

**A Shared Vision:** We call on elected officials to work with us to build a prosperous, equitable and sustainable future Prince George's that offers: multiple thriving transit-focused downtowns (North, Central, and South county); inclusive, safe, healthy and connected neighborhoods and municipalities; preserved open spaces and natural areas, and climate-friendly development patterns.

**Prince George's Possibilities:** As we recover from the devastation of COVID-19, we seek to build a sustainable and shared prosperity, health equity and wellbeing for all Prince Georgians. This creates a virtuous cycle of economic growth which retains homegrown talent and businesses, attracts new investment, and improves both people and places – especially benefitting Black and Latino residents who have been historically and structurally excluded from wealth, opportunity, and health.

### Recommendations Summary

**Great Places Around Transit:** Implement creative, equitable placemaking and transit-oriented development projects, investments and policies. Prioritize public investments that foster walkable environments, including urban street designs around and connecting to transit stations and inner Beltway communities to reverse decades of disinvestment.

**Housing for All:** Guide land use, budget priorities, and housing policy changes to address the needs of all Prince George's residents, including seniors, families, and low-income individuals. This begins with increased county funding. It also means better utilization of state and federal funding streams to preserve and build the housing of the future and achieve housing stability, quality, choice and prevention of displacement. Implement [Housing Opportunities for All](#).

**Safe Streets:** Achieve zero traffic deaths ([Vision Zero](#)) and transit-oriented placemaking goals by slowing vehicle speeds, and changing how streets are designed and operated, providing sidewalks and other facilities; focus on areas of high pedestrian deaths, and activity centers in need of improved walk and bike access. Allocate the necessary funds to make streets safe for all modes and connect communities. Implement county [Urban Street Design Standards](#).

**Better Buses:** Make better bus service a top priority. Allocate increased transportation investments and focus policy priorities to improve the frequency, reliability, accessibility, and customer experience of public transportation. This is especially important in inner Beltway communities where residents rely more heavily on public transportation.

[RISE Prince George's](#) is a group of county residents and allies advocating for policies and practices that build shared, sustainable prosperity in Prince George's County by creating safe, walkable, inclusive and transit-oriented communities. <https://smartergrowth.net/rise-prince-georges/>

**Prince George's strengths:** With 15 Metro stations, another 11 Purple Line stations on the way, and 8 MARC stations, the county's transit assets are *the* competitive advantage – for promoting future job growth, local economic development, and generating needed increases in the county's tax base. Prince George's has the benefit of planning for a future which forecasts increased job growth as well as increased demand for housing and amenities near jobs and transit.

**Equitable economic development through transit-oriented development (TOD)** will create the base of public and private resources that are necessary to support high-performing schools and community-oriented public safety services, increase the amount of high-quality housing for people of all incomes close to jobs and essential services, and provide better employment, entrepreneurship, retail amenities, health equity, and wealth-building opportunities for all county residents.

## Progress and Opportunity

Prince George's Metro stations have gained new buildings and activity that are helping shape a sense of place in recent years. These changes include a major Kaiser Permanente administrative building at New Carrollton Metro station, the University of Maryland Capital Region Medical Center at the Largo Metro station; and new housing and offices at West Hyattsville, Prince George's Plaza, Branch Ave. and



College Park Metro stations. The [new vision](#) launched by County Executive Alsobrooks for the county's economic development is anchored by the Blue Line Corridor Initiative, promising to further capitalize on a corridor of premier transit assets in the heart of the county. The Purple Line, once it is completed, will provide yet another significant opportunity for economic activity, housing in all price ranges, equitable transit access, and unique placemaking.

## Addressing Our Challenges

Despite progress with growing transit districts, the county continues to facilitate sprawling land development patterns and roads designed for fast vehicles to the exclusion of people. This perpetuates underinvestment in transit-oriented places, and inequitable access for disadvantaged residents to grocery stores, healthcare, jobs, schools, and other daily needs.

These land use patterns undermine opportunities to more sustainably build value and grow the tax base through equitable transit-oriented placemaking. Spread-out land uses and related costly road expansions generate traffic congestion, longer trips, pollution, crashes, and reduced, inequitable transportation choices.

