




Transit Services

RECOMMENDED FY26 BUDGET

\$211,045,285

FULL TIME EQUIVALENTS

922.86

 CHRISTOPHER CONKLIN, DIRECTOR

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Division of Transit Services is to provide an effective mix of public transportation services in Montgomery County.

BUDGET OVERVIEW




The total recommended FY26 Operating Budget for the Division of Transit Services is \$211,045,285, an increase of \$17,379,868 or 8.97 percent from the FY25 Approved Budget of \$193,665,417. Personnel Costs comprise 59.10 percent of the budget for 899 full-time position(s) and nine part-time position(s), and a total of 922.86 FTEs. Total FTEs may include seasonal or temporary positions and may also reflect workforce charged to or from other departments or funds. Operating Expenses account for the remaining 40.90 percent of the FY26 budget.

Debt Service for general obligation bonds and other debt for the Mass Transit Fund is appropriated in the Debt Service Fund and is not displayed in this section. To pay for Debt Service in FY26, a transfer of funds from the Mass Transit Fund to the Debt Service Fund of \$28,429,735 is required.


In addition, this department's Capital Improvements Program (CIP) requires Current Revenue funding.

COUNTY PRIORITY OUTCOMES

While this program area supports all seven of the County Executive's Priority Outcomes, the following are emphasized:

-  **Thriving Youth and Families**
-  **A Greener County**
-  **Easier Commutes**

INITIATIVES

-  **Prioritize transit in Montgomery County by making Ride On bus service fare free. Zero-fare bus systems offer a significant advantage to public transportation by eliminating the cost of travel for passengers. This initiative aims to encourage the use of buses, reduce traffic congestion, and lower carbon emissions by promoting more eco-friendly commuting options. By removing fares, these programs make transportation more accessible to everyone, especially those with limited financial resources, while also supporting environmental and social goals.**

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- ★ Create a more sustainable and equitable transit system for the County through the Ride On Reimagined Service and Implementation Plan. This comprehensive strategy was developed through over two years of meticulous research and planning, including a focus on the community's unique needs. The first year of the plan focuses on foundational improvements, such as upgrading infrastructure, enhancing existing routes, and introducing new services where there is the highest demand. In later years, the plan will expand service to increase accessibility and accommodate future growth.
 - ★ Transition to a zero-emission bus fleet to achieve the County's goal of zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2035, as outlined in the Climate Action Plan. The Montgomery County Department of Transportation has developed a transition plan to develop concrete strategies for emission reduction, evaluate facility needs, determine appropriate fleet composition, and engage the community. By integrating innovative technologies and planning for necessary infrastructure, the County is not only addressing current environmental challenges but also setting a standard for future transit initiatives. This proactive approach demonstrates a dedication to creating a cleaner, healthier environment for all residents while contributing to global efforts against climate change.
 - ★ Expand Ride On service through the Great Seneca Transit Network, which will significantly enhance mobility and access to vital job sectors, particularly in healthcare, biotech, and education. The first phase of the network is operational and serves the Shady Grove corridor and the Life Sciences Center along I-370. Key features of the network include new and upgraded transit stations, dedicated bus and bike lanes, transit signal priority for efficiency, enhancements to transit centers, and improvements for pedestrians and cyclists.

INNOVATIONS AND PRODUCTIVITY IMPROVEMENTS

- ★ The County has added 26 battery electric buses as replacements for diesel-fueled buses in the Ride On bus fleet. An additional 86 electric buses are planned to be added to expand the fleet to 112 electric buses by the end of FY26.

PROGRAM CONTACTS

Contact Ken Sloate of the Division of Transit Services at 240-777-5808 or Gary Nalven of the Office of Management and Budget at 240-777-2779 for more information regarding this department's operating budget.

