

## MD 355N/S BRT Corridor Study

### STEP 1: Establish the context and need for the project.

#### 1. What need does this project fulfil and what benefit (or outcome) does this project seek to create in the community?

The *Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan, 2013* (BRT Master Plan) defines a vision for expanding transit infrastructure throughout Montgomery County by recommending a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) network comprising 10 corridors plus the Corridor Cities Transitway for a total of 11 corridors. BRT was identified as the preferred transit technology by the Master Plan because it is typically more flexible, more affordable, and easier to implement as compared to other fixed guideway alternatives (i.e., light rail or heavy rail (Metro)). Fixed guideway describes a transit service that utilizes and occupies a separate right of way (ROW) exclusively for public transit. In the case of BRT, this ROW is typically a bus lane located within an existing roadway. The lane can be created by converting an existing lane to a bus-only lane or it could occur through roadway widening. The BRT system has been branded Flash. MD 355 is one of the BRT corridors recommended in the BRT Master Plan.

The BRT Master Plans included two corridors on MD 355 (Wisconsin Avenue/Rockville Pike/Frederick Road) extending from Clarksburg to Bethesda (22 miles). The MD 355 Flash BRT service will ultimately provide upgraded bus service along MD 355, bringing fast and reliable transit service in dedicated lanes, where feasible, to this busy corridor. The project will create new, high-quality transit connections north of the Metrorail Red line terminus at Shady Grove, and support growth and redevelopment at key activity centers along the corridor including downtown Bethesda, North Bethesda, Rockville, Gaithersburg, and Germantown. The MD 355 BRT includes new BRT stations, transit signal priority (TSP), and safety enhancements to the corridor. The new BRT stations will provide amenities such as upgraded shelters, comfortable seating, real-time passenger information, and fare collection equipment. TSP will allow a bus to get some extra green signal time to pass through an intersection, allowing the buses to maintain a high level of reliability. Safety upgrades to the corridor will include sidewalks, dedicated bicycle facilities, ADA improvements, intersection redesigns, and improved crosswalks.

The total cost of the MD 355 BRT project has warranted phasing of the project due to available funding. The County has decided to move forward initially with the Central segment of the corridor between Germantown and Montgomery College in Rockville. This segment of the overall project corridor directly serves equity focus areas in Germantown and Gaithersburg. It also provides improved transit service to areas of the County with higher concentrations of zero-car households and high existing transit use. The Central segment of the MD 355 BRT extends high-quality transit north of the terminus of the Metrorail Red line at Shady Grove. The Southern and Northern segments of the project are future extensions of the MD 355 Central BRT Corridor, south to Bethesda, and north to Clarksburg, 355 N/S. The extension to the Clarksburg will help facilitate future growth in the UpCounty while reducing the reliance on driving through the expansion of high-quality BRT service. This should help address traffic concerns along the entire corridor. The extension through Rockville, North Bethesda, and Bethesda will help advance redevelopment that is already occurring in Rockville and North Bethesda. This extension will also provide access to additional employment activities at major activity centers in the south and function as a second transit alternative to the Metrorail Red line.

Once the project is fully constructed, MCDOT proposes five routes to serve this high use transit corridor

on overlapping segments, providing the most frequent service in the area of highest ridership between Lake Forest Transit Center and Shady Grove Metro. This new service will improve transit travel time and increase opportunities for users, including a significant number of minority and low-income riders living in the central portion of MD 355 along a highly congested corridor. The project will create new connections and support growth and redevelopment at key activity centers along the corridor including downtown Bethesda, White Flint, Rockville, Gaithersburg, and Clarksburg. The incorporation of bicycle and pedestrian access and safety improvements will facilitate improved access to stations and improve overall corridor safety.

The current roadway design plans for the MD 355 corridor have been developed with the objective of accommodating median-running dedicated Flash lanes where feasible, based on the findings from the last phase of study for this project, recognizing and adjusting where necessary based upon constraints in some locations along the corridor. The design will be customized in some locations based on constraints. The County will use the input provided by the public, as well as federally compliant analysis of the environmental impacts of this design, to finalize these roadway design decisions in the next project phase.

The County's adoption of Vision Zero promotes the importance of safe access to BRT transit stations. At each of the MD 355 BRT station locations, the existing sidewalks will be modified and/or upgraded to provide pedestrian access to and around the station platforms to meet current Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards. The Project proposes pedestrian and bicycle access and connectivity improvements beyond those required to replace facilities impacted by station construction and dedicated lane widening. Included in the proposed improvements are new sidepaths, sidewalks, intersection signals, signing, pavement marking, and lighting. These upgrades would connect short portions of existing sidewalks interspersed along roadway segments and would also make existing sidewalks and intersections ADA compliant. These pedestrian and bike improvements will greatly increase access to the new BRT service. The project will also help the County meet Master Plan non-auto-driver mode share goals and achieve its Vision Zero goals to reduce deaths and serious injuries on County roadways to zero by 2030.

The new MD 355 BRT service will improve transit travel time and reliability, increasing opportunities for users living along this highly congested corridor. The initial planning study for the project estimated travel time would improve from 57 minutes to 36 minutes for a transit user traveling between Rockville and Bethesda. The project will improve passenger transit mobility by connecting riders to high-density housing, employment centers, as well as the broader region via transfers to the Metrorail Red Line at various Metrorail stations along the corridor. The incorporation of bicycle and pedestrian access and safety improvements will also facilitate improved access to stations and improve overall corridor safety. While improving mobility, this project also supports the County's Climate Action Plan (2021) by expanding public transportation and the active transportation network.

## **2. What informed the project request— how did you learn about this need?**

The problem of traffic congestion was identified decades ago by county planners, elected officials, and community advocates. Improved transit was identified as a way to reduce reliance on driving single occupant vehicles and rethink how the County developed. Low density development patterns and the separation of land uses was seen as contributing to traffic congestion while improved transit, such as BRT, would allow for new development and redevelopment to occur in a more compact and walkable pattern, reducing reliance on single occupant vehicles by improving conditions that support walking, biking, and public transit use.

