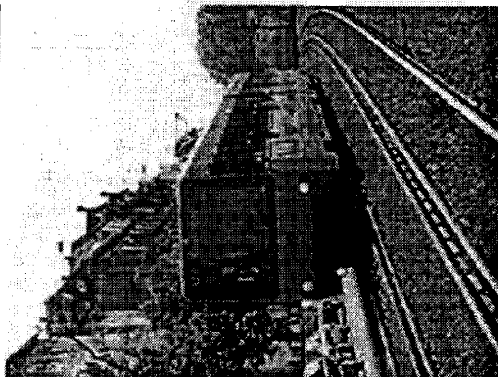
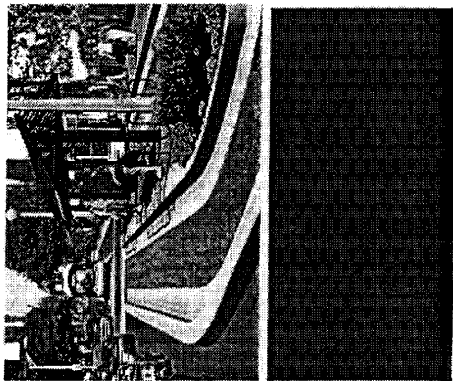


# **Bi-County** *transitway*



## Purpose and Need

January 2004

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## PROJECT LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

The Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) is undertaking an Alternatives Analysis and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (AA/Draft EIS), to study alternative means for addressing mobility issues in the corridor between Bethesda and New Carrollton, Maryland. The corridor is located in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, just north of the District of Columbia boundary. The Bi-County Transitway will provide high-capacity transit along the approximately 14-mile corridor that connects Metrorail's Red Line (Medical Center, Bethesda and Silver Spring stations), Green Line (College Park station), and Orange Line (New Carrollton station). The corridor, which contains key activity and employment centers, needs additional transit options and improved system connectivity for east-west transportation to serve a substantial population that uses transit. The Bi-County Transitway project incorporates previous studies of the Purple Line, Bethesda to Silver Spring segment (formerly known as the Georgetown Branch Transitway/Trail) and the Purple Line, Silver Spring to New Carrollton segment into one comprehensive study. The two previous studies are being combined to meet consistent project goals and to ensure that all alternatives are assessed from the perspective of the entire corridor.

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF PROJECT

The goals and objectives for the Bi-County Transitway are based on the transportation needs identified in the corridor. Table 1 presents the goals and objectives on which to effectively evaluate the project alternatives.

The Bi-County Transitway corridor is located approximately eight miles north and northeast of Washington, D.C. with a majority of the alignment within one to three miles of the circumferential I-95/I-495 Capital Beltway. (See Figure 1) The corridor includes established inner-ring communities that, while containing pockets of high-density development (Bethesda, Silver Spring, and New Carrollton), are predominantly characterized by low to medium-density residential uses, with the exception of the University of Maryland in College Park. This portion of the metropolitan Washington region experienced rapid development following World War II and now contains mature neighborhoods with the majority of housing constructed prior to 1960. The commercial areas are focused primarily on retail and the activity centers are older in design and function when compared with contemporary suburban developments. These activity centers often have substantial deficiencies in access, parking and pedestrian circulation. However, many of the commercial and industrial sites are undergoing redevelopment as vacant and available land is scarce and the value of property in the metropolitan region has continued to appreciate, especially for parcels with good access to the transportation network.

Heavy rail transit, including the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Metrorail Red, Green and Orange Lines, MTA's MARC service, and Amtrak operate in the corridor. These transit routes are oriented to downtown Washington, D.C. and do not provide for cross-county travel. The current public transit options that accommodate cross-county trips (WMATA Metrobus, Montgomery County Ride-On, and Prince George's County TheBus) have unpredictable