PROGRAM PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Performance measures for this department are included below (where applicable), with multi-program measures displayed at the front of this section and program-specific measures shown with the relevant program. The FY25 estimates reflect funding based on the FY25 Approved Budget. The FY26 and FY27 figures are performance targets based on the FY26 Recommended Budget and funding for comparable service levels in FY27.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

★ Community Mobility Services

The Community Mobility Services program provides a wide range of transportation-related services and options for County residents and commuters. The program includes components to inform people about services available, enabling them to make the best choices for their needs; programs to reduce the cost of using those options; and programs to increase the array of choices.

Those components include the following units:

- **Commuter Services:** Working with the business and residential community, this program unit promotes alternatives to single occupant vehicles (including transit, car/vanpooling, biking, bikesharing, micromobility services, walking, and telework) in order to reduce traffic congestion, improve air quality and other environmental factors, and address climate change. Outreach and services are targeted to employers, employees, and residents of multi-unit buildings within the County's six Transportation Management Districts (TMDs): Silver Spring, Friendship Heights, Bethesda, North Bethesda, Greater Shady Grove, and White Oak, and in the Wheaton Transportation Planning and Policy area. Large employers and residential complexes outside the TMDs are also serviced on a more limited basis as resources permit. The unit coordinates with other agencies in the development approval process and works with developers within TMDs to incorporate supportive measures into their projects through implementation of Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Plans. The unit also coordinates with Parking Management to provide parking opportunities within the TMDs but outside Parking Lot Districts (PLDs). Revenues from these non-PLD parking areas help support the unit's services. The unit supports and helps coordinate actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector in order to meet the County's climate change goals, consistent with actions identified in the Climate Action Plan. These include programs promoting use of electric vehicles by residents, businesses and their employees, developers, and the community at large.
- **Senior & Special Transportation:** This unit provides travel options for seniors and residents with disabilities who have low incomes, under a user-side subsidy program (Call-n-Ride); transportation to and from medical appointments for participants with low incomes (Medicaid); and outreach and information on public and private transportation programs for populations with special needs (Senior and Special Transportation Services). It ensures these populations have transportation options to meet their unique needs, provides access to necessary services, promotes independence, and prevents social isolation.
- **Taxi Services:** This unit administers taxicab regulation, licensing, and permit activities of Chapter 53 of the Montgomery County Code (Taxi).
- **Cross-Coordination of Services:** The Community Mobility Program coordinates implementation of programs and grants to support a broad range of mobility options with community groups, County departments, and other local, state, and regional agencies.

Program Performance Measures	Actual FY23	Actual FY24	Estimated FY25	Target FY26	Target FY27
Number of employer contacts	11,906	14,379	15,000	15,500	16,000
Number of Call-n-Ride participants	5,449	5,212	5,500	5,800	6,100
Percent of Employer Transportation Demand Management Plans Filed ¹	84%	79%	81%	83%	85%
Non-auto driver mode share in Silver Spring Transportation Management District ²	71.8%	71.8%	73%	73%	74%

¹ Due to continuing after-effects on businesses from the Covid-19 pandemic, following up with employers regarding filings of TDM Plans and related reports continues to be more challenging than in the past. Commuter Services works with employers to complete as many of their filings as possible, but it has not been possible to reach many employers, some of whom have moved or ceased operations. Others have continuing staff shortages and other priorities, making it difficult to assist with completion of TDM Plans and reports. County staff vacancies and outreach contract challenges also impacted the number of employer plans that could be obtained in FY24. With the filling of those vacancies and resolution of other constraints it is anticipated staff and contractors will be able to work with more employers to enable them to successfully file their TDM Plans.

² Commuter Surveys are conducted every other year. Figures for intervening years carry forward the results for the prior survey year -- thus NADMS figures will only change at most every other year. The most recent Commuter Survey was conducted in fall 2022 (FY23), with final analysis completed in FY24. This was the first survey conducted since FY20, which was conducted in fall of calendar year 2019, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. As an ongoing impact from the pandemic, telework was especially high among employees and residents responding to the FY23 survey. This resulted in high percentages of NADMS in most TMDs. Extensive use of telework is anticipated to be slightly lower in subsequent survey years, as more employers and employees return to in-person work post-pandemic, while transit use is anticipated to grow somewhat, resulting in small increments in NADMS.