While the *Montgomery County Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan* (2013) pre-dates the *Racial Equity and Social Justice Act of 2019*, the benefits provided by the Flash BRT system are strongly

aligned with the goals of the Act. Improved transit service by its very nature enhances the lives of people who use transit, particularly those who are dependent on it, typically people of color and other marginalized groups, by providing better and more reliable access to jobs, housing, education, medical services, and more.

MD 355 was identified as one of the 10 corridors in the BRT Master Plan. That plan focused on identifying the corridors which would best accommodate and facilitate the vision for a BRT network, identify segments where bus lanes would be needed, recommended a minimum public right of way, and identifies proposed station locations. The BRT Master Plan divided MD 355 into two corridors, North and South. Montgomery County has chosen to move forward initially, as described above, with a segment from Montgomery College in Germantown to Montgomery College in Rockville. The corridor has several major existing and planned activity nodes, including Rockville, Germantown, and Gaithersburg. It is also characterized by heavy congestion and high transit ridership potential. Gaithersburg and Germantown lie north of the last station on the Metro Red Line at Shady Grove. These areas of the County are not currently supported by high-frequency, high-quality transit. Extending the initial terminus north to Clarksburg will increase the ability for people north of the Metro to utilize public transportation as a viable alternative to driving. Additionally, enhanced transit access could play an integral role in revitalizing the adjacent neighborhoods, relieving congestion, supporting land conservation, and improving safety for bicyclists and pedestrians. Conversion of former suburban, car-oriented land uses has started in North Bethesda, Twinbrook, and Rockville where more walkable and transit-oriented redevelopments are underway. BRT will help support the continued change in land use without the need for additional automobile capacity. This is especially true in the Southern portion of the project corridor. Pedestrian and bicycle improvements will increase the mobility, safety, and sustainability of the study corridor, particularly for those who would walk to the BRT stations.

Since 2015, MCDOT has held regular meetings regarding the project with key stakeholder organizations including the Cities of Gaithersburg and Rockville, the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, the Maryland Department of Transportation, local Corridor Advisory Committees, and a variety of community-based organizations. MCDOT has also held multiple series of public open houses and dozens of pop-up events each year since 2015. MCDOT has reviewed and considered hundreds of public comments and survey responses regarding the MD 355 BRT. Public comments have discussed the lack of quality transit north of Rockville and concerns about pedestrian safety, particularly if roadways are widened. These comments have informed decisions on project phasing, with the focus on the Central phase of the corridor, as well as roadway and station access designs to improve safety.

The addition of the Northern and Southern limits of the MD 355 BRT project extends the termini to Clarksburg Premium Outlets and downtown Bethesda. This includes connections to the federal installations of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Walter Reed National Medical Center, and US Nuclear Regulatory Commission. These are just a few of the additional destinations that will become accessible to those residing and working in the Central portion of the corridor.

**STEP 2: Apply a Racial Equity Lens to the problem or issues the project seeks to address.**

**3. What does data, community feedback, and broader research (historical and/or current) tell you about who is most impacted/burdened by what this project seeks to address?**

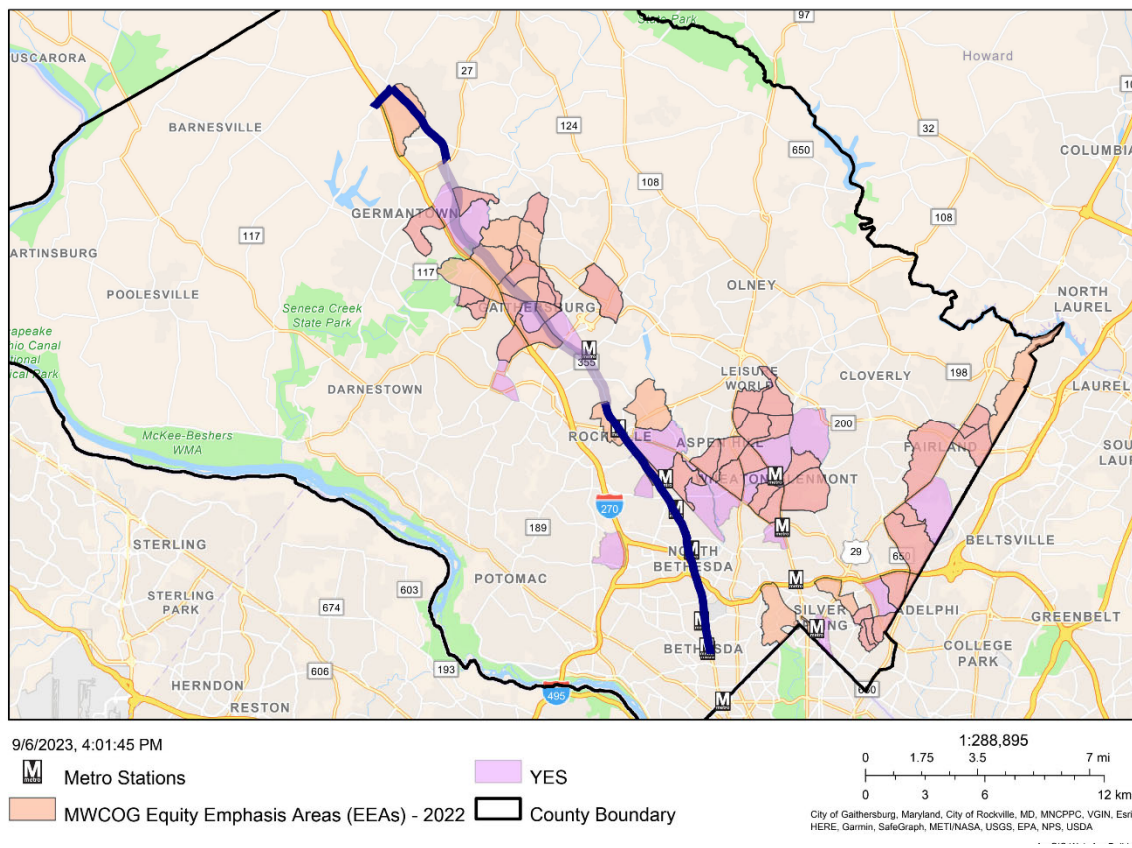
The need for the MD 355 N/S project is best shown by considering maps of the entire MD 355 BRT corridor. The communities experiencing the disparities and inequities are largely located in the center of the corridor – the location of the MD 355 Central corridor, but the MD 355 N/S extensions will greatly expand

the mobility of the residents in these communities and give them further opportunities for employment and services.