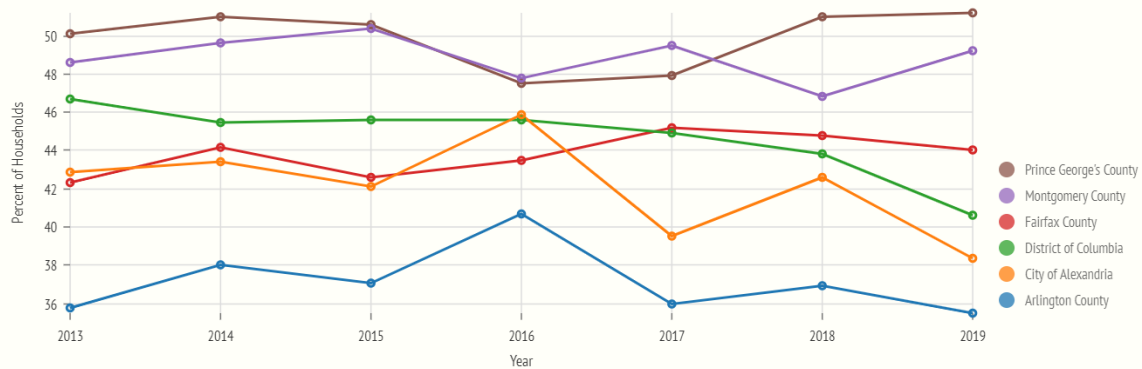
These patterns pose or compound a number of challenges for Prince George's residents, including:

- **Too few walkable urban places near transit and inner Beltway communities.** The majority of residential growth between 1980 and 2010 was outside of the Capital Beltway and far from transit stations. In the last few years, however, the county has captured growth at its 8 Regional Transit Districts, including an increase of 27% new dwelling units in its designated Regional Transit Centers from 2014-2019. Yet in that same time period the county sustained a 27% increase in outlying, vehicle-dependent areas like Konterra, Westphalia and Brandywine Town Centers ([Plan 2035 Five Year Evaluation](#)). In contrast, the county's land use plan, [Plan 2035](#), sets goals to capture 50% of housing and job growth in Regional Transit Districts, and only 10% at outerlying, auto-oriented Town Centers.
- **Unaffordable Housing:** More Prince George's renters are cost-burdened than DC area residents. Fifty-one percent of renters paid too much, where they pay more than 30% (and often more than 50%) of their incomes in housing costs in 2019. This [compares](#) to Montgomery County's 49.2%, Fairfax County's 44% and DC's 40.6%. While home values and rents might be less expensive than elsewhere in this costly region, rents are rising and fueling increased concern among Prince George's families who earn modest wages or rely on a fixed income.

## Affordability Context

### Renter Housing Cost Burden

Proportion of renter households paying 30% or more of income on housing expenses



Source: [HAND](#)

- Dangerous streets** and poor connections for people walking and biking: Prince George's typically wide, fast roadways do not safely accommodate many of its users. Often these areas are missing sidewalks or safe, convenient crossings. The county consistently has approximately twice the pedestrian deaths of peer jurisdictions. In 2019, Prince George's had 30 pedestrian deaths, [compared](#) to 17 in Fairfax County, VA and 14 in Montgomery County.
- Long waits to ride the bus** even on the busiest routes: No routes for Prince George's TheBus offer service more frequently than one bus every 30 minutes. TheBus service ends every day by 8:20 pm at the latest, and does not run on Sundays. Since the pandemic, TheBus has offered more frequent all-day service on its highest ridership routes, but this service is still 30 minutes between buses. During the pandemic, Metrobus has also [implemented a network](#) running every 12 minutes, or every 20 minutes on a few key routes. As the county recovers from the pandemic, it will need increased investment in more frequent and reliable bus service to better connect residents to jobs, services, education, and childcare.