FY26 Recommended Changes	Expenditures	FTEs
FY25 Approved	16,953,840	33.83
Shift: From Grant Fund	96,005	0.90
Increase Cost: Three Percent Inflationary Adjustment to Non-Profit Service Provider Contracts	24,778	0.00
Increase Cost: Marketing Services Contract Escalations	16,257	0.00
Increase Cost: TRiPS Commuter Store Contract Escalation	14,860	0.00
Increase Cost: White Oak Transportation Management District	3,718	0.00
Decrease Cost: Transportation Management District Reporting	(19,500)	0.00
Shift: To Mass Transit Fund	(96,005)	(0.90)
Decrease Cost: Commuter Survey for Employees and Residents	(100,000)	0.00
Reduce: Countywide Transportation Demand Management Outreach Contract	(200,000)	0.00
Reduce: Transportation Services Improvement Fund Taxicab Reimbursements to Ensure the Sustainability of the Fund	(991,265)	0.00
Multi-program adjustments, including negotiated compensation changes, employee benefit changes, changes due to staff turnover, reorganizations, and other budget changes affecting multiple programs.	224,724	(1.55)
FY26 Recommended	15,927,412	32.28

Transit Services

Public transit plays a vital role in maintaining the livability of Montgomery County's growing communities, easing commutes for County residents, and reducing emissions of greenhouse gases. The Transit Services program provides Ride On fixed route bus service, the FLASH limited stop transit service, and the FLEX on demand zone-based service in the County. The program plans and schedules all transit service, evaluates and develops routes and zones, and adjusts bus schedules three times a year.

Ride On bus service provides critical mobility options for County residents. Ride On operates fixed route service primarily in neighborhoods and provides a collector and distributor service to the major transfer points and transit centers in the County. Ride On bus service coverage extends to many residents and employers in the County and provides vital service to low-income households and households without cars.

The FLEX bus provides on demand service in several community zones. The FLASH Transit service operates on U.S. Route 29 from Briggs Chaney and Burtonsville to the Paul S. Sarbanes Transit Center in the Silver Spring business district. Transit Services supplements and coordinates the County's mass transit services with Metrobus and Metrorail service, which are provided by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA).

Transit Services is committed to transitioning its fleet of over 375 buses to zero emissions. Ride On currently has fourteen zero-emission electric buses in service and a procurement is underway for additional zero emission buses.

Program Performance Measures	Actual FY23	Actual FY24	Estimated FY25	Target FY26	Target FY27
Passengers transported (millions)	14.359	18.422	19.040	19.421	19.810
Scheduled Ride On roundtrip circuits missed, in whole or in part, per 1,000 roundtrip circuits	5.8	4.9	5.0	4.8	4.5
On time performance for Ride On buses	69.6%	70.3%	70.7%	71.0%	71.5%

FY26 Recommended Changes	Expenditures	FTEs
FY25 Approved	175,303,260	869.53

FY26 Recommended Changes	Expenditures	FTEs
Increase Cost: Overtime Adjustment	2,400,000	0.00
Increase Cost: Bus Shelter Maintenance	1,600,000	0.00
Add: Howard County Flash Expansion (Offset by Revenue from Howard County)	1,119,413	17.00
Increase Cost: Juneteenth Holiday Pay	487,476	0.00
Increase Cost: Contract Escalations	392,058	0.00
Add: Zero Fare Transit Ambassadors	250,000	0.00
Increase Cost: Utilities	215,889	0.00
Add: Automated Bus Lane Enforcement Pilot	160,000	0.00
Increase Cost: Transit Asset Management Plan	150,000	0.00
Increase Cost: Nicholson Court Lease	48,095	0.00
Increase Cost: Three Percent Inflationary Adjustment to Non-Profit Service Provider Contracts	16,654	0.00
Decrease Cost: FY25 Mid-Year Position Consolidation	(65,291)	(1.00)
Decrease Cost: Elimination of Fare Collection	(557,113)	(2.50)
Multi-program adjustments, including negotiated compensation changes, employee benefit changes, changes due to staff turnover, reorganizations, and other budget changes affecting multiple programs.	12,700,047	2.55
FY26 Recommended	194,220,488	885.58