**Equity Focus Areas and Equity Emphasis Areas**

Figure 1 displays the County Equity Focus Areas and the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOC) Equity Emphasis Areas, and where the two overlap. The difference between the two measures is that Montgomery County uses a combination of household income, race and ethnicity, and ability to speak English to define their Equity Focus Areas, while MWCOC uses low income, race, and ethnicity to define their Equity Emphasis Areas. The MD 355 N/S alignment segments are shown in dark purple, while the MD 355 Central corridor is shown in lighter lavender. This map shows a few areas identified as warranting focus/emphasis due to a concentration of demographic groups that have been historically disadvantaged beyond those focused on the Central corridor. The extension of the corridor both north and south will provide access to additional areas of growth (north) and economic activity (south).

*Figure 1: M-NCPPC EEAs and MWCOC EFAs*



**Community Equity Index**

The following mapping and data are from the Montgomery County Community Equity Index. It uses five indicators: Poverty, Education Level, English Proficiency, Housing Tenure, and Per Capita Income to create a combined score which compares each neighborhood to the County’s overall score. Neighborhoods are represented by census tracts, each of which receives one of the following colors based on its CEI categorization:

**Yellow tracts** have scores that are proportionate to Montgomery County's overall scores for the indicators. These tracts are socio-economically representative of the county, so their residents, on average, have no distinct advantage or disadvantage over residents of other areas in the county.

**Blue and light blue tracts** diverge from countywide scores in ways that confer advantage to their residents. People living in blue and light blue tracts have higher per capita incomes and lower percentages of people belonging to the other four indicators compared to Montgomery County overall. Darker shades of blue represent more divergence from the countywide average scores and thus stronger advantage.

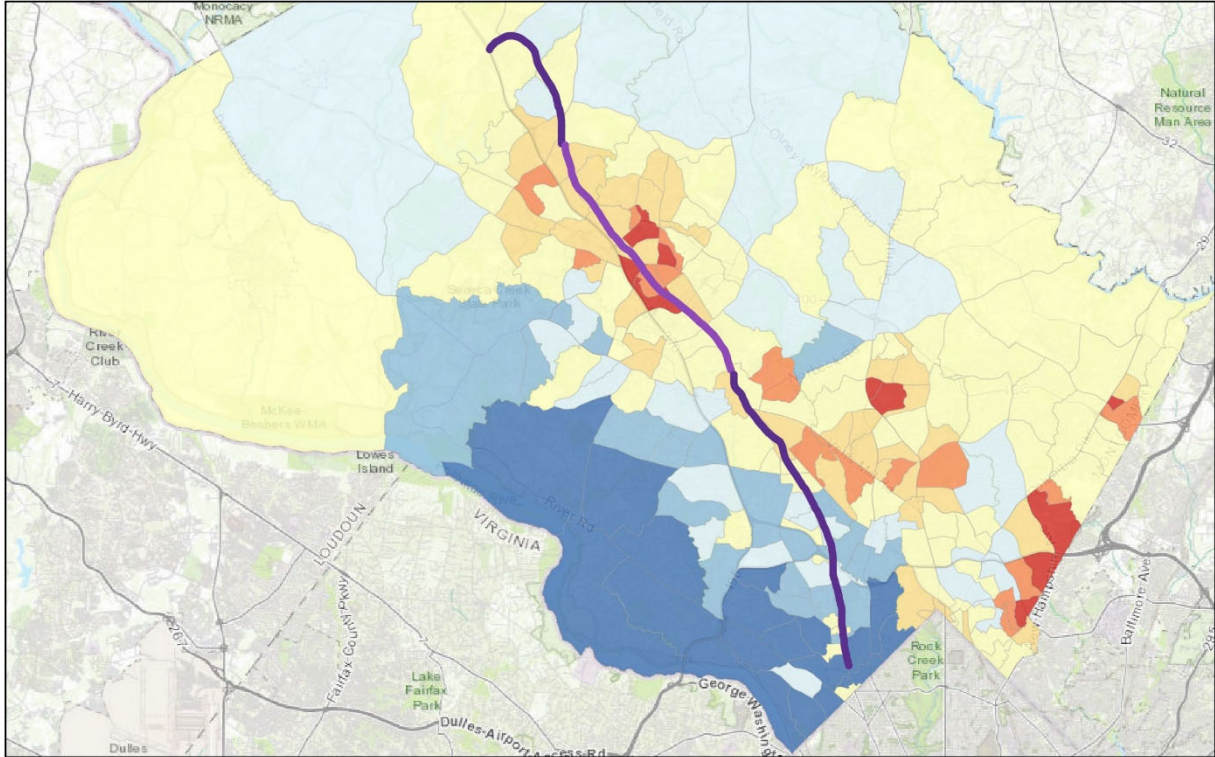
**Red and orange tracts** diverge from countywide scores in ways that confer disadvantage to their residents. People living in orange and red tracts have lower per capita incomes and higher percentages of people belonging to the other four indicators compared to Montgomery County overall. As the shade moves from orange to red, it represents greater divergence from the countywide average scores and thus a greater disadvantage.

This figure shows that the areas that are disadvantaged are focused on the central portion. Again, this reinforces the decision to advance the Central corridor first and then incorporate the Northern and Southern segments to expand the network effect of the BRT.





