budget requests would be non-binding.
 - Timely budget review timeline to be developed.
- Required annual report to the General Assembly.



Potential Next Steps for the Workgroup

- Workgroup acknowledged completing substantial work during the 2025 interim work session and reaching consensus on a governance reform proposal that meets the statutory objectives of HB 517.
 - Workgroup recommends that the report be treated as final and that there is no need to continue Workgroup activity into 2026.
 - Legislative activity is expected.

Thank you! Any questions?



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