Transit Services General Administration

The General Administration program provides executive direction and support functions for Transit Services programs that include Ride On operations and planning, human resources, information technology, budget/grant/fiscal management/procurement services, and special transportation programs to increase mobility and promote the economic growth and stability of the County.

FY26 Recommended Changes	Expenditures	FTEs
FY25 Approved	1,408,317	6.00
Multi-program adjustments, including negotiated compensation changes, employee benefit changes, changes due to staff turnover, reorganizations, and other budget changes affecting multiple programs.	(510,932)	(1.00)
FY26 Recommended	897,385	5.00

BUDGET SUMMARY

	Actual FY24	Budget FY25	Estimate FY25	Recommended FY26	%Chg Bud/Rec
MASS TRANSIT					
EXPENDITURES					
Salaries and Wages	84,780,648	86,816,397	91,816,842	94,794,005	9.2 %
Employee Benefits	22,839,033	25,253,581	26,017,466	28,419,604	12.5 %
Mass Transit Personnel Costs	107,619,681	112,069,978	117,834,308	123,213,609	9.9 %
Operating Expenses	80,990,192	76,326,826	81,434,896	82,680,062	8.3 %
Capital Outlay	0	144,230	144,230	144,230	—
Mass Transit Expenditures	188,609,873	188,541,034	199,413,434	206,037,901	9.3 %

BUDGET SUMMARY

	Actual FY24	Budget FY25	Estimate FY25	Recommended FY26	%Chg Bud/Rec
PERSONNEL					
Full-Time	853	869	869	884	1.7 %
Part-Time	16	9	9	9	—
FTEs	885.51	896.26	896.26	910.66	1.6 %
REVENUES					
Property Tax	192,537,043	213,971,756	213,514,101	211,415,487	-1.2 %
Taxi Licensing Fees	57,115	80,000	32,000	80,000	—
Bus Advertising	1,681,491	1,720,000	820,000	1,780,000	3.5 %
Motor Pool Charges/Fees	680,181	0	813,868	0	—
Other Charges/Fees	3,375,675	3,148,906	3,305,850	3,719,383	18.1 %
Parking Fees	871,288	828,704	712,430	775,000	-6.5 %
Ride On Fare Revenue	2,791,910	4,820,798	1,583,893	0	-100.0 %
Other Fines/Forfeitures	2,625	0	1,925	160,000	—
Parking Fines	1,028,102	800,000	961,590	800,000	—
State Aid: Call N' Ride	379,107	379,107	395,666	391,011	3.1 %
State Aid: Damascus Fixed Route	425,094	607,466	681,401	681,401	12.2 %
State Aid: Ride On	41,307,169	40,589,000	40,589,000	40,589,000	—
Miscellaneous Revenues	46,104	0	(11,218)	0	—
Insurance Recoveries	8,798	0	103,607	0	—
Property Rentals	6,217	0	1,867	0	—
Other Intergovernmental	0	0	0	1,119,413	—
Mass Transit Revenues	245,197,919	266,945,737	263,505,980	261,510,695	-2.0 %