**Table 1 – Project Goals and Objectives**

Goal Statement	Objectives
Support regional mobility, increase system connectivity, and address travel demand through 2025	<p>Improve accessibility to existing and planned economic development areas in the corridor. Significantly reduce transit travel time between activity centers in the corridor.</p> <p>Support transit, pedestrian and bicycle access within the corridor by improving pedestrian and bicycle links to existing transit, local and regional trails and parks.</p> <p>Serve existing and future transit-oriented populations, including those who are largely dependent on transit.</p> <p>Improve access to institutions of higher learning.</p>
Maximize operations efficiencies and safety	<p>Significantly increase transit ridership.</p> <p>Improve feeder services and access facilities at existing and proposed stations appropriate for surrounding land use.</p> <p>Improve overall dependability and schedule adherence of transit system in the corridor.</p> <p>Provide transit service that is safe for the users as well as for other people in the community.</p>
Enhance communities and support public policies	<p>Provide an attractive system that contributes to community character through quality design of all transitway elements, including streetscape, stations, signage systems, and vehicles.</p> <p>Ensure that transit alignments and maintenance facilities, particularly those that are at-grade, are designed to minimize and mitigate any necessary negative impacts on established neighborhoods.</p> <p>Minimize and mitigate any necessary negative impacts to the natural environment in the transitway corridor.</p> <p>Support regional clean air goals by reducing dependence on automobile usage.</p> <p>Minimize negative impacts on traffic patterns in the transitway corridor.</p> <p>Support State “Priority Places” Strategy</p> <p>Support local transit and land use policies and adopted Master Plans.</p>
Optimize public investment and maximize eligibility for federal, state, and private sector funding	<p>Demonstrate that the overall benefits of transit improvements warrant their overall capital costs.</p> <p>Demonstrate that the continuing benefits of transit improvements warrant their operating costs.</p> <p>Implement a transit system that makes sufficient allowance for staged implementation and for accommodating transit ridership growth beyond 2025.</p> <p>Provide inter-jurisdictional coordination in planning for alignments and station areas that cross jurisdictional boundaries.</p>

Encourage economic development

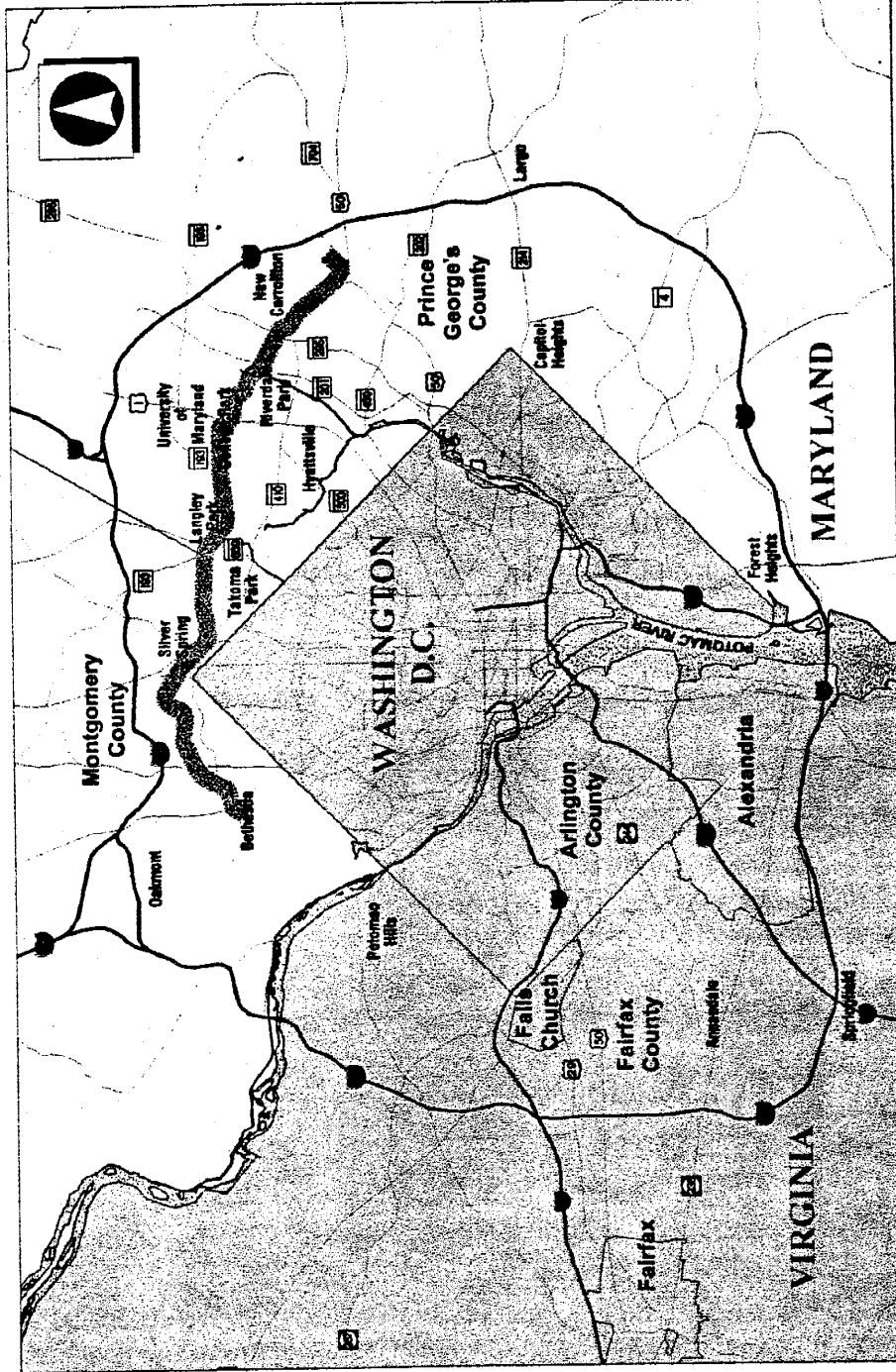
Increase potential for Transit Oriented Development (TOD) at existing and proposed stations in the corridor. Support development and revitalization of key activity centers such as Bethesda, Silver Spring, Takoma Park, Langley Park, College Park, Riverdale Park, and New Carrollton.