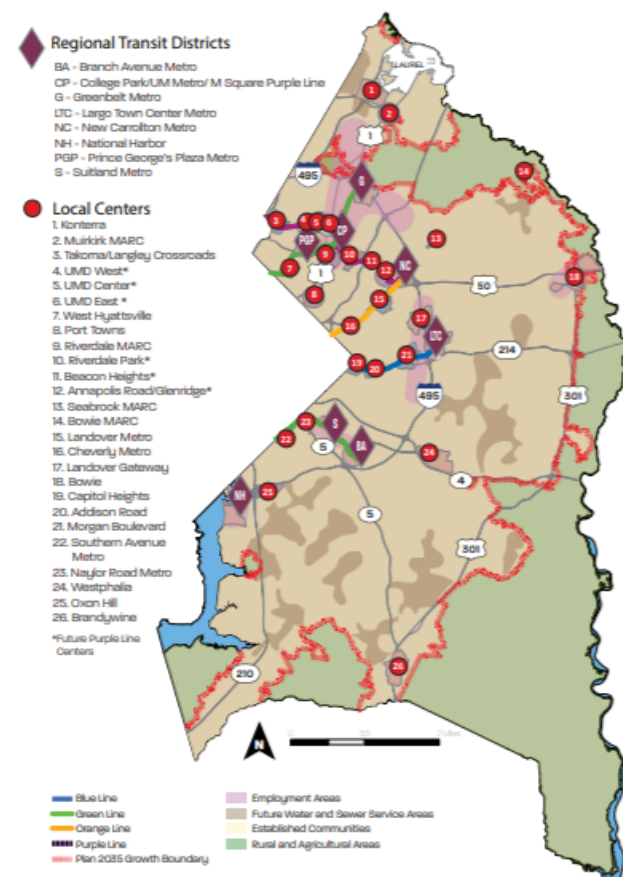


## Building on the County's Progress

Elected officials can help lead us as we educate, engage, and mobilize to reshape policy and budget priorities to make the most of the county's assets that serve our residents' needs. These assets include transit stations, established communities, and anchor institutions which drive job creation and economic growth. In the last decade, the county has made major advances and moved forward with a set of strategies to build a better future. Key official county strategies include:

- ❖ [General Plan 2035](#) addresses land use issues that affect the county as a whole, specifically where future growth and development should be concentrated, where land should be preserved or dedicated, and how our established communities and municipalities can be strengthened. The plan identified three "Downtowns" and an additional five Regional Transit Districts. These growth areas will be hubs for development and activity. The downtowns are: Prince George's Plaza, New Carrollton, and Largo Metro station areas.
- ❖ [Zoning Rewrite](#): The County Council replaced the 50 year-old zoning code with updated, modern zoning regulations to implement Plan 2035 in 2018. The zoning code goes into effect through the [Countywide Map Amendment](#) (CMA) in spring of 2022. The CMA assigns the new zones to all properties in the county. The goals of the zoning ordinance rewrite are to: 1) streamline the ordinance and development approval processes; 2) modernize and consolidate zones and development standards; 3) incentivize revitalization and economic, transit-oriented, and mixed-use development; and 4) protect stable residential neighborhoods.

Map 1. Plan 2035 Growth Policy Map (2014)



Prince George's County Planning Department

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- ❖ [Transit Vision Plan](#): This 2018 plan provides a foundation for future local bus service in the county. The plan laid out key goals:

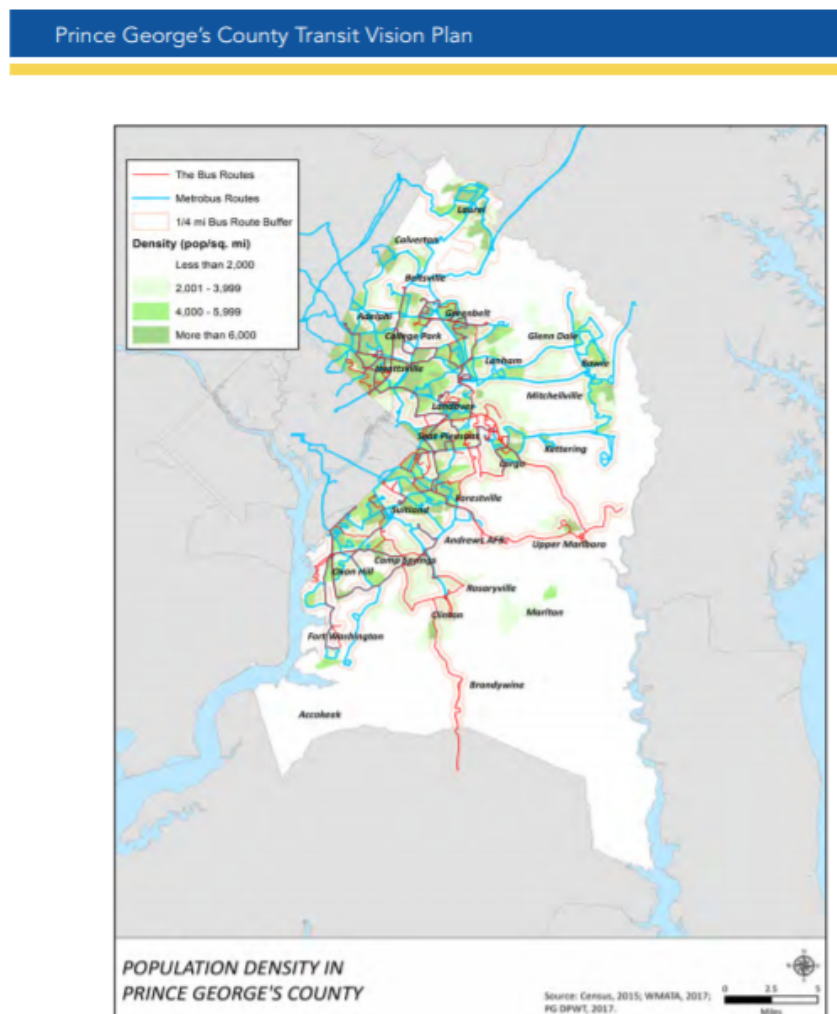
Goal 1 Enhance: Provide high quality, robust mobility options with effective and efficient service while addressing gaps in existing services.

Goal 2 Expand : Strengthen and expand the county's pedestrian and bicycle networks in order to enhance connectivity to the county's fixed route transit system.

Goal 3 Collaborate: Improve internal and external communication with agencies and stakeholders to increase transit-supportive land use decisions and improve pedestrian accessibility to transit services.

Goal 4 Engage: Improve internal and external communications to meet the evolving transit needs of the community.

In August 2021, due to COVID-19, the county launched a [Reimagining TheBus POST COVID](#) plan to implement Saturday service, increase all-day frequency on highest ridership routes, and switch some low ridership routes to on-demand service.



**Figure 3.2** Prince George's County Current Population Density Based on U.S. Census

- ❖ [Vision Zero Plan](#) The 2019 Vision Zero Action Plan is the Prince George's County roadmap to achieving zero fatalities and serious injuries on county roadways by 2040. The Vision Zero strategy focuses on a combined approach using the six essential elements for a safe transportation system: education, emergency response, engineering, enforcement, evaluation, and equity. The plan also builds on the county's [2017 Urban Street Design Standards](#).
- ❖ [Housing Opportunities for All \(HOFA\)](#), The 2019 Prince George's County's comprehensive housing strategy, represents the county's 10-year plan to serve the housing needs of all county residents, both current and future, while expanding access to opportunity through housing investments. Housing Opportunity for All is designed to achieve three primary goals:
  1. Support existing residents, including long-time residents, seniors, residents with disabilities, and residents at-risk of displacement.
  2. Attract new residents, including millennials, families, employers, and developers.
  3. Build on strategic investments and submarket conditions, including transit-oriented development (TOD) areas like the Purple Line corridor, areas around strategic assets and major public investments, and areas designated as federal Opportunity Zones.
- ❖ [Economic Development Platform](#) (June 2021) - The overall strategy, and its Blue Line Corridor Anchor Initiative, represents an opportunity to create the next big destination for the county and region – a dense, multimodal, amenity-rich sports and entertainment destination:
  - Goal 1: Increase the number of people who live and work in the county.
  - Goal 2: Increase commercial tax collections by \$100 million.
  - Goal 3: Increase population by 50,000 and density in transit-oriented development areas (Metro, MARC, Amtrak, Purple Line) and other local growth centers to promote a mix of incomes, housing options, amenities and job growth.
  - Goal 4: Preserve housing affordability and diversify the County's housing stock.
  - Goal 5: Increase the amount of healthy food retail square footage in Low Income, Low Access areas by 100,000 square feet.
  - Goal 6: Increase areas in the county with identifiable character and a sense of place by promoting and improving priority areas as destinations.

