

FLASH

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)

QUARTERLY UPDATE TO
THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE
FALL 2024

The Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) continues to implement the 2013 Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan. This brief document contains an update on 2024 efforts to advance the program and is published quarterly.

Current Flash BRT program and project efforts include:

- General Flash BRT Program Accomplishments
- Design and Construction of Veirs Mill Road and MD 355 Flash projects
- Preliminary Engineering for US 29 – Phase 2 Flash BRT, which will add median dedicated transit lanes between Tech Road and Sligo Creek Parkway
- Planning/Alternatives Analyses for the North Bethesda Transitway and New Hampshire Avenue Flash BRT projects
- “AccelerateMC” Regional Infrastructure Accelerator (RIA) Implementation
- Associated Fleet Procurement and Facilities Development

Highlights of progress during the period of July through October on each of these efforts are provided on the following pages.



BRT PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS

1. Continued coordination with MDOT State Highway Administration to develop a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) that outlines a streamlined approvals process and support for implementation of the Flash BRT on state roads.
2. SHA hired a full-time staff person dedicated to coordinating with the Flash BRT program on state roads
3. Preparing a brochure to help property owners understand their rights and the County’s right of way (ROW) acquisition process.
4. Selected consultant to develop program-wide standards and specifications for running way, systems, and stations.
5. Coordinated with Ride On Transit to reflect planned Flash BRT service as part of Ride On Reimagined.
6. Advanced the preparation of Programmatic Safety and Security Plans for application to the design and construction of Flash BRT routes.
7. Participated in the following events to promote the Flash BRT program:
 - Montgomery County Agricultural Fair
 - MCDOT Flash BRT at National Night Out - East County
 - MCDOT Flash BRT at National Night Out - Germantown
 - East County Back to School STEM Festival
 - Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Back to School Night
8. The County, in partnership with the SHA, finalized the Lane Repurposing Framework to guide decision-making for future lane repurposing projects. The Framework will support the implementation of the County’s Flash BRT network.



1 VEIRS MILL ROAD FLASH BRT

The Veirs Mill Road Flash BRT will be a 7.6-mile, limited-stop, branded bus service with dedicated lanes and twelve stations planned on Veirs Mill Road and MD 355.

- Advanced design to 95 percent complete.
- Submitted necessary documentation (i.e., Ratings and Readiness Packages) to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for the Capital Investment Grant (CIG) Small Starts application. Responded to requests for additional information from the FTA. The County is requesting 80 percent federal funding (approximately \$133.3 million) for the project's eligible costs.
- Staff are holding bi-weekly meetings with the FTA and its Project Management Oversight Consultant (PMOC) to coordinate their evaluation of the project's readiness for federal funding. Through these meetings MCDOT is demonstrating its in-house management and technical capabilities to advance the project.
- In preparation for the planned PMOC-led Risk Workshop in February 2025, the project team conducted internal risk management workshops for design, construction, and other project related activities.
- Coordination is ongoing with third-party agencies and utilities (e.g., City of Rockville, Pepco, Verizon, Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission) to confirm design and roles for utility relocation.
- Developed schedule and prioritization for temporary and permanent right of way acquisition.
- Coordinating with WMATA and Ride On to facilitate operations planning, complementing services and adjustment of underlying service when the Flash BRT becomes operational.
- Establishing a Safety and Security Committee to review project-specific Safety and Security Plans and required readiness documentation.
- The project team held a public open house in June 2024 to provide updates on project status and seek input on project features. Ongoing stakeholder engagement efforts are focused on preparing materials to support anticipated property impacts as affected individuals are contacted in 2025 in advance of construction activities in 2026.

2 MD 355 FLASH BRT

The MD 355 Flash BRT will be a 24-mile County-owned and operated transitway to include approximately 11 miles of fully dedicated BRT lanes.

- Issued the Progressive Design Build (PDB) Request for Proposal (RFP) and conducted a pre-bid meeting with interested PDB teams. Completed the drafting of the PDB contract. The PDB will complete design for the corridor and construct the initial 11-mile Central Phase of the project between Montgomery College - Rockville and the Germantown Transit Center with currently available funding.
- The Central Phase was accepted into Project Development under the FTA's CIG New Starts Program.
- Advanced conceptual design of Montgomery College-Rockville Campus Transit Center and selected consultant to initiate design for Lake Forest Transit Center.
- Prepared preliminary drafts of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Section 106 documentation for the entire corridor. Conducting natural resources and cultural and historic resources field work to identify potential impacts. Findings will be used to refine the design to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts.
- Preparing the Simplified Trips on Project Software (STOPS) ridership forecasts as required by the FTA for federal funding eligibility and developing service plan for underlying local bus service along corridor.
- Evaluated scenarios for proportions of federal, state, and local funding to assess capacity.



