



## Montgomery County's Advocates for Better Transportation

P.O. Box 7074, Silver Spring MD 20907 • [admin@actfortransit.org](mailto:admin@actfortransit.org)

Montgomery County Council  
100 Maryland Ave., 6th Floor  
Rockville, MD 20850

February 6, 2025

### **Re: FY26 Capital Budget and Amendments to FY 2025-2030 CIP**

Dear Council President Stewart, Vice President Jawando, and Councilmembers:

The Action Committee for Transit (ACT) urges this County Council to prioritize Capital Budget projects that build more bus lanes, safer infrastructure for active transportation, and community development projects that will accelerate the production and preservation of housing near transit. The budget process is our county's annual opportunity to build transit-oriented communities that are sustainably developed as envisioned in already adopted plans such as Thrive 2050, the Climate Action Plan, the Bicycle Master Plan, and the Pedestrian Master Plan.

ACT is encouraged that the US 29 Flash Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project will eventually extend into Howard County due to receiving federal money. Extending the US 29 Flash into Howard County is potentially a win for regional economic growth and reducing the carbon emissions that contribute to the climate crisis. The promised world-class transit networks for US 29, MD 355, and Viers Mills Road mentioned in the budget will only happen with dedicated bus lanes and learning the lessons from what is happening on the US 29 Flash route. Due to separate fare payment systems and stops for the Flash and other buses traveling in the same corridor, riders pay the Flash fare before boarding that bus, but the local bus arrives first in many instances. There is a problem of wait times and travel times increasing on the US 29 route. The next phases of the BRT project on all routes must not repeat this situation, or we risk turning the BRT project into a boondoggle.

If the budgetary constraints facing Montgomery County prevent us from building a high-capacity BRT network, then we should invest our time and money in running more frequent buses on an expanded network. The [Bus Priority Program - Minor Projects](#) has proven we can have bus lanes sooner rather than later. We have already seen success with bus lane projects such as the one on the congested University Boulevard corridor, and we should be doing more.

Furthermore, a great transit experience does not begin and end with the service itself because people need to walk, roll, or bike to transit stops. The pedestrian and bicyclist could be the student going to school, someone going to work, or the parent going to the [local grocery store](#).

The planning, design, and construction for capital projects involving BRT and any other project near transit must incorporate pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure. Unfortunately, Montgomery County is not taking enough advantage of the great opportunity that is Capital Bikeshare for first and last mile trips and trips up to three miles. Capital Bikeshare is [outpacing](#) similar systems across the country, and neighboring jurisdictions are seeing a ridership boom. Montgomery County has not kept pace because [the inadequate density of our bikeshare network](#) is making it difficult to improve ridership. The county should focus on building a denser network of docking stations in transit hubs that will encourage more ridership.

The great vision in our county's plans for transit will be incomplete unless we build transit-oriented communities. ACT on January 10, 2025, sent a letter to this County Council calling for action on housing production. The money allocated to the Housing Initiative Fund and the Non-Profit Preservation Fund are crucial investments that will bring the county closer to the scale of commitment we must meet for the production and preservation of affordable housing. This level of funding should continue to be a benchmark and not the ceiling for the future. In addition, ACT looks forward to the passage of ZTA 25-02 that will open up more land for housing along transit corridors. This ZTA is a real step forward for broadening access to high-capacity transit, and it is another reason to accelerate transit and complete streets projects.

Wherever there is housing along corridors, we must design or retrofit streets to be safe for walking, rolling, and biking to transit. Montgomery County knows many of the most hazardous routes to life and limbs while accessing transit are within Equity Focus Area (EFA). Data presented to this Council in the Pedestrian Master Plan clearly showed [EFAs suffer higher rates](#) of crashes that result in a fatality or severe injury. The building of the Silver Spring Greenway and the Bicycle-Pedestrian Priority Area Improvements in the CIP along the Purple Line and in Wheaton are examples of critical infrastructure for making transit near housing accessible and safe.

ACT recognizes the budgetary situation facing the county and state raises serious concerns regarding how to generate revenue needed for transit infrastructure. ACT is engaged with this conversation at the state level, and we look forward to the formation of the task force to explore additional funding mechanisms that came out of the Growth and Infrastructure Policy deliberations last year. Nevertheless, Montgomery County's Capital Budget must prioritize the generational effort of developing complete streets and high frequency transit for all. It is an opportunity to build transit-oriented communities where people have the viable option to choose not to drive. It is the opportunity to take the climate crisis seriously by building a more sustainable county.

Sincerely,

Michael Larkin  
Vice President, Housing and Land Use