Improve access to jobs in the region from households in the study corridor.

Improve transit service to revitalize the image and marketability of older communities and stimulate investment in those communities.

**Figure 1 – Project Area**

(Note: Show radial Metro and MARC lines, arrow pointing toward BWI airport, and piece dots at activity centers.)



**BI-COUNTY TRANSITWAY PROJECT**

**LEGEND**

- Interstate Highway
- Local Road
- U.S. Highway
- Bi-County Transitway Study Area
- Maryland State Route
- Virginia State Route

0 2 4 6 Miles

U.S. Department of Transportation  
Federal Transit Administration

**MTA**  
Maryland

travel times as buses in the corridor are often delayed by roadway congestion. In addition to improving the mobility of people in this corridor, the Bi-County Transitway would significantly improve access to the University of Maryland at College Park and Montgomery College in Silver Spring. For example, the introduction of a fixed-guideway transit service with direct access to the University of Maryland campus would increase mobility choices for students and University employees and provide connectivity between the University and other institutions, businesses, and major activity centers.

The Bi-County Transitway project supports the Priority Places Strategy (formerly known as Smart Growth) in Maryland, where proposed development in currently built-up areas is encouraged as it takes better advantage of existing infrastructure, including transportation. The opportunities for infill and transit oriented development located in close proximity to transit stations are being explored as an economic redevelopment benefit of this alignment. This will complement current redevelopment activities occurring in and around Bethesda, Silver Spring, Takoma Park, Langley Park, College Park, Riverdale Park, and New Carrollton.

The Bi-County Transitway project supports Maryland's goal of doubling transit ridership by 2020 (MDOT, *Maryland Comprehensive Transit Plan*, 2001). By linking existing, redeveloping, and emerging activity centers, this high-capacity transit system would improve mobility and access to local economic centers. It would provide a transportation choice that does not exist today.

The Bi-County Transitway project connects WMATA's radial rail system at Bethesda, Silver Spring, College Park and New Carrollton. By having direct connections between suburban activity centers, some transit trips could avoid going into the

District of Columbia along the existing Metrorail system in order to reach another suburban activity center. As such, the east-west line could provide relief to WMATA's core capacity issues. In addition, the Bi-County Transitway would directly connect several key activity centers to the MARC Penn and Camden rail corridors and to Amtrak's northeast corridor via the New Carrollton station. These facilities provide access to BWI Airport, the Baltimore central business district, and major metropolitan areas in the northeast.

### Project Setting

In Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, existing land uses include residential, commercial, recreational, institutional, and industrial development. Land use in the Montgomery County portion of the corridor is largely residential, with concentrations of commercial areas in Bethesda, Silver Spring, and Takoma Park. The Rock Creek Stream Valley Park provides recreational opportunities. The areas affected by the corridor include a mix of housing types and densities, which are supported by an array of public services. Most of the respective areas have, in part or in whole, plans that emphasize transit-oriented mixed-use land uses in developed areas, especially adjacent to transit stations.