GRANT FUND - MCG

EXPENDITURES

Salaries and Wages	447,842	1,285,595	1,285,595	1,154,787	-10.2 %
Employee Benefits	133,201	351,043	351,043	364,852	3.9 %
Grant Fund - MCG Personnel Costs	581,043	1,636,638	1,636,638	1,519,639	-7.1 %
Operating Expenses	3,862,617	3,487,745	3,487,745	3,487,745	—
Grant Fund - MCG Expenditures	4,443,660	5,124,383	5,124,383	5,007,384	-2.3 %

PERSONNEL

Full-Time	15	15	15	15	—
Part-Time	0	0	0	0	—
FTEs	13.10	13.10	13.10	12.20	-6.9 %

REVENUES

Federal Grants	0	1,939,694	1,939,694	1,939,694	—
State Grants	0	3,184,689	3,184,689	3,067,690	-3.7 %
Grant Fund - MCG Revenues	0	5,124,383	5,124,383	5,007,384	-2.3 %

BUDGET SUMMARY

	Actual FY24	Budget FY25	Estimate FY25	Recommended FY26	%Chg Bud/Rec
DEPARTMENT TOTALS					
Total Expenditures	193,053,533	193,665,417	204,537,817	211,045,285	9.0 %
Total Full-Time Positions	868	884	884	899	1.7 %
Total Part-Time Positions	16	9	9	9	—
Total FTEs	898.61	909.36	909.36	922.86	1.5 %
Total Revenues	245,197,919	272,070,120	268,630,363	266,518,079	-2.0 %

FY26 RECOMMENDED CHANGES

	Expenditures	FTEs
MASS TRANSIT		
FY25 ORIGINAL APPROPRIATION	188,541,034	896.26
<u>Changes (with service impacts)</u>		
Add: Howard County Flash Expansion (Offset by Revenue from Howard County) [Transit Services]	1,119,413	17.00
Add: Zero Fare Transit Ambassadors [Transit Services]	250,000	0.00
Add: Automated Bus Lane Enforcement Pilot [Transit Services]	160,000	0.00
Reduce: Countywide Transportation Demand Management Outreach Contract [Community Mobility Services]	(200,000)	0.00
Reduce: Transportation Services Improvement Fund Taxicab Reimbursements to Ensure the Sustainability of the Fund [Community Mobility Services]	(991,265)	0.00
<u>Other Adjustments (with no service impacts)</u>		
Increase Cost: FY26 Compensation Adjustment	5,212,910	0.00
Increase Cost: Motor Pool Adjustment	4,565,762	0.00
Increase Cost: Annualization of FY25 Compensation Increases	2,816,249	0.00
Increase Cost: Overtime Adjustment [Transit Services]	2,400,000	0.00
Increase Cost: Bus Shelter Maintenance [Transit Services]	1,600,000	0.00
Increase Cost: Juneteenth Holiday Pay [Transit Services]	487,476	0.00
Increase Cost: Contract Escalations [Transit Services]	392,058	0.00
Increase Cost: Retirement Adjustment	353,378	0.00
Increase Cost: Utilities [Transit Services]	215,889	0.00
Increase Cost: Printing and Mail Adjustment	192,453	0.00
Increase Cost: Transit Asset Management Plan [Transit Services]	150,000	0.00
Shift: From Grant Fund [Community Mobility Services]	96,005	0.90
Increase Cost: Nicholson Court Lease [Transit Services]	48,095	0.00
Increase Cost: Three Percent Inflationary Adjustment to Non-Profit Service Provider Contracts [Community Mobility Services]	24,778	0.00
Increase Cost: Three Percent Inflationary Adjustment to Non-Profit Service Provider Contracts [Transit Services]	16,654	0.00
Increase Cost: Marketing Services Contract Escalations [Community Mobility Services]	16,257	0.00
Increase Cost: TRiPS Commuter Store Contract Escalation [Community Mobility Services]	14,860	0.00
Increase Cost: White Oak Transportation Management District [Community Mobility Services]	3,718	0.00

