



## Baltimore Transit Governance and Funding Workgroup September 2, 2022

### Meeting One Summary

#### **Introduction**

Mike Kelly, Executive Director of BMC attended the meeting remotely and welcomed the Workgroup and thanked the members for their participation. He introduced the Chair, Delegate Tony Bridges.

Chairman Bridges introduced himself and his background, welcomed the Workgroup members and outlined his hope for what the group was formed to accomplish. He asked Workgroup members to introduce themselves. Workgroup members introduced themselves.

Mike Kelly, Executive Director of BMC briefed the group on the background of their forming, introduced the members to the process, staff and consultant team.

#### **Workshop Agenda and Schedule**

Bethany Whitaker, Nelson\Nygaard, outlined the workgroup schedule, highlighting that the workgroup is scheduled to meet four times, including this first meeting. Meetings are scheduled for 9 AM to 11 AM on the first Friday of the month between September and December:

- October 7, 2022
- November 4, 2022
- December 2, 2022

Bethany also let the Workgroup know that the workgroup is tasked with refining the models from 2021 and delivering more detailed recommendations.

#### **Transit Governance and Funding in Maryland**

Fred Fravel, KFH Group, provided background on the history of transit in the region and its governance and funding/financing structure at the State and local levels. He discussed



the transit systems growth and trends, including Locally Operated Transit Systems (LOTS), and COVIDs impact on the system and revenues.

Questions about the existing conditions included:

- Delegate Bridges asked if the MTA/LOTS programs included other programs such as Senior-Ride? There is a need to delve into all aspects of LOTS funding to know what programs are included. Fred confirmed that yes, senior ride services can be included in LOTS programs. He also confirmed the need to delve into LOTS funding.

### **Framing the Challenge**

Bethany walked through the goals of the Transit Funding and Governance Study and asked work group members to think about the goals as they considered the potential governance models.

Discussion from the group included:

- Senator Washington said that the group should include a policy goal of affordability to the user. The policy perspective needs to make clear that there is an understanding that transit will not pay for itself, does not cover its costs, and will need to be subsidized. Del. Bridges agreed. Bethany noted that good decision-making should lead to affordability.
- Sam Snead—There is a need to consider how any new structure would administer contracts and grants—what entity would do this? There are advantages to the current model in terms of MTA providing statewide contracts that local entities can utilize (for example for vehicles) and other support such as planning. This would be much more difficult for local systems if they had to do all their contracts on their own.

### **Governance and Funding Models**

Bethany introduced the draft governance models, noting the previous study developed six models:

- Status Quo/Do Nothing
- State Transportation Commission
- State Transit Commission
- Baltimore Advisory Board



- Baltimore Transit Commission
- Baltimore Regional Transit Authority

Bethany emphasized that the models are all draft and anything about them can be changed or refined. Questions about the individual models included:

Model #0: Status Quo/Do Nothing

No comments were made.

Model #1: State Transportation Commission

D'Andrea Walker asked who is on the current State Transportation Commission? Who appoints them? What do they do?

Don Halligan from BMC explained that the Commission is appointed by the Governor and provides advice to the Secretary of Transportation. The Commission is codified in the State of Maryland code.

Action: Bethany promised to provide more detailed information on the existing State Transportation Commission, including charter (if one), membership and past accomplishments. This will be available for the next working group meeting.

Model #2: State Transit Commission

No comments were made.

Model #3: Baltimore Advisory Board

Two work group members, Adrea Turner and Ron Hartman, noted that this option would not have authority to do things to expand the transit share—it could only allocate the amount of funding provided by MDOT.

Delegate Washington asked what does “manage” funding mean in this option?

- Bethany noted that if this model is advanced, the work group could define “manage” in more detail.

Model #4: Baltimore Transit Commission (BTC)



Adrea Turner asked if this model would apply in the Washington region as well.

Michael McMillan asked if the LOTS would be part of the BTC. He also asked why or why not, noting that the LOTS say they cannot raise pay and benefits because of the state funding formula. He asked if they joined the BTC could they raise more funding?

Bethany replied that the draft model currently assumes that the core LOTS of Baltimore County, Howard County, Anne Arundel County, Annapolis Transit would be included in the BTC. Other LOTS (Carroll, Harford, Queen Anne's) would have the option of joining.

One work group member asked if the model includes the ability to raise new or additional funds. Bethany confirmed that the model does include the ability to raise funding.

Sam Snead commented that there is a need to build in a role for this entity to be able to lobby for increased federal funding/projects to get more for the region. Bethany confirmed that in model #4, the MDOT MTA continues to be the direct recipient of federal funds, but in model #5 Baltimore Regional Transit Authority, the BRTA would be the direct recipient.

Ron Hartman noted that only the LOTS are currently putting in local money and work group members need to be aware of that role.