1 US 29 – PHASE 2

MCDOT has continued work to complete preliminary engineering (35% design) for US 29 Flash BRT Phase 2, which includes the recommended median bus lane concept. The study area includes a 4.6-mile section of the full US 29 Flash BRT Corridor between Sligo Creek Parkway and Tech Road.

- Continued developing median running bus lane design concept and investigating operational strategies for implementation including signals and controls.
- Conducted VISSIM traffic analysis on options at Franklin Ave and Burnt Mills Shopping Center.
- Conducted traffic counts throughout the corridor to calibrate the traffic noise data model. Noise monitoring data to be collected in the Fall/Winter 2024/25.
- M-NCPPC review of the Cultural Resources Assessment was completed and the report was submitted to the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) for review.
- Completed the wetland investigation report for inclusion with state and federal permit application planned for Spring, 2025.

2 NORTH BETHESDA TRANSITWAY

MCDOT is planning the Flash BRT connection between the Westfield Montgomery Mall Transit Center and the North Bethesda Metrorail Red Line Station.

- Currently conducting a corridor study and assessing the performance of alternatives to select a locally preferred alternative. This planning study will refine the Master Plan recommendation and station locations, BRT lane configurations and corridor termini.
- The corridor may also include an express lane connection along the I-270/495 corridor to Virginia.
- MCDOT anticipates recommending a preferred alternative to the County Executive and County Council in Spring, 2025.

3 NEW HAMPSHIRE AVENUE

The project will create a Flash BRT corridor along New Hampshire Avenue (MD 650) between the Fort Totten Metrorail Station in the District of Columbia as its southern terminus and the Colesville Park and Ride lot as its northern terminus.

- Currently conducting a corridor study for the 8.25-mile segment to select a locally preferred alternative.
- This planning study will refine the Master Plan recommendation and station locations, BRT lane configurations, corridor termini, and ADA-accessibility.
- Determined a hybrid alternative that provides a combination of mixed traffic with additional exclusive transit lanes.
- Completed initial transit ridership analysis using the STOPS model
- MCDOT anticipates recommending a preferred alternative to the County Executive and County Council in Spring, 2025.



Promoting the Flash BRT program at the National Night Out in Germantown



Promoting the Flash BRT program at the MCPS Back to School Fair



The County was awarded a \$2 million grant by US DOT Build America Bureau to create the AccelerateMC Regional Infrastructure Accelerator (RIA). AccelerateMC will develop innovative approaches to funding, financing, right of way acquisition, risk management, third-party agreements, and workforce development for the BRT program.

- Finalized the cooperative agreement with USDOT and expect tasks to begin in Q1 or Q2 of FY 2025.
- Conducted program initiation meeting with USDOT.
- Participated in biweekly coordination meetings with USDOT.
- Prepared and submitted Program Management Plan to the Build America Bureau.
- Developed AccelerateMC web site MCDOT - AccelerateMC (montgomerycountymd.gov) to explain the program and scopes of the tasks.
- Initiated review of the current right of way acquisition process to ensure compliance with relevant federal and state requirements.
- Initiated development of programmatic risk management system to guide decision-making and to conduct risk identification, evaluation, and mitigation through all stages of program and project development and implementation.

MCDOT has been working to address critical issues to deliver the Flash BRT program, including:

1 Capital Investment Grant Application

- Navigating the complexity of the FTA's CIG process and preparing the extensive volume of analyses and documentation required for funding approval.
- Changing requirements delayed our ability to submit the Veirs Mill project for rating on the original schedule.

2 Third Party Agreements

- Coordinating with numerous third parties that are directly and indirectly affected by project work.
- Entering into programmatic or project specific agreements with each public entity and utility impacted by project work.

3 Utilities

- Obtaining timely utility relocation designs to avoid construction delays. Most utilities require that they perform the design as well as the physical relocation of the utility.

4 Right of Way

- Avoiding and minimizing right of way (ROW) impacts and associated costs through design modifications while maintaining the overall function of the project.
- Helping property owners understand their rights and the County's ROW acquisition process.

ASSOCIATED FLEET & FACILITIES EFFORTS

- Evaluating alternative project delivery methods for the Crabbs Branch Maintenance Depot (Jeremiah Park), which will support the MD355 Flash BRT project and provide storage and maintenance capacity for the County's transition to Zero Emission Buses (ZEBs).
- Initiated community outreach and land planning for the Crabbs Branch Maintenance Depot.



Promoting the Flash BRT program at the Montgomery County Agricultural Fair