(Note: The following section would be easier to understand if shown graphically on a map.)

Except for the Bethesda CBD, primarily single-family and some multi-family residences with little commercial development characterize the portion of the corridor west of Rock Creek. East of Rock Creek, land uses adjacent to the corridor are more varied, ranging from commercial/industrial development to low, medium and high-density residences. The Bethesda CBD contains places of worship, schools, high-rise

office buildings, commercial establishments, and multi-family housing of moderate to high density along the corridor.

Light industrial development dominates the area from Lyttonville Place to the CSXT Metropolitan Branch main line north of the corridor. South of the corridor are single-family and multi-family houses and parcels that are zoned for medium-density and high-density residential uses. The Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Forest Glen Annex is located adjacent to this area northwest of Brookville Road.

Single-family residences are dominant east of 16th Street and the CSXT Metropolitan Branch main line. Between 16th Street and Spring Street, several parcels of townhouse, clustered residential, professional office, and public or semi-public uses are interspersed within the neighborhood. The parcels abutting the south side of the CSXT Metropolitan Branch main line between 16th Street and Spring Street are zoned as limited-intensity retail commercial purposes, which support present uses. Further from the CSXT right-of-way are a series of high-density residences dominated by high-rise buildings south of 16th Street.

The portions of the project area east of Spring Street lie within the Silver Spring CBD and have varying land uses, including high-rise apartments, private and public offices, mixed-use development, and many commercial facilities. Development becomes more intense toward the future Silver Spring Transit Center (SSTC), located in the core of the CBD.

(Note: the section above would be easier to understand if shown graphically on a map.)

Among the themes of the *Silver Spring CBD Master Plan* is the goal of a transit-oriented downtown. This includes the planned multi-modal Silver Spring Transit Center (SSTC), which will ultimately include a relocated MARC station platform,

Metro-rail, Ride-On, Metrobus services, intercity buses, and the Bi-County Transitway station facilities. Silver Spring's current and future economic revitalization depends on the accessible and efficient transit connections associated with the planned SSTC and integrated with the adjacent TOD projects. The *North & West Silver Spring Master Plan* has set a goal for creating "neighborhood-friendly circulation systems", which include transit. The *Takoma Park Master Plan* and the *East Silver Spring Master Plan* also have "neighborhood-friendly circulation system" plans that include public transportation.

Generally, each area plan encourages future development projects that offer integration with existing and planned transportation projects.

Land use along the Prince George's County portion of the corridor, Langley Park to New Carrollton, is primarily comprised of residential uses, with large sections of recreational and commercial areas. Housing types and densities in this area are largely single-family dwellings interspersed with multi-family apartment complexes. The area's public services, including police and fire stations, schools, hospitals, libraries, places of worship, etc., offer a large support structure for area residents. This portion of the corridor includes Northwest Branch Park as well as large institutions such as the University of Maryland in College Park and the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center. Most master plans in the area emphasize transit-oriented mixed-use development.

The *Prince George's County General Plan Amendment* is geared toward transit-oriented multi-use development for its "Developed Tier" residential and commercial areas (namely, those developed areas close to the District of Columbia). The Takoma Park/Langley Park area, the City of College Park (including the University of Maryland), and the Riverdale area



all fall in the County's "Developed Tier." The plans for the areas affected by the alignment offer support for any future transit planning by making it a requirement that any project considered for development in the respective areas have access to, or integration with, existing or planned transportation projects.

### Planned Redevelopment Opportunities

The following regions have designated redevelopment zones and areas where improved transit connectivity would benefit residents and local businesses. The Bi-County Transitway project would support these revitalization activities, which build upon transit-oriented development and design principles:

*Bethesda CBD* - Bethesda is already densely developed. The transit-oriented development policies of Montgomery County for this area encourage continuing infill and redevelopment. At least five approved developments are within ¼-mile of the Bi-County Transitway terminal station option located in downtown Bethesda. The majority of these planned development sites are currently under construction. They include office, retail and residential.

*Silver Spring CBD* - The *Approved and Adopted Silver Spring Central Business District Sector Plan (Feb. 2000)* places emphasis on the importance of a transit hub for continued redevelopment and economic viability in the Silver Spring CBD. Existing transit providing access into the core consists of MARC Commuter Rail, Metrorail, Metrobus, Ride-On, MTA Commuter Bus, and intercity bus services. Along with plans to facilitate connections between different transit systems and improve pedestrian access, the *Silver Spring CBD Plan* considers a Bi-County Transitway connection critical to maximizing the use of transit, which, in turn, can provide an alternative to automobile congestion and support

redevelopment. Plans for the redevelopment of the Silver Spring Transit Center have been coordinated to ensure that sufficient space is provided for station facilities for the Bi-County Transitway.