#### Model #5: Baltimore Regional Transit Authority (BRTA)

Jon Laria asked for a matrix that compares Models 4 and 5. We also need to fully understand the Washington area funding (not just WMATA) in comparison to Baltimore.

Sam Snead asked how or if this model could participate in FHWA flex funding opportunities, if MDOT/SHA is the highway recipient.

- Bethany replied that the State of Maryland (MDOT) would still make decisions about flexing federal funds to transit. She also noted that two models could be combined, so that the work group recommends model #1 (State Transportation Commission) to influence state level decisions and model #5 to influence local decisions.



Andrew Gena said that contracting of core services is a huge red flag. If you mean they would be contracted back to the state, then who is in charge? From a labor perspective, want to contract with the entity that has control over the funding amount and allocation.

- Bethany agreed that contracting is challenging. She said that the team talked about different options for how to transfer contracts from MDOT MTA and any new regional transit authority. She explained that in the BTC option, bus drivers, mechanics and staff who operate the transit service would continue as MDOT MTA employees. Under the BRTA, they would become BRTA employees.
- Michael McMillan said workers want to be employed by the organization that controls the money.

Michael McMillan asked if there is a mechanism that includes labor input on new dedicated funding—could this be carried over to these different models?

- Bethany said that some of the details had not been worked out yet, but that if there are agreements with labor today, those could be carried over to future contracts.

Del. Bridges expressed concern about paratransit and asked why paratransit had not been specifically called out. He is interested in knowing who provides the service and who pays for it, noting that the service is expensive. and costs are rising rapidly.

Delegate Bridges said that in the Washington region MDOT pays for all ADA paratransit, which is provided by WMATA.

- Bethany said ADA paratransit follows fixed route bus service, so who ever is operating the fixed route service would be responsible for providing ADA complementary paratransit service as well.

Action: Bethany agreed to create a comparison table for the BTC and BRTA and provide a summary of how transit governance and funding works in the Washington DC region.

## Discussion

The work group discussed the models collectively and agreed to take a non-binding vote to see if there were some models that could be eliminated after the preliminary



discussion. Based on this discussion, the group agreed to eliminate two options: Model #0 (Status quo/Do nothing) and Model #3 (Baltimore Advisory Board).

Based on this discussion, the work group agreed to advance four models for further discussion:

- State Transportation Commission (currently model #1), extend current Maryland Transportation Commission to include MTA
- State Transit Commission (currently model #2), create new commission to oversee MTA spending and investment
- Baltimore Transit Commission (currently model #4)
- Baltimore Regional Transit Authority (currently model #5)

### **Public Comment**

Delegate Bridges opened the meeting for public comment, noting that individuals had up to 3 minutes and organizations up to 5 minutes. There were two requests for public comment:

- Anna Ellis, a transit user, who works with Transform Maryland. Anne commented on how important transit is and how poor transit service (limited frequency, span, poor reliability) affects users and people's livelihoods. She expressed support for model #5 (BRTA), noting more control is needed.
- Brian O'Malley—Central Maryland Transportation Alliance (CMTA) said he supports model #5 (BRTA) for four reasons:
  - Equity
  - Local Control
  - Ability to maximize federal investment
  - Predictability for planning and investment—decisions would not be under a single decision-maker that could overturn long-planned investments (ex. Of Red Line)
- Brian noted there are additional resources that would be helpful to this effort including: the MTA Capital Needs Studies – update shows unmet needs growing, not declining; and a forthcoming MTA Compensation Study. He also noted that the CMTA has a consultant who is available to assist with this effort.



**Working Group Members Attending**

Dr. Celeste Chavis, Morgan State University

Andrew Gena, Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Research Division

Tasha Gresham-James, Dundalk Ren

Ron Hartman, WSP

Jon Laria, Ballard Spahr

Tony Bridges, Maryland State Representative District 41

Michael McMillan, Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU)

Tony Scott, SW Partnership

Sam Snead, Anne Arundel Transportation

Adrea Turner, Urban Institute

D'Andrea Walker, Baltimore County Department of Public Works

Mary Washington, Maryland State Senator, District 43



### Members of the Public Attending

Attending by Zoom	Attending in Person
Alfred Harf	Mark Stout (CMTA)
Jimmy Rouse	Anna Ellis
Holly Arnold,	Brian O'Malley (CMTA)
MTA Kathy	Carissa Mattern (Senator Washington's
Bartolomeo	office)
S. Gray	
Loan	
Stocia	
Ruth	
White	
Bakari Height (Labor Network for	
Sustainability)	
Christopher Dews	
Danielle Sweeney	
(CMTA) Benjamin	
Groff	
John Hillegass (Greater	
Washington Partnership)	
Veronica	
Nancy	
Stout	
Candice	
Susan	
Peters	