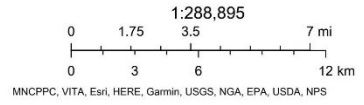
Figure 2: Community Equity Index



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CEI Scores

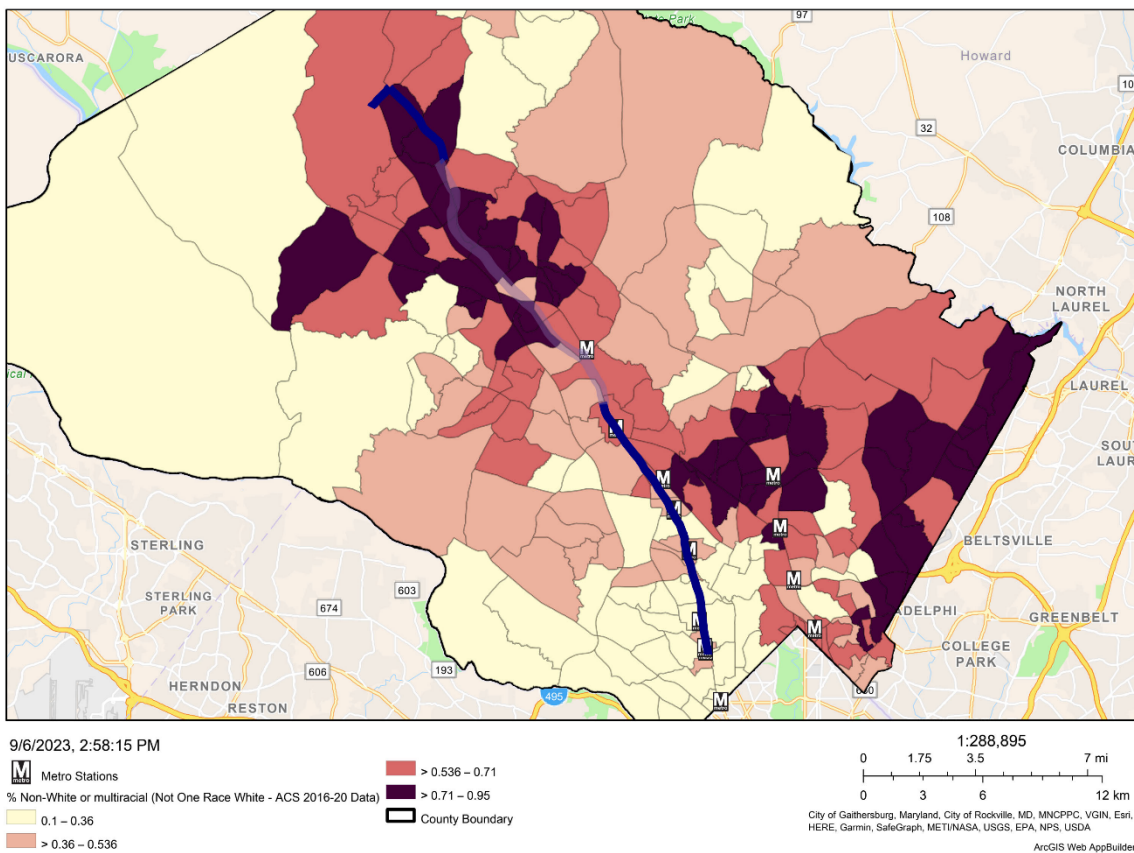
- Highly Disproportionate - Disadvantaged
- Moderately Disproportionate - Disadvantaged
- Proportionate - Neither Advantaged nor Disadvantaged
- Slightly Disproportionate - Disadvantaged
- Slightly Disproportionate - Advantaged



Racial Demographics

Demographic data from the Census Tracts along the MD 355 corridor reveal that north of Rockville, most of the census tracts bordering the alignment are at least 53.6% non-white or multiracial and as high as 95%. The Census Tracts at the southern end of MD 355 are considerably different, with the percentage of non-white or multiracial less than 35%, as is the western part of the county. See Figure 3. Some of the areas south of Rockville show percentages of non-white residents at greater than 50%. According to the Racial Equity Profile Update published by the Jupiter Independent Research Group in April 2023, it is estimated that Blacks were more than 1.5 times as likely to take public transportation and experience a longer travel time to work than Whites. In addition, Blacks are 2 times more likely than Whites to not have access to a car. Latinos and Other racial/ethnic groups were 1.5 times as likely to not have access to a vehicle compared to Whites. While the Southern segment approaching Bethesda is not a racially diverse as the other areas of the project corridor, there is still a high concentration of non-white or multiracial residents around Rockville, Twinbrook, North Bethesda, and Grosvenor who will benefit by having access to improved bus transit.