*Flower Village* - The Flower Village Center, located at the intersection of Piney Branch Road and Flower Avenue in Montgomery County, is a location with Commercial Revitalization Overlay Zone (CROZ) zoning. The *Takoma*

*Park Master Plan* (2000) concepts include enhancing the pedestrian environment and traffic calming measures. The plan favors preservation of the neighborhood and encourages community-oriented retail with an emphasis on transit and trail connections.

*Takoma/Langley Crossroads* - Takoma/Langley Crossroads is located south of University Boulevard at New Hampshire Avenue, within what is known as "Maryland's International Corridor" due to the area's strong ethnic diversity. The zoning for this area is also CROZ. The *Takoma Park Master Plan* (2000), envisions a major community commercial center and transit terminal. The Takoma/Langley Crossroads Community Development Corporation (CDC) is leading an effort to improve the conditions of the existing strip commercial establishments located at this site. These improvements include more attractive design elements and a relocated and upgraded bus Transfer Center. The plan recognizes that even greater development could be achieved with a Bi-County Transitway route along University Boulevard along with revitalization of the existing commercial center and surrounding neighborhoods.

*College Park/Riverdale Transit District Development* - A special Transportation District Overlay Zone (TDOZ) has been established just south of the College Park Airport and adjacent

to the College Park/University of Maryland Metro Station. Prince George's County specifies that the purpose of a TDOZ is to ensure that the development of land in the vicinity of Metrorail stations maximizes transit ridership and takes advantage of the development opportunities that mass transit provides. Elements such as building heights, set backs, and density are tailored to promote pedestrian destinations within reach of transit stations, receive an increased return on the transit system investment, and improve local tax revenues. The plan includes mixed-use development with office, retail, residential, and light industrial components. The plan also incorporates open space and recreational features for which the existing Metrorail station, and the Bi-County Transitway, would improve the marketability of these concepts.

*New Carrollton Transit District Development Plan* - The TDOZ for New Carrollton includes an area extending west approximately one-half mile from the New Carrollton Metrorail Station. The plan identifies the purpose of the zone to promote and integrate development activities around Metrorail stations. The envisioned economic effects are the same as those outlined in the College Park TDOZ, namely an increased return on investment in a transit system and improved local tax revenue. Recently, large office building complexes have been built, such as the Federal Internal Revenue Service, on portions of the TDOZ closest to the Metrorail station. Future development potential will depend upon the particular alignment of the Bi-County Transitway project, which may encourage more pedestrian friendly features in this TDOZ.

#### Major Trip Generators and Activity Centers

The Bi-County Transitway project would connect regional employment, recreational, cultural, and residential areas throughout the corridor. Bethesda, Silver Spring, and College

Park are the major activity centers located in the corridor. The University of Maryland, located in College Park, is the largest employer and trip generator in Prince George's County.

As home of the National Institutes of Health, National Library of Medicine and National Naval Medical Center, Bethesda is one of the world's leading biomedical research centers. The state of Maryland designated downtown Bethesda as an Arts and Entertainment District in 2002 due to the presence of almost 200 restaurants, over 100 specialty shops, numerous art galleries, and the Discovery Trail, which highlights the public art in the Bethesda CBD.

Downtown Silver Spring is experiencing a renaissance with major projects currently underway, bringing new retail, restaurants, entertainment, office, hotel, and residential development to Silver Spring's central business district. Some of the major projects include:

- The American Film Institute (AFI), a preeminent presenter of classic, foreign and art films, has renovated the old Silver Theatre in downtown Silver Spring to its former Art Deco-style, and added two additional, state-of-the-art theaters and a large reception area. AFI hosts feature presentations, film festivals, guest directors, and more at the Silver Theatre.
- A 22-acre area of redevelopment projects is nearing completion in the heart of downtown Silver Spring with Phase I and part of Phase II open for business. The project will include new, community- and regionally-oriented shopping, a first-run movie theater complex, restaurants, office, hotel and parking facilities. The project will also include a new downtown civic building and Veteran's Plaza Park for outdoor activities and events.

