

PLEASE DO NOT INCLUDE THE U.S. 29 FLASH BUS RAPID TRANSIT PHASE 2
PROJECT IN THE FY 2027-2032 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAM

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Introduction. The Montgomery County Council is considering whether to include \$115.2 million in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2027-2032 Capital Improvements Program (CIP) to design and construct barrier-separated dedicated median lanes for the U.S. 29 Flash Bus Rapid Transit route (the BRT Phase 2 project). I strongly believe that funding for the BRT Phase 2 project should be withheld so that higher priority needs can be met with the limited funding available to the County.

Higher Priority Needs. Montgomery County is currently facing a period of rising financial uncertainty due to recent losses of Federal jobs and grants, increasing needs for social services, higher building costs, and other factors (see [Montgomery County warns of major revenue drop, tough budget cuts](#)). Rather than committing over \$100 million to modify an existing, fully operational BRT line, the County should devote its scarce capital funds to address more urgent needs such as school maintenance, completing the Purple Line, repairing infrastructure, and (one would hope) building out other sections of the County's BRT system more quickly and affordably. The County might also consider replacing the BRT Phase 2 project with a project that converts two lanes of U.S. Route 29 into High-Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes on which BRT buses could travel along with toll-paying and high-occupancy cars. This approach could be implemented without building physical lane barriers, thus making it less costly than the BRT Phase 2 project, and could generate substantial toll revenues to help cover the costs of the project's construction and operation.

More Affordable BRT Solutions. I believe that nothing would be more effective in expanding use of the U.S. 29 Flash BRT route than connecting it as soon as possible to the planned series of eight other BRT routes in Montgomery County. This completion would enable riders to rapidly access locations across the County by bus transit. As a long-time user of bus transit in Montgomery County (since 1985), I can tell you that it is the uncertainty of making efficient connections to limited stop bus services that discourages me from using buses for long trips. I do not need "elite" buses to meet my needs. What I need is well-coordinated, frequent, and predictable limited-stop bus routes that connect to each other, with accurate information about arrival and connection times (perhaps assisted by AI). The limited-stop network could initially make use of existing traffic lanes and basic covered bus stops. It could then be embellished over time with more elaborate features when funding becomes available. This coordinated service could be developed more rapidly and with a much lower capital outlay than is currently projected for the proposed BRT services.

BRT Phase 2 Will Cost More than Advertised. When considering the BRT Phase 2 project for inclusion in the CIP, be aware that it is almost certain to cost much more and take much longer to build than currently estimated. These overruns will occur because the dedicated bus lanes are to be built on a physically constrained and complex segment of U.S. Route 29, which includes the Four Corners intersection, and require construction to take place on high traffic volume

roadways. Recent County experience with the Purple Line along Wayne Avenue reveals the array of problems that often lead to cost overruns and delays (see [Purple Line progress leads to congestion woes in neighborhoods along light-rail route](#)). Similarly, the Bethesda Metrorail Purple Line mezzanine is now projected to cost 20 times more than the original estimate ([Purple Line mezzanine costs soar to \\$52M, impacting Montgomery County transport plans](#)). Given the County's current budget outlook and the unlikelihood of sufficient Federal transit grants (at least for the next several years), the County should avoid starting a disruptive and expensive project.

Potential Loss of Transportation Efficiency if BRT Phase 2 is Pursued. Delays in completing the BRT Phase 2 project will also create costs and inconveniences for private citizens and businesses. U.S. Route 29 is already very congested at peak travel periods. Construction activities for the BRT Phase 2 project would remove lanes and impose other disruptions to traffic flows for an extended period of time, creating delays for all users of U.S. Route 29 in Silver Spring, users of University Blvd (at the intersection with U.S. Route 29), and for the stores, restaurants, and small businesses along U.S. Route 29. Recent experience on Wayne Avenue and Fenton Street reveals that the impacts on businesses can be severe (see ['We need help:' Silver Spring businesses say Purple Line construction driving them to the brink | FOX 5 DC](#)).

More importantly, once the BRT Phase 2 project is operational, the permanent removal of one car lane on U.S. Route 29 in each direction going through Four Corners will lead to ongoing, increased congestion for cars traveling in both directions on U.S. Route 29, particularly around the on- and off-ramps of the Beltway. Time is money, and imposing slower travel times on County residents and businesses will be a drag on economic productivity. Traffic congestion caused by the lane removals will also lead to significant increases in traffic diversion into the residential neighborhoods along U.S. Route 29, adversely affecting safety. Additionally, the need to create barriers for the dedicated bus lanes will block many neighborhood residents from direct access to their own streets.

Summary. In November 2025, County leaders acknowledged a newly released six-year forecast that anticipates a \$854 million decline in revenue. This outlook comes at a time of greatly increased school maintenance costs and urgent social needs. The U.S. 29 Flash BRT line is already operational and is not in danger of shutting down if the BRT Phase 2 project is not funded. In a time such as this, when the County is struggling to attract new businesses and investment, it is better to focus on using scarce funding for essential projects, such as repairing our schools or upgrading our basic infrastructure, or for projects such as HOT lanes that will generate revenue and reduce travel delay for all. For these reasons, please do not include funding for the BRT Phase 2 in the FY 2027-2032 CIP.

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