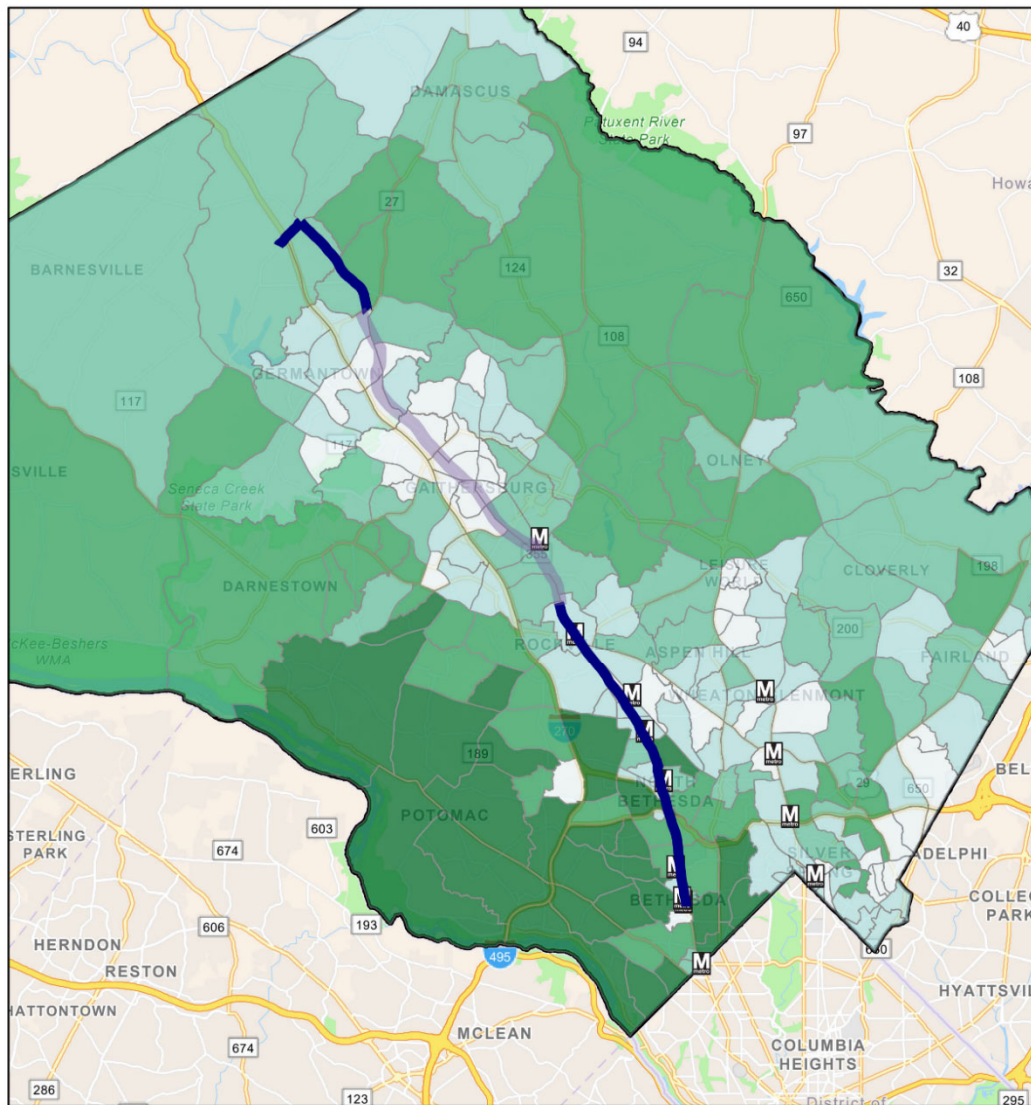
Figure 3: Percentage Non-white or Multiracial



Socio-Economic Data – Median Income

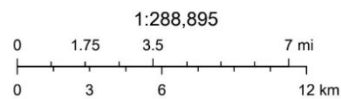
The median income of households along the MD 355 BRT corridor is shown in Figure 4. Most of the Census Tracts bordering the alignment are in the two lowest categories, \$41,779 – \$80,500 and \$80,500 - \$111,600, with a cluster of Census Tracts with a median income of \$111,600 - \$150,200 in the neighborhoods around the Shady Grove Metro Station. The Census Tracts to the south and west have higher median incomes. The median household income in 2020 for Montgomery County according to the American Community Survey was \$111,812. Vehicle ownership, or multi-vehicle ownership can be a heavy financial burden for families. Improved transit gives those families greater access to opportunities.

Figure 4: Median Income



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-  Metro Stations
-  41,779 - 80,500
-  80,500 - 111,600
-  111,600 - 150,200
-  150,200 - 195,000
-  195,000 - 250,000+
-  County Boundary



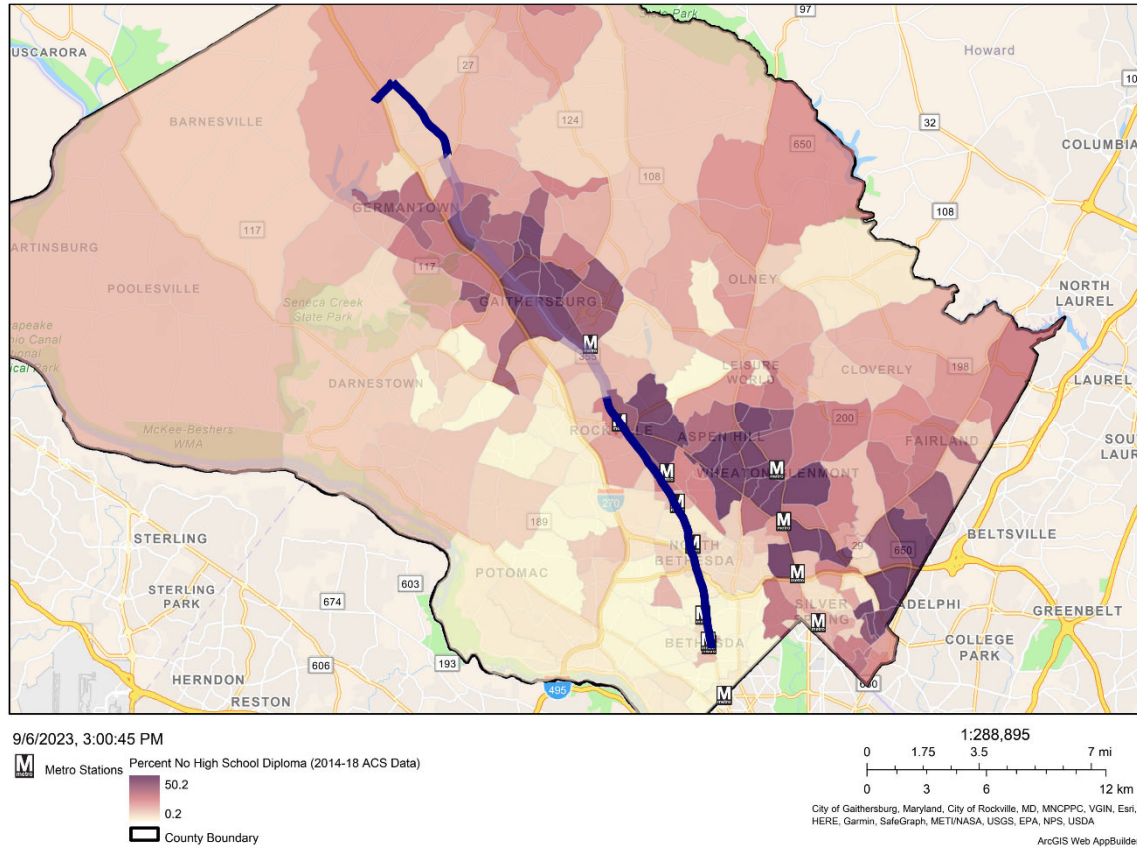
City of Gaithersburg, Maryland, City of Rockville, MD, MNCPPC, VGIN, Esri, HERE, Garmin, SafeGraph, MET/NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USDA



Demographic Data - Percentage of High School Graduates

This map shows the percentage of people without high school diplomas echoes the median income data. In some areas the percentage is as high as 50.2% These populations will benefit from better access to low skill retail and service industry jobs at the northern and southern ends of the MD 355 BRT.

