

Central Maryland Transportation Alliance

An overview of past and present efforts to improve transportation systems in the Baltimore Metro area

LAI Baltimore Chapter – March, 2019 meeting

Michael Cordes – Scribe

On March 20th, Brian O’Malley visited with the Baltimore LAI Chapter to review regional transportation improvement efforts in the greater Baltimore Metropolitan area. Brian is the President & CEO of the Transportation Alliance.

Brian began by opining that “Regional transportation really shapes our lives”. Citing several studies (including Moving to Opportunity – May, 2017) that looked at a variety of factors that contribute to stubbornly entrenched poverty. Interestingly, the one factor most closely correlated with the worst odds of escaping poverty is an average commute time of greater than 45 minutes. This listener found that quite surprising. Its not crime level, education levels, or housing conditions – its when the average commutes times exceed 45 minutes that correlates most strongly with not being able to escape poverty. And Baltimore was apparently judged to be the worst county studied with respect to the chances of residents escaping poverty due our substandard transportation infrastructure. Put succinctly, our transportation systems help to calcify our citizen’s poverty.

Further emphasizing the impact of transportation, Brian opined that “great transportation systems”:

- Grow your economy
- Give you choices
- Keep you and your environment healthy


Brian reviewed the Alliance’s 2017 “Transportation Report Card”, which gave the Baltimore area a “D” grade. He then asked “What is being done to address this?” The answer appears to be that MTA was working on two major improvements, namely a re-design of the bus network, and the Red Line expansion of the subway system. Unfortunately, the Red Line has been cancelled. A redesigned bus network, labeled BaltimoreLink, has been implemented. Are we any better off now? Brian indicated the answer is basically “no”. The Transportation Alliance attempted to independently evaluate the revamped BaltimoreLink, but “MTA’s claim of improved reliability can’t be evaluated because MTA changed both its definition of on-time performance (OTP) and its method of measuring and calculating OTP”. The Alliance’s observational data/anecdotal evidence did not indicate a reliability improvement.

Brain offered the following slides regarding BaltimoreLink and where we go from here:

In a Nutshell

- BaltimoreLink was
 - Overpromised
 - Flat funded
 - Not a gamechanger for riders
- To improve
 - Transparency and open data
 - Prioritize transit
 - Focus on frequency
 - Reverse MTA budget cuts
 - Produce an excellent transit plan

Are We Better Off?
Assessing BaltimoreLink's
Promises One Year Later

Central Maryland Transportation Alliance 

- 1. Improve Transparency and Open Data (MTA):** report on the aspects of transit that matter most to riders; Fast, Frequent, Reliable, Connected, and Walkable; publish methodologies for measuring performance.
- 2. Prioritize Transit (Baltimore City and MTA):** openly evaluate bus priority lanes and TSP; develop a memorandum of understanding or other agreement document to prioritize moving people, coordinate implementation and enforcement, and create accountability.
- 3. Focus on Frequency (MTA):** maintain the headway levels promised in the high frequency network; identify corridors for expanding new or enhancing existing frequency; ensure that the entirety of each CityLink route provides high-frequency service.
- 4. Reverse MTA Budget Cuts (Governor Hogan and Maryland Department of Transportation):** restore capital funding to the MTA which is currently slated to see a 58% cut from FY19 to FY23.
- 5. Produce an Excellent Central Maryland Regional Transit Plan (MTA and Local Governments):** produce a goal-oriented and multi-modal plan through meaningful public involvement and stakeholder engagement; program it into regional transportation plans.

Brian spoke about “Get Maryland Moving” a coalition aiming to create a viable Regional Transportation Plan. Get Maryland Moving defines itself as a “Coalition of business, labor, non-profits, and transit riders advocating for inclusive, equitable and accountable transit”. The Coalition’s goals for the near term are detailed in the following slide Brian presented:

What are **GET MARYLAND MOVING** 2019 objectives?

- Launch 2019 campaign
- Grow GMM membership
- Raise funds for an effective campaign
- Populate the Regional Transit Plan Commission with people who will fight for a strong transit plan
- Engage the counties and Baltimore City to support a strong transit plan
- See the MTA define clear, measurable goals for the plan

The Coalition is looking for new members during 2019, and will be formally launching a new awareness campaign this year. Brian advised that the best way to learn more about the Coalition is to sign up for updates at www.GetMDMoving.com and to follow it on Facebook@GetMDMoving, and/or Twitter @GetMDMovingNow. Brian encouraged all in attendance to get involved. And if anyone feels strongly enough to make a contribution toward the Coalition’s fundraising goals, “Talk to me!”

The Transportation Alliance is offering free workshops for anyone interested in learning in greater detail about our region’s challenges. “Turning concerned citizens into informed advocates”:



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TRANSPORTATION ALLIANCE**

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Transportation 101 is a **FREE** workshop series open to anyone interested in gaining a deeper understanding about regional transportation issues and the critical role transportation plays in our lives and our communities.

**FOR MORE INFO VISIT
www.cmtalliance.org/transportation-101**

The members of the Baltimore Chapter of LAI thank Brian for his work on behalf of Maryland's citizens and for his kindness in presenting such a cogent overview of the transportation issues facing the greater Baltimore region.