



Montgomery County's Advocates for Better Transportation

P.O. Box 7074, Silver Spring MD 20907 • admin@actfortransit.org

Montgomery County County Council
Stella Werner Council Office Building
100 Maryland Ave.
Rockville, MD 20850

February 8, 2026

Re: FY27-32 Capital Improvements Program (CIP) Budget - Transportation and Land Use

Dear Council President Fani-González, Vice President Balcombe and Councilmembers:

The Action Committee for Transit (ACT) is a volunteer-led organization united by a vision of socially and economically vibrant communities accessible by public transit and active transportation. The constricted budgetary situation facing Montgomery County is an opportunity to prioritize projects that can offer benefits sooner rather than promises that are often pushed off into the distant future. This County Council can prioritize transit improvements now by reallocating money to the Bus Priority Program instead of waiting for the full construction of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) network. This Council can also ensure that Montgomery County takes full advantage of the opportunities the Purple Line presents by building all the sidewalks in the Purple Line BiPPA in time for the opening of the Purple Line and supporting mixed-use development along the Purple Line Corridor.

The Bus Priority Program delivered the permanent bus lanes on University Boulevard and at the Germantown Transit Center. In addition to bus lanes that improve transit service for residents in the near future, the program can also pay for transit signal priority and safer bus stops. The proposed CIP holds funding constant at \$500,000 over six years. This funding is insufficient to continue transit improvements while also spending capital money needed to support WMATA's important ClearLanes program. Moreover, the amount is woeful when the CIP is proposing a total of almost \$12 million for planning and design of the new Observation Drive Extended Highway. The first \$2.4 million is scheduled for FY28. By FY32, \$30 million is budgeted to start construction of this highway expansion. New highway expansions are the kind of expenditures that contradict the Thrive 2050 general plan and the Climate Action Plan. Bus riders, pedestrians, and bicyclists should not be told money is scarce when a new highway holds space in this budget.

ACT realizes that under the current Spending Affordability Guidelines (SAG) the county must be careful about project funding. This means the time has come to adjust expectations for the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project. BRT is a bold plan first passed in

2013, and the plan's vision of fast and reliable public transportation is undoubtedly right. Nonetheless, it is now 2026 and Montgomery County does not have one BRT dedicated bus lane. The US 29 Flash BRT Corridor Advisory Committee continued to spend time in 2025 debating whether the county should even complete the necessary infrastructure improvements to make it safe to access the stations. The MD 355 BRT central portion is not expected to begin operation until FY32 at best. The north and south portions are even more far off in the distance of future budgets. Fortunately, Viers Mills BRT appears to be a more realistic opportunity, but the construction of depot space needed to maintain and run frequently the new generation of BRT vehicles is years away at best.

Montgomery County cannot afford to tell residents to wait for BRT when reasonable suggestions for better transit service are proposed as happened during the Ride On Reimagined focus groups. Money from current revenue in the Mass Transit Fund allocated in the CIP for BRT System Development can be better used by the Bus Priority Program for transit improvements residents can experience now. The Bus Priority Program is comparably more affordable and can provide better transit sooner in corridors such as MD 355, MD 97 Georgia Avenue, and anywhere else where BRT is many years away or no BRT route is planned or in design. Over the long term, the best way to provide dedicated bus lanes is by repurposing existing road space instead of prohibitively expensive road widenings. This is an issue ACT will return to during this current budget season and future budgets because BRT capital expenditures are competing with the most important characteristic of bus service: the frequency of the service.

Another transit project many years in the making is finally at a point that it is reasonable to think about the freedom it will offer residents. The Purple Line is now 87% complete. Railcars were delivered and the trains are being tested. This project has been painful for residents and local business owners enduring construction for years. The county must take full advantage of all the sustainable development opportunities the Purple Line offers. This requires building all the sidewalks recommended in the Purple Line BiPPA in time for the opening of the Purple Line, including the rejected sidewalks near the Takoma-Langley station. A letter from the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) dated July 14, 2025, stated that the budget does not have sufficient money to build all the sidewalks. This County Council can fix that issue. Fully funding all the sidewalks will send the clear message that in the year 2026 Montgomery County will not shirk from the responsibility to provide pedestrians safe access to transit stations due to [unfounded](#) fears about "stranger danger" as cited in the July 2025 Takoma-Langley Letter.

Moreover, the connection between quality transit and housing must always be remembered. Transit-oriented communities are the way to address the housing crisis without defaulting to car-centric development with all of its deleterious public health consequences. The Chevy Chase Library Redevelopment is a great opportunity to use public land for public good. An amendment to the CIP in 2022 provided for a new library with mixed-use development at the site of the existing library. This provision offered the possibility to build housing in an opportunity-rich neighborhood adjacent to the Purple Line. The proposed CIP only refers to improving the existing library. Opportunities to

build housing on land the county controls must not be surrendered in the current context of unaffordable housing costs. Although adding money to the budget for this project may be impractical now, the CIP description of this project should maintain the goal of mixed-use development.

ACT acknowledges that this upcoming budget cycle could be the financially hardest one of the current County Council term. However, more people will be unable to afford a private car and maintain it due to the [rising costs](#) of car ownership. Public transit will be critically important to our fellow community members who need transportation to jobs, schools, libraries, healthcare, and to our parks. Fund transit and active transit projects with the priority they need to make a real difference in the lives of residents. Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Michael Larkin
Vice President, Action Committee for Transit