

Montgomery County's Independent Transit Authority Proposal

Catalyzing a world class, sustainable transit system in 5 years

Montgomery's planned 81-mile Rapid Transit System offers incredible potential to transform the county's aging commercial corridors into vibrant, sustainable, walkable, transit-oriented communities. With dedicated lanes, service every 5-10 minutes, weather-protected stations, Wi-Fi, and many other amenities, Rapid Transit will provide high quality transit service at a far lower cost than building new highways. Rapid Transit will bring enormous benefits to our county by taking cars off the road, saving commuters time, improving safety for walkers and cyclists, and cleaning up our air.

Benefits of the RTS

- **Environmental:** Rapid Transit helps achieve the county's smart growth goals, make it easier for residents to leave cars at home, and will help clean up our air.
- **Economic development:** Rapid Transit is critical for the county's economy to enable the creation of new jobs in places like White Oak and White Flint.
- **Access and ridership:** Rapid Transit will provide high quality transit service to more places in the county, linking residents with needed job opportunities and cutting long bus commute times.

An independent Transit Authority can get the job done.

Infrastructure projects take time and focus. To get Rapid Transit moving on our roadways as quickly and efficiently as possible, County Executive Leggett has proposed the creation of a new independent Transit Authority to oversee the implementation and operations of transit in the county. A new Authority will have the laser focus required to execute this top priority for the county. The new independent Transit Authority would be similar to other authorities of the county such as the Revenue Authority and the Housing Opportunities Commission, which are able to independently raise revenues and carry out their specific missions, with oversight from the public and county elected officials.

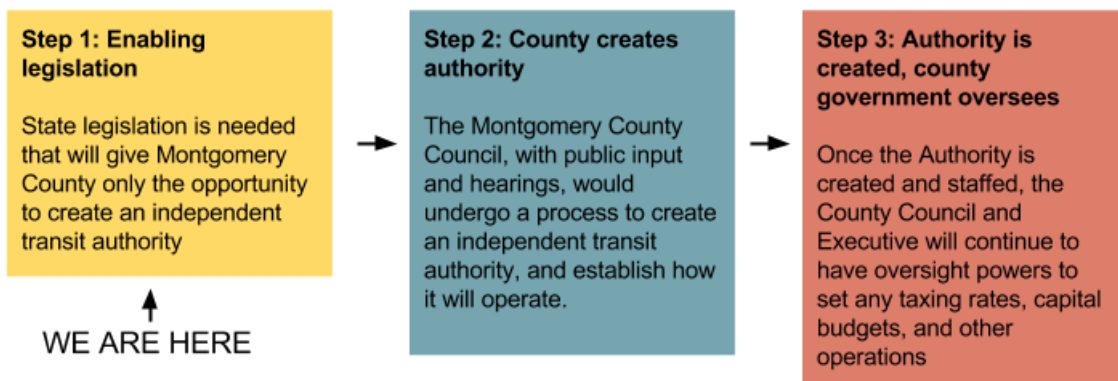
Benefits of an independent Transit Authority

- **Focus:** A singularly focused, local agency will enable swifter, higher quality implementation of the Rapid Transit network than the state agency currently responsible for planning.
- **Efficiency:** Faster implementation of the RTS means less money required for planning, organizing, and building the system
- **Reliability:** Will establish a stable, reliable, and dedicated source of revenue, critical for successful transit systems
- **Self determination:** The ability for Montgomery County to have control over the design, financing, and operation of its own system, rather than depending on state agencies
- **Independent, but accountable:** The County's elected Councilmembers will approve the Transit Authority's financial model, including its Capital Improvements budget, setting of tax rates, and its imposition of any tax. The existing county mass transit property tax will be set to zero and be replaced by a new tax to support all county transit including Rapid Transit.

The Transit Authority could have responsibility for:

- Planning, designing, engineering, developing, financing, maintaining, and operating the Ride-On bus system and the planned RTS network, including the Corridor Cities Transitway.
- Coordinating the relationship with MDOT (including MTA and SHA) and WMATA.
- Providing fleet management for transit vehicles (transferred from Department of General Services).

Steps to create an independent Transit Authority



Enabling legislation: Bill MC 24-15

This bill, before the General Assembly, would enable Montgomery County to create, through a separate local legislation process, an independent transit authority that:

- Will take control of planning, design, engineering, development, financing, maintenance, and operation of the “Ride-On” bus system and the planned RTS network, including the Corridor Cities Transitway
- Can establish a countywide tax, not subject to County Charter limits, to finance transit, to be set by the County Council
- Can incur debt, including issuing revenue bonds
- Can acquire property through contract and condemnation
- Can enter into contracts and public-private partnerships
- Will coordinate with WMATA and the Maryland Transit Authority for all other transit
- Will establish a budget and Capital Improvement Program, approved by the County Council and subject to existing Master Plans
- Will manage the transit vehicle fleet
- Will be governed by a board of at least five members, appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council
- Would be subject to Montgomery County public ethics law

**Other details about the Authority will be determined through the local legislative process, with full public input.*

The independent transit authority will likely be funded by:

- The County transit tax, no longer subject to County Charter limits
- The County’s capital budget
- State and Federal grants
- State and private sector contributions
- System revenues

Authorities are a common structure for providing transit and are usually associated with specific, dedicated funding programs and regional cooperation. Many currently exist around the region and country:

- New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA)
- Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (PANYNJ)
- Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA)
- Mass.: Southeastern Regional Transit Authority (SRTA)
- Vermont: Chittenden County Transportation Authority (CCTA)
- Virginia: Williamsburg Area Transit Authority (WATA)
- Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)

The creation of an independent Transit Authority can streamline transit operations, increase system visibility and flexibility, and expand service consistent with overall mobility, livability and land use goals. Approving this enabling legislation and creating this Authority is the best solution for the future of transit in Montgomery County.