FY26 RECOMMENDED CHANGES

	Expenditures	FTEs
Decrease Cost: Transportation Management District Reporting [Community Mobility Services]	(19,500)	0.00
Decrease Cost: Risk Management Adjustment	(24,560)	0.00
Decrease Cost: FY25 Mid-Year Position Consolidation [Transit Services]	(65,291)	(1.00)
Decrease Cost: Commuter Survey for Employees and Residents [Community Mobility Services]	(100,000)	0.00
Decrease Cost: Elimination of Fare Collection [Transit Services]	(557,113)	(2.50)
Decrease Cost: Annualization of FY25 Personnel Costs	(681,359)	0.00
FY26 RECOMMENDED	206,037,901	910.66

GRANT FUND - MCG

	FY25 ORIGINAL APPROPRIATION	5,124,383	13.10
<u>Other Adjustments (with no service impacts)</u>			
Decrease Cost: Annualization of FY25 Personnel Costs	(20,994)		0.00
Shift: To Mass Transit Fund [Community Mobility Services]	(96,005)		(0.90)
FY26 RECOMMENDED	5,007,384		12.20

PROGRAM SUMMARY

Program Name	FY25 APPR Expenditures	FY25 APPR FTEs	FY26 REC Expenditures	FY26 REC FTEs
Community Mobility Services	16,953,840	33.83	15,927,412	32.28
Transit Services	175,303,260	869.53	194,220,488	885.58
Transit Services General Administration	1,408,317	6.00	897,385	5.00
Total	193,665,417	909.36	211,045,285	922.86

CHARGES TO OTHER DEPARTMENTS

Charged Department	Charged Fund	FY25 Total\$	FY25 FTEs	FY26 Total\$	FY26 FTEs
MASS TRANSIT					
Health and Human Services	General Fund	273,694	0.00	282,694	0.00

FUNDING PARAMETER ITEMS

CE RECOMMENDED (\$000S)

Title	FY26	FY27	FY28	FY29	FY30	FY31
MASS TRANSIT						
EXPENDITURES						
FY26 Recommended	206,038	206,038	206,038	206,038	206,038	206,038

FUNDING PARAMETER ITEMS

CE RECOMMENDED (\$000S)

Title	FY26	FY27	FY28	FY29	FY30	FY31
No inflation or compensation change is included in outyear projections.						
Annualization of Positions Recommended in FY26	0	835	835	835	835	835
New positions in the FY26 budget are generally assumed to be filled at least three months after the fiscal year begins. Therefore, the above amounts reflect annualization of these positions in the outyears.						
Elimination of One-Time Items Recommended in FY26	0	(427)	(427)	(427)	(427)	(427)
Items recommended for one-time funding in FY26, including Zero Fare Transit Ambassadors and update of of the Transit Asset Management Plan, will be eliminated from the base in the outyears.						
Labor Contracts	0	466	466	466	466	466
These figures represent the estimated annualized cost of general wage adjustments, service increments, and other negotiated items.						
MD 355 Bus Rapid Transit	0	0	0	39,500	40,700	40,700
Estimated budget impact of MD 355 Bus Rapid Transit, which is projected to start service on the segment from Rockville to Germantown in 2029.						
Veirs Mill Road Bus Rapid Transit	0	3,600	3,708	3,820	3,934	3,934
Estimated budget impact of Veirs Mill Road Bus Rapid Transit, which is projected to start service in 2027. Budget impacts are net of anticipated savings from repurposing resources for existing service on the corridor.						
Subtotal Expenditures	206,038	210,512	210,620	250,232	251,546	251,546

ANNUALIZATION OF FULL PERSONNEL COSTS

	FY26 Recommended		FY27 Annualized	
	Expenditures	FTEs	Expenditures	FTEs
Howard County Flash Expansion (Offset by Revenue from Howard County)	789,376	17.00	1,624,457	17.00
Total	789,376	17.00	1,624,457	17.00

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