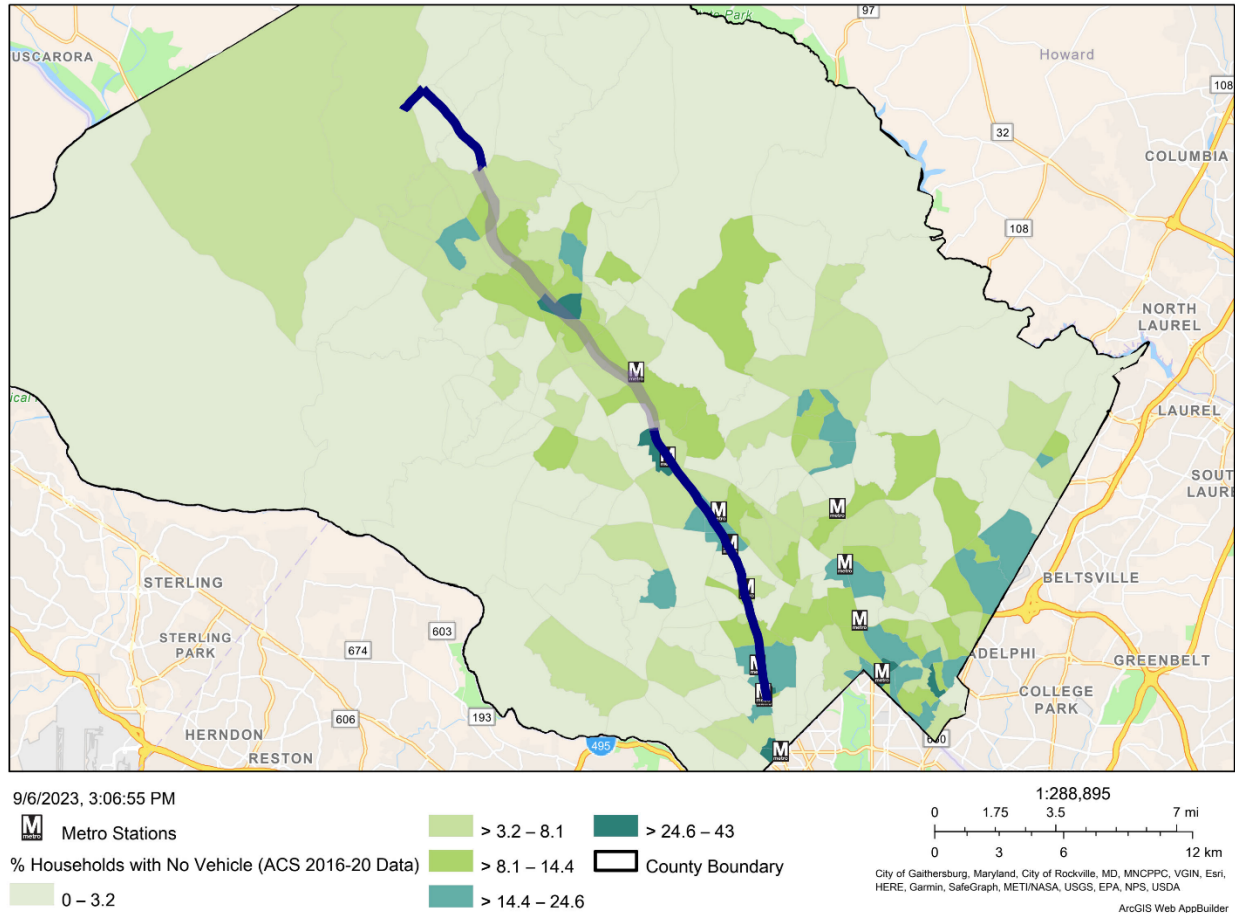
Figure 5: Percentage of people without High School Diplomas



Socio-Economic Data – Zero-Car Households

The map showing the percentage of households with no car is striking when one looks at the county as a whole. In the majority of the county less than 3.2% of households have no car. The percentages vary in the MD 355 corridor, but it should be remembered that living in most parts of this autocentric corridor would be very challenging without a car.

Figure 6: Percentage of Households with No Car



Conclusions

The communities north of the MD 355 Center corridor, from Germantown to Clarksburg are generally proportionate with the County as a whole, neither advantaged nor disadvantaged. To the south the socio-economic demographics start to change as you move from Rockville toward Bethesda. As one approaches Bethesda the communities are increasingly disproportionately advantaged. This does not negate the need for the Southern extension but reinforces the initial focus on the center of the overall project. The extension south will also connect people to what is, in effect, the economic engine of the county. Jobs exist here at all levels. The BRT service will provide access to these job opportunities for people who live in the neighborhoods to the north. Because the BRT service is rapid and reliable, people will have access to additional housing options in a larger area, while still having an acceptable commute to work. It is important to acknowledge the network effect of BRT as different extensions occur and other corridors are constructed. As the BRT network grows, access is enhanced to more of the County and region.

The MD 355 South corridor is an activity center planned for a high level of redevelopment that will support all day travel throughout the corridor. It is characterized by shorter trips representing a wide variety of travel purposes (shopping and recreation, in addition to commuting). The corridor has several planned or existing activity nodes, including Rockville, Twinbrook, White Flint, the National Institutes of Health/Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, and the Bethesda CBD. It is also characterized by heavy congestion and high transit ridership potential. Access to this activity center will be beneficial to the communities to the north.