# Recommendations

## to Achieve a Prosperous, Equitable and Sustainable County

### Great Places Around Transit

Implement creative, equitable placemaking and transit-oriented development projects, investments, and policies. Prioritize public investments that foster walkable environments, including urban street designs around and connecting to transit stations and inner Beltway communities to reverse decades of disinvestment.

- Prioritize public investments that foster walk-friendly environments in and around transit stations, connecting communities with multi-modal (walk, bike, scooting) transportation networks, and make last mile connections to transit.
- Hold the Planning Board and Planning Department accountable for guiding growth to transit-centers rather than outlying areas. One tool to accomplish this is by evaluating the impact of growth (and associated greenhouse gas emissions) utilizing a vehicle miles traveled (VMT) standard for all new developments.
- Ensure the zoning rewrite is implemented to fulfill its promise to guide transit-oriented placemaking.
- Ensure coordination with housing investments so that transit-oriented development brings equitable access to residents who need quality, affordable housing and proximity to transit and amenities.
- Support growth in inner Beltway communities and around transit centers while protecting rural farm and forest lands to ensure environmentally-sustainable development.

### Housing for All

Guide land use, budget priorities, and housing policy changes to address the needs of all Prince George's diverse residents, including seniors, families, and low-income individuals. This begins with increased county funding. It also means better utilization of state and federal funding streams to preserve and build the housing of the future and achieve housing stability, quality, choice and prevention of displacement. Support the county's [Housing Opportunities for All](#) strategy implementation.

- Increase funding for the Housing Investment Trust Fund by doubling the county's annual \$10 million commitment until reaching the [recommended](#) \$82 million/year.



- Prioritize funding for preserving and building new affordable housing close to Purple Line and Metro stations.
- Build on the [Housing Opportunities for All \(HOFA\) strategy](#) by engaging with the [HOFA workgroup](#) and implementing its recommendations.
- Strengthen the county's use of Right of First Refusal (ROFR) to acquire, rehabilitate, and secure long term affordability of apartment complexes. Leverage financing, planning and policy tools to build and sustain more mixed-income housing around transit. Include demolition permits under ROFR.
- Strengthen tenant protections while encouraging property owners to invest in maintaining their properties and build new rental housing.
- Ensure the county government has sufficient staff capacity to implement expanded affordable housing development activity, including through nonprofit sector partners.

## Safe Streets

Achieve zero traffic deaths ([Vision Zero](#)) and transit-oriented placemaking goals by slowing vehicle speeds, and changing how streets are designed and operated, providing sidewalks and other facilities; focus on areas of high pedestrian deaths, and activity centers in need of improved walk and bike access. Allocate the necessary funds to make streets safe for all modes and connect communities. Implement the county's [Urban Street Design Standards](#).

- Increase oversight of Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPW&T) and Department of Permitting, Inspections and Enforcement (DPIE) on implementation of [Vision Zero](#) and [Urban Street Design Standards](#). Set a goal to reduce travel speeds and track progress.
- Engage with county agencies to work with the Maryland State Highway Administration to make state roads in the county meet Vision Zero goals and conform to urban street design standards in activity centers.
- Implement walk/bike access audits for all Regional and Local Transit Centers. Include assessments of wide, high speed roadways to be prioritized for urban street design retrofits that lower speeds, reduce crossing distance, tighten turn radii, and expand walk and bicycle facilities (such as adding sidewalks, crossings, protected bike lanes, trails).
- Require the county to include planned bike/pedestrian facilities in all new and reconstruction projects; require routinely in resurfacing. Ensure protected bike lanes are built.
- Allocate funds from DPW&T's CIP budget to implement the county's bicycle and pedestrian facility network commensurate to the percent of pedestrian and bicycle crashes of all traffic crashes (currently around 20%) in the county.

- Expand the use of speed and red light cameras (Automated Traffic Enforcement - ATE) where road design solutions need greater support; [remove ATE from the police](#); commit to [transparency, accountability and racial equity in operations](#) with a goal of few infractions and increased safety; adjust fines to promote deterrence rather than being punitive (e.g. income percentage-based adjusted fines).
- Accelerate the construction of the [Capital Trails Network](#) as outlined by the Capital Trails Coalition (CTC), which prioritizes trail projects based on four metrics: low-income areas, high populations of people of color, activity centers, and high density areas. Priorities include the Central Avenue Connector Trail, the Suitland Parkway Trail, and the Prince George's Connector Trail.

## Better Buses

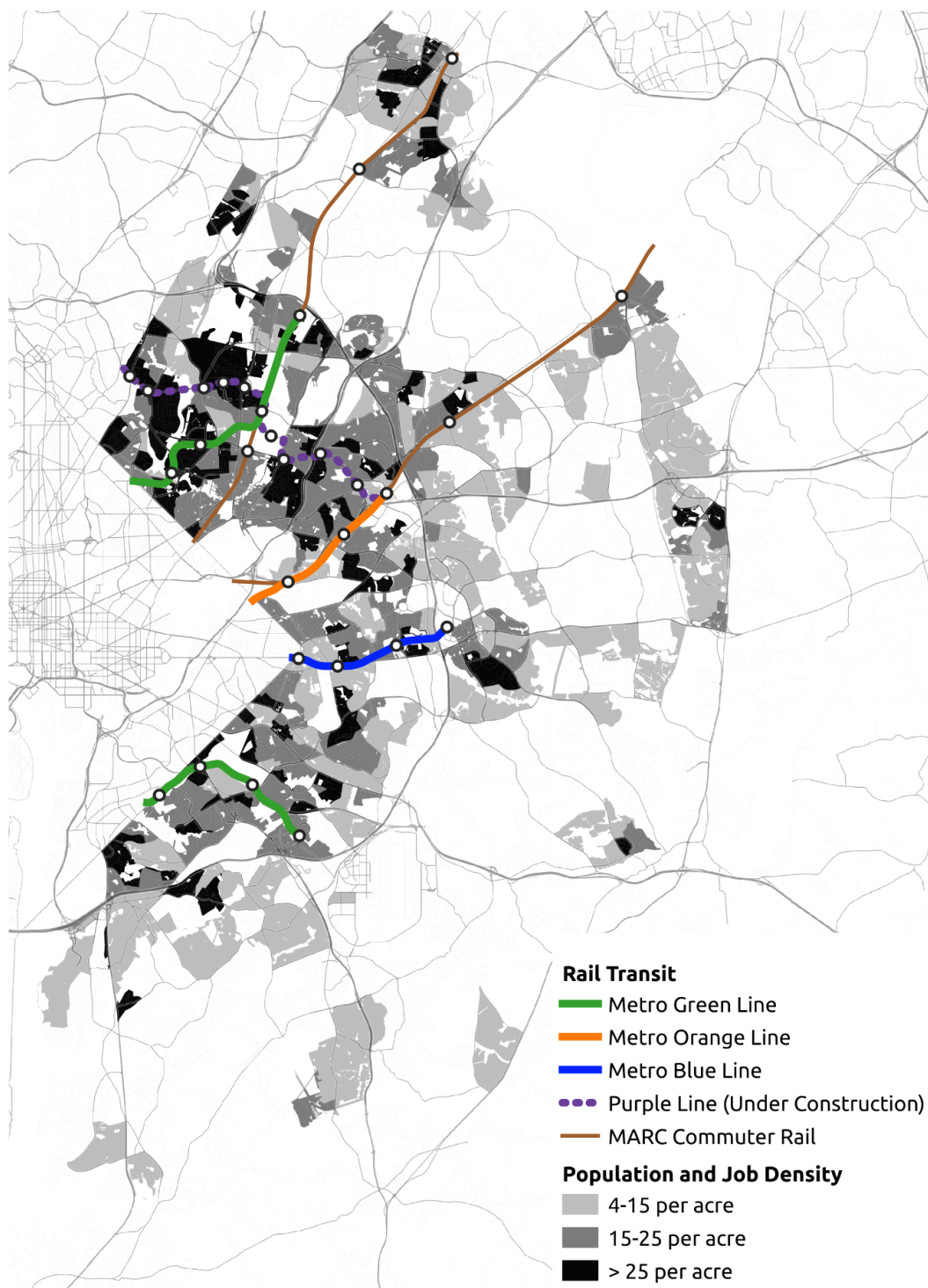
Make better bus service a top priority. Allocate increased transportation investments and focus policy priorities to improve the frequency, reliability, accessibility, and customer experience in public transportation. This is especially important for serving low income residents and communities who need quality transit options to travel throughout the county. As the county recovers from the pandemic, it should step up investments in better service on high ridership routes, building on the recommendations from the [Transit Vision Plan](#) and [Reimagining TheBus POST COVID](#) plan, specifically:

- Provide frequent bus service every 15 minutes rather than the current 30 minute headways on the [13 higher ridership routes](#) which serve population and job centers concentrated inside the Beltway as well as higher-density communities outside the Beltway (including Laurel, Bowie, Upper Marlboro, Clinton, and Fort Washington).
- Extend service until 10 pm each day and add Sunday service.
- Accelerate walk/bike facilities implementation from the Transit Vision Plan, which identified \$8.8 million for 24 miles of sidewalk network to ensure residents can safely walk to bus stops.
- Expand bikeshare and safe bicycling facilities to connect to bus stops/local destinations.

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This election platform is by [RISE Prince George's](#), a group of county residents and allies advocating for policies and practices that build shared, sustainable prosperity in Prince George's County by creating safe, walkable, inclusive and transit-oriented communities. This platform is part of a non-partisan, non-profit 501(c)(3) activity. RISE Prince George's does not endorse or work on behalf of candidates, or express any view for or against any candidate. Photo credits: All photos by C. Cort unless otherwise noted.

## Map of Prince George's County - Population/Jobs Density and Rail Lines



## Map commentary

This map shows the Metrorail lines, Purple Line, and two MARC lines in relation to concentrations of jobs and population per acre. Nearly all of the areas with the highest jobs and population per acre are clustered inside the Capital Beltway. These concentrations are those that can be more efficiently served by [public transit](#).

However, while some Metro and Purple line stations connect to higher concentrations of homes and jobs, many do not. This shows the opportunity to direct future growth to these more efficient (current or future) transit hubs.

Some other areas where more homes and/or jobs are clustered together are not near current or planned rail stations. For these districts, better bus service – that is frequent and reliable – is essential to provide residents and workers more convenient and sustainable transportation.

All of these transit-accessible communities depend on creating a much safer environment for walking and biking – incorporating protected bike lanes, and sidewalks, and shared use trails to connect to transit, jobs, stores, schools, and services. The Central Avenue Connector Trail is one example and is part of the county's current priority focus on the Blue Line transit corridor.

There are major challenges to serving newer developments outside the beltway with good bus service. Both distance and winding local roads and cul-de-sacs make it difficult to affordably provide effective bus service. Focusing development near arterial bus routes and using a grid of walkable streets will help these communities be more walkable and transit accessible. Most growth, however, should be directed to transit station areas and inner beltway community centers.

Map credit: D.W. Rowlands.

Data sources: 2018 LEHD LODES job data from the Census Bureau, converted to 2020 Census block groups using a geography crosswalk provided by the National Historical GIS project at the University of Minnesota, and 2020 Decennial Census redistricting data, 2020 Census Bureau "TigerLine" shapefiles.