

Feasibility Study – Expanding and Improving MARC

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Executive Summary



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The Central Maryland
Transportation Alliance

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Feasibility Study – Expanding and Improving MARC

The ***Central Maryland Transportation Alliance*** is focused on improving and expanding transportation options for the citizens and businesses of Central Maryland. For the region to meet the economic, environmental and socioeconomic challenges of the coming decades, the State must prioritize increasing revenue sources dedicated to maintaining, improving and expanding the transportation infrastructure. To this end, the Transportation Alliance is assessing the feasibility of increasing service on the MARC system, the only commuter rail system that serves the entire Baltimore/Washington corridor. The Transportation Alliance’s MARC initiative focuses on three critical elements of a robust rail service:

- 1. The need to increase the frequency and efficiency of rail service in order to provide access to job opportunities and to a trained and skilled workforce**
- 2. The need to increase rail service to support other economic assets in the Baltimore/Washington region, including healthcare, higher education, transit-oriented development projects and airports, particularly BWI**
- 3. The need to increase rail service as a catalyst for creating value for private sector investors and developers through public-private partnerships and other financing mechanisms**

Regional Growth Assessment – The region is experiencing major economic changes and shifts in population, and the economic connection between Baltimore and Washington DC continues to grow. The economic synergies of these two regions, merely 40 miles apart, underscore the need for an efficient and reliable mass transit system that serves the residents and workers that need or want to travel about without relying on their personal vehicles. Much of this job growth is fueled by the federal government and by the BRAC relocations that are the catalyst for significant additional growth in defense related companies and supporting service businesses.

The new BRAC jobs are located in dense clusters and, along with other significant hubs of employment, are located near a MARC station. MARC can provide the access to these jobs that is key to unlocking the economic potential of the region

Existing Rail Transportation – Rail transportation in the region is provided by Amtrak, the MTA, MARC and WMATA. Amtrak and MARC provide the only rail transportation link between Baltimore and Washington DC, but only the MARC system provides true regional commuter service. MARC operates a three branch system with service between Perryville and Washington DC along the Penn Line, another service between Washington DC and Baltimore via the Camden Line, and service to Frederick MD and Martinsburg WV via the Brunswick Line. MARC runs 84 trains per day, providing service to 42 stations, and carrying nearly 32,000 passengers per day, Monday through Friday. ***MARC service is focused on carrying commuters to DC and not the new job centers north of Baltimore.*** Service north of Baltimore is sparse in both directions. Only 6 southbound MARC trains leave Perryville on weekdays. Northbound service from Baltimore to Perryville is equally limited. Only one train arrives in the morning, one train arrives in the afternoon, and four trains arrive in the late afternoon/evening.

MARC Penn Line Weekday Service Summary

Number of Trains Between Baltimore and Washington DC				
	Morning Peak 5AM to 9AM	Mid-Day 9AM to 3PM	Afternoon Peak 3PM to 7PM	Evening 7PM to Midnight
Northbound	7	7	11	3
Southbound	11*	7	7	2
Number of Trains Between Baltimore and Perryville				
	Morning Peak 5AM to 9AM	Mid-Day 9AM to 3PM	Afternoon Peak 3PM to 7PM	Evening 7PM to Midnight
Northbound	1	1	2	2
Southbound	4*	1	1	0

*One train leaves Perryville 4:40AM

MARC also provides commuter service between Baltimore and Washington DC along the Camden Line which runs between Washington DC and Camden Station in Baltimore. The line serves a number of growing communities in Howard County and Prince Georges County. Northbound service from Washington DC consists of three morning trains, five late afternoon/early evening trains and one evening train. Southbound service from Baltimore consists of six morning trains and three afternoon trains. There is no evening service.

MARC Camden Line Weekday Service Summary

Number of Trains Between Baltimore and Washington DC				
	Morning Peak 5AM to 9AM	Mid-Day 9AM to 3PM	Afternoon Peak 3PM to 7PM	Evening 7PM to Midnight
Northbound	3	0	5	1*
Southbound	6	0	3	0

*Last train leaves Union Station 7:35PM

Rail Transportation Improvements on the Penn Line – MARC service runs in slots between the faster Amtrak express trains. In most cases MARC trains terminate in Baltimore so Amtrak service can continue north unobstructed by slower traffic.

- **Mid-day service between Washington DC and Perryville can be improved with some minor schedule adjustments but without any infrastructure improvements**
- **Weekend and evening service between Washington DC and Perryville can be implemented without any infrastructure improvements**

Extending weekday rush hour service north of Baltimore may require infrastructure improvements, including a new passing track at a cost of \$10 - 20M. Some service improvements may also require additional rail equipment. Improving weekday service between Baltimore and Perryville could be accomplished with a new shuttle train running between Baltimore and Perryville, at a cost of operating fees and possible additional equipment.

MARC service improvements are severely hampered by the lack of a major storage and maintenance yard. The development of such a facility, at a cost of \$150M to \$350M, must be a priority. Funding for most of the infrastructure and equipment will need to come from traditional sources; however, the new maintenance and storage facility may be an opportunity for private investment

through a public/private partnership contract, and MARC should investigate the potential for infrastructure cost sharing with other agencies that could co-locate at the facility.

Station Improvements – Two prime station development opportunities along the MARC Penn Line are at Bayview and at BWI. A new station at Bayview will provide access to this regional employment center and improve mobility through a connection with the future Red Line at the Bayview campus. A new station at BWI is also necessary to improve access to and serve the growing passenger business at BWI Airport. Stations are sometimes able to attract private investment, particularly through larger transit-oriented development projects, and modern stations can be seamlessly integrated into a commercial environment.

Bayview Station – A new station at Bayview can attract private investment through the expansion of the medical complex (Johns Hopkins Hospital and/or the NIH), or medical office and other professional office space not directly related to medical services. The site could accommodate a hotel with meeting and conference space for the campus, and could also support retail space (restaurants and convenience retailers) for campus employees and visitors. With the addition of a new MARC station:

- **Employees and visitors could arrive directly at their office or hotel from anywhere along the Northeast Corridor, or from BWI Airport with only a short connection between the airport and BWI rail station.**
- **With the addition of a new Red Line station employees and visitors could also reach downtown Baltimore within 14 minutes and the University of Maryland Baltimore and BioPark within 18 minutes.**

BWI Station – BWI Airport is the second busiest airport in the Baltimore/DC metro area and the only one that directly serves Baltimore. It is the 15th busiest Origin and Destination airport in the country and in 2010 the airport handled nearly 22M passengers and an average of 670 commercial flights per day. By train it is 20 minutes south of Baltimore Penn Station, 20 minutes north of New Carrollton Station and 35 minutes north of Union Station in DC. A shuttle bus service connects the station to the airport terminal. The BWI Station should be a priority for building a new station building that supports and is an asset to the growing passenger business at the Airport. The site, owned by the Maryland Aviation Administration, could easily accommodate a station house similar to the new Rental Car Facility that could provide:

- **A large receiving area for rail passengers and employees, not unlike the new rental car facility, and offices for airport backroom operations.**
- **Ticketing and waiting areas, sandwich shops, snack shops, newsstands, and other commuter related businesses**
- **Potential opportunity for private development above the Station.**

Conclusions – Economic growth in the Baltimore/DC region, including BRAC relocations and other DOD investments, will continue to influence demographic changes and attract private development and employment opportunities. Transportation improvements must keep pace with this growth, particularly public transportation in the form of commuter rail that can connect residents to opportunities. This commuter rail – the MARC system – exists today and provides the best opportunity for near-term improvements that can greatly enhance the effectiveness of the system to serve greater Baltimore, DC and its suburbs.