**4. What unintended consequences does this project have the potential to create (at any point in the lifespan of the project) for communities of color and other marginalized groups?**

This project corridor has high numbers of commuters using public transportation. The project will improve the experience for riders who choose BRT by reducing their travel time along the corridor and improving reliability. Improved reliability gives users greater certainty in planning their trip. Residents and workers who live or work in the closest proximity to the BRT stations will benefit most from the convenience of this premium transit service.

This project is being designed to balance the needs of a high-quality BRT system while minimizing impacts to the local communities. The adverse impacts to the adjacent neighborhoods are anticipated to be very small, while the benefits, described in the responses above, will be considerably greater. As the design of this project progresses, the focus will be on reducing project impacts further while maintaining overall transit performance.

Changes to the existing local bus services will temporarily have unintended consequences on communities of color and other marginalized groups as people would need to adjust their travel choices and shift to BRT. The hope is that as an improved service, BRT will be an easy choice to switch to. The overall goal is to improve the public transit experience in the corridor. It is hard to predict whether these would be positive or negative. It is important to note that the Division of Transit Services is currently conducting a study to examine network changes with the BRT corridors in mind. This forward-looking planning will hopefully address any unintended changes and account for public feedback as part of the project. MCDOT will implement a carefully thought-out communications plan to engage and inform the local community well prior to any service changes. See the response to Question 7 for a discussion of the challenges MCDOT will need to address in engaging these communities and some of the approaches and tools that MCDOT would use. Balancing this, local buses would benefit from the queue jump lanes, bus lanes, and transit signal priority implemented for the project, providing better (faster and more reliable) service to riders of local buses.

Another unintended consequence is that redevelopment pressures around BRT stations may increase. These pressures could result in displacement of residents or businesses. While displacement has not been as severe an issue as concentrations of low-income households in Montgomery County, according to a 2019 report from Montgomery Planning, high-quality transit has shown an ability to result in redevelopment. It is possible that properties not initially impacted by the project start to receive pressure to redevelop. This could be beneficial, resulting in the property owner improving their financial situation. It could also result in negative consequences for businesses or owners not looking to relocate or sell but feeling the pressure to do so. MCDOT does not have control of land use decisions in the

County but works closely with Montgomery County Planning staff who are also focused on addressing equity in land use decisions.

**STEP 3: Explain how the project responds to the information generated from using a racial equity lens.**

**5. How does this project respond to data, community feedback, and broader research (historical and/or current) about racial disparities and inequities related to what this project seeks to address?**

There are larger portions of the full MD 355 BRT corridor that are characterized by communities that tend to rely more heavily on transit. Given that the corridor includes higher percentages of people of color and ethnicity than Montgomery County as a whole, particularly in the Germantown, Gaithersburg, and Rockville areas, the project's benefits should be felt by those communities. Disadvantaged communities suffer from poor access and mobility, limiting access to job opportunities, access to housing choices, medical care, shopping, educational institutions, and more. Studies of equity have consistently shown that low income and minority communities suffer from this lack of mobility. Owning a car is expensive, and with a quality transit network it is less important to own a vehicle.

The incorporation of the southern portion of the BRT corridor will provide access via BRT to an area of many jobs that will be more accessible to potential employees. This will enhance opportunities for the people who need them most. While the MD 355 Central corridor is where most of the disadvantaged communities are located, the extension south will provide important access to the economic engine of the County. The northern extension is to an area of growth which will become increasingly important in the future.

Another aspect of disadvantaged communities is the lack of safe bicycle and pedestrian facilities, particularly for people who rely on transit. Studies have shown that serious and fatal crashes disproportionately affect low income and minority communities. This can be for a number of reasons: lack of investment in transportation improvements as well as higher percentages of residents walking and/or biking due to lower vehicle ownership.

The MD 355 corridor has been built over many years with a focus on automobile performance and driving. The roadway is wide with few opportunities to safely cross; intersections have been built with free flow right turns and other geometric designs that improve driving often at the expense of walking and biking. The County's Vision Zero efforts to end traffic deaths include recommendations to increase safe crossings, incorporate low-stress pedestrian and bicycle facilities with other projects, redesign unsafe intersections, and address bus stop safety. The County's BRT projects are aligned with these efforts and are making safety improvements to the roadway where feasible. This includes intersection redesigns to remove free flow right turns and tighten curb radii, improve pedestrian crossings, and incorporate upgraded pedestrian and bicycle facilities. This project with its pedestrian and bicycle improvements will make life in these neighborhoods safer, reducing crashes, injuries and fatalities, benefiting the communities not just around the station areas but along the corridor.

As planning and design of this project has advanced, the project team has, and will continue to conduct a variety of community outreach activities to seek feedback to better understand evolving community



concerns and produce a project that is responsive to local needs. These activities have been targeted on locations (shopping centers, bus stops, and community festivals) where minority, low income, and limited English proficiency speakers are likely to be engaged. Each BRT project also includes a Corridor Advisory Committee comprised of a diverse group of residents, business owners, and other interested stakeholders. Efforts to include transit users as part of the committee are an ongoing focus. These groups provide feedback on project planning and design questions in addition to sharing concerns from their communities. Project designs have been influenced by the Committee as well as general community outreach. Shifts in project alignment, station location, and safety improvements have all been made in response to public comments. Engagement has been conducted using staff that speak Mandarin to better engage and understand the needs of the community along the project corridor. Community outreach for this project has evolved as we have discovered what works and what doesn't. Earlier in the project, information was shared through in-person or virtual meetings. Community outreach efforts have also utilized a variety of communication platforms and strategies to help the project team reach a wider and more diverse audience. This has included a combination of in-person and virtual events, traditional community meetings and pop-up events at local destinations, mailers, and phone calls. These efforts have resulted in hundreds of interactions with the community.

**6. What racial disparities or inequities will this specific project help to reduce or widen because of its implementation/completion?**

The Racial Equity Profile Update for Montgomery County found African Americans are 1.5 times more likely than whites to take public transportation. In addition, African American are 2 times more likely than whites to not have a car. This project has the ability to advance equitable outcomes for Montgomery County residents – specifically the low-income communities and communities of color that align the corridor, as members of these communities are less likely to own, or have access to, a personal vehicle as shown in the maps above. By providing faster and more reliable public transportation residents of the corridor will have access to more jobs and other services including healthcare, and shopping, to name a few. This will help reduce disparities with better employment options, improved health outcomes, and other resources that will improve the quality of life for users. with stops at both the Germantown and Rockville campuses of Montgomery College will provide opportunities to enhanced education services. It will provide better connections to the WMATA Metrorail network at Shady Grove – providing access to the larger region, expanding the benefits described above. The fare for this premium service will be the same as the County's regular Ride On bus fare. Currently it is a reduced fare of \$1, with no plans for an increase, while the WMATA Metrobuses have returned to their pre-COVID fare of \$2. This improved mobility and access can help to reduce racial or economic disparities by providing enhanced quality of life and improved access to housing options and job opportunities.

The resulting service improvements in transit will reduce travel times and improve the reliability of the service. This will expand access to jobs, shopping, medical facilities, educational opportunities, and county facilities. The additional pedestrian and bicycle upgrades will address long-standing safety needs along this corridor and provide a more comfortable experience for those who walk and bike.

The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice in its Racial Equity Assessment for the MCDOT BRT: US 29 Phase 2 found that the project “has the ability to advance equitable outcomes for Montgomery County

residents—specifically for low-income communities and communities of color as they are less likely to own, or have access to, a personal vehicle.<sup>1</sup>” The demographics and transit use of the MD 355 Central corridor and the US 29 Phase 2 BRT corridor are very similar and the findings would apply to MD 355 Central corridor as well.

**7. How will you mitigate any unintended consequences, for communities of color and other marginalized groups, resulting from the development, construction, or implementation of the project?**

MCDOT plans to continue to carefully consider the implications of the project design, construction, and ultimately the operation of the service as the project advances. This includes refinement of project designs to reduce ROW impacts or construction easements, addressing the impacts of construction on residents, businesses, and travelers of the corridor, and future changes to the local bus services. This will be accomplished through continued engagement of the public through community meetings and the Corridor Advisory Committee. A thoughtful, targeted outreach effort will ensure that communities of color and other marginalized groups are engaged in these discussions.

As this project moves into the next phase (final design), we will take advantage of the lessons learned about the challenges of engaging a community with a level of civic distrust. The project will be developing a new Community Engagement Plan for the Final Design of the project. This plan will be submitted to the ORESJ for consultation. Materials and communications will be in multiple languages and via a range of formats and forums. MCDOT will rely on the Regional Service Center and the Office of Community Partnerships for support and help in engaging community members and identifying trusted community leaders. While in-person and virtual meeting formats have shown varied success, the team found the strategy of “go where the people are” to be particularly effective in reaching the community during the last large engagement effort. The outreach team has been successful with outreach efforts at local community activity centers (shopping centers, libraries, fairs) and making engagement fun for families. Participating in a community event and providing activities for children was a way to engage with stakeholders who were then willing to provide feedback on the project. MCDOT has also offered the opportunity to win a gift certificate with participation in a project survey (participation in the survey was not required to enter the drawing) and had a prize wheel with small gifts. The team will ask community members where and when they would prefer to meet. Native language speakers are far more effective than a translated brochure. These are the types of considerations that will be used in public engagement.

Any changes to the transit network will require a Title VI review to ensure that no group is disadvantaged. This is a federal requirement.

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<sup>1</sup> Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) Supplemental Appropriation (SA) FY23-28 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and Special Appropriation #23-53 FY23 Capital Budget Montgomery County Government Department of Transportation Bus Rapid Transit (BRT): US 29 Phase 2 (CIP No. 502201) <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/23-53.pdf>

Please answer regarding the process for completing the equity questions above.

1. Who and what resources did you consult in the preparation of this Budget Equity Tool response?
  - a. Have you consulted with your Racial Equity CORE Team or CORE Team Lead? (If yes, please provide their name(s).)
    - a. 8/30 Tiara McCray. Tiara provided the VERY useful RESJ Support Map.
  - b. Have you consulted with the Montgomery County Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice? (Names of ORESJ staff that you consulted with and dates, and/or resources shared by ORESJ.)
    - a. 8/30 met with Tiffany Ward, Sarah Alvarez, Rhiannon Reeves, Tiara McCray
  - c. Have you reviewed any Racial Equity Impact Assessments (or other related equity analyses) related?
    - a. Yes. REIA Supplemental and Special Appropriation #23-53: US 29 Phase 2

The following resources were consulted:

- MC RESJ Support Maps
- ORESJ Racial Impact Assessment for US 29 Phase 2
- Racial Equity Profile Update (April 2023) by Jupiter Independent Research Group
- The Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan, 2013
- Montgomery County Community Equity Index
- Project information and documents found on the MD 355 BRT website.

The project writeup was reviewed by senior leadership within the division (Eric Willis), the Division's Racial Equity CORE Team member (Tiara McCray), the division chief (Tim Cupples) and departmental leadership (Maricela Cordova). We met with Sarah Alvarez, Rhiannon Reeves, and Tiffany Ward on Wednesday, August 30th. The discussion included questions about the best way to submit graphics and figures as well as preferences for specific data resources. We learned there that sources used are not as important as how the data is interpreted and used to identify issues and address them.

2. Please provide the name(s) of those involved in the completion of this assessment.
  - a. Assessment completed by: (Name(s), Title(s), Department)
  - b. If different from above, Department Director: (Name)

The staff involved in the completion of this assessment include Monica Meade, a consultant project planner with RK&K, supporting the County's BRT program. Corey Pitts, BRT Project Implementation Manager, with the Division of Transportation Engineering in the Department of Transportation reviewed the analysis and provided updates based on additional knowledge and background on the project. The Departmental Director is Christopher Conklin.