- Discovery Communications, parent company for Discovery Channel, Animal Planet and other channels, has completed construction of its world headquarters facility at the corner of Georgia Avenue and Colesville Road. The facility brings nearly 1,500 employees to the heart of downtown Silver Spring. The company opened a separate facility for 400 employees in South Silver Spring in early 2001.
  - Silver Spring's Metrorail station, one of the busiest in Washington's Metro system, has been expanded to include MARC commuter rail. Plans are being prepared to redevelop the station into a multi-modal transit center with enhanced terminal and transfer facilities for Metrobus, Ride-On, MTA Commuter Bus, intercity bus, Metrorail, MARC and eventually the Bi-County Transitway. In addition, a commercial mixed-use development project will be constructed above the transit center, which will include residential units, office space, and retail shops.
- Along with these area attractions, a number of regional shopping centers are located in the corridor. Prince George's Plaza and Beltway Plaza Mall have regional appeal due to their location and diverse retail shopping opportunities.

## **NEED FOR TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS**

The need for the project is based on substantial growth projections in corridor population and employment. The increasingly congested transportation system does not have adequate capacity to accommodate either the existing or projected average daily travel demand. The lack of alternative routes to serve east-west markets exacerbates the problem. Federal air quality standards will not be attained without changes to the existing transportation infrastructure.

The Bi-County Transitway corridor is facing numerous transportation challenges as a result of limited infrastructure for east-west travel. The primary east-west travel routes, consisting of the Capital Beltway, East-West Highway (MD 410), and University Boulevard (MD 193) are heavily congested during peak periods, especially on weekends, and are unable to accommodate the increase in demand for east-west travel. Further, the difficulty of expanding highway capacity and building new roadways in built-up locations prevent connections to adjacent growth areas. With the current road and transit network best suited for downtown Washington-oriented trips, there is a longstanding and growing need for transit improvements to meet the demand for east-west travel.

The Bi-County Transitway corridor serves a major commuting population that travels to and from work in the District of Columbia, Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, and Northern Virginia suburbs. The need for improved transit services is heightened as it becomes more difficult to commute from locations with affordable housing to jobs that are dispersed throughout the region. New employment opportunities are no longer clustered in the downtown of the District of Columbia and many of the Federal functions that were traditionally located in the District have relocated to suburban locations. Although the Bi-County Transitway corridor contains a substantial population that relies on transit to reach employment and activity centers, new transit services in the corridor have been limited to bus service subject to the same roadway congestion as automobile traffic. To date, there has been no investment in fixed guideway systems or in new highways to facilitate commuting and enhance links between the development centers along radial transportation routes that cross the corridor. The Bi-County Transitway project serves parts of Montgomery and Prince George's Counties where

residents need increased mobility options to reach employment opportunities located throughout the region.

Although several modal choices (autos on highways, commuter rail, and bus service) and intermodal opportunities (including park-and-ride lots and Metrorail) are available in the Bi-County Transitway corridor, current commuting options are limited at many locations as the various modes do not connect conveniently and efficiently. Most importantly, these services still are heavily oriented to existing radial routes. In addition, these services are inconvenienced by lack of direct routes into/out of the key activity centers. There is a need for additional transit options and improved system connectivity.

The following sections discuss four major needs within the project area upon which the Bi-County Transitway purpose and need are based:

- Mobility and Accessibility
- Economic Viability of the Corridor
- System Connectivity
- Long-Term Attainment of Regional Clean Air Goals

### **Mobility and Accessibility**

Improving transit mobility and accessibility in the corridor is a key element in supporting the economic viability of the corridor. Although regional transit use is substantial, the corridor needs additional investment in a reliable east-west transit system.

### **Connection of Trip Generators and Activity Centers**

The project connects employment, residential, cultural, educational, and transportation centers in Montgomery and

Prince George's Counties, including Bethesda and Silver Spring. The Silver Spring CBD currently has approximately 5,400,000 square feet of office space, of which approximately 1,900,000 square feet is located in the core area immediately to the north and east of the Silver Spring Metrorail Station. The Silver Spring CBD contains approximately 33,900 jobs and this number is growing. The Bethesda CBD currently contains approximately 6,700,000 square feet of office space, and approximately 39,800 jobs. Substantial office, retail, and residential developments are planned, under construction, or newly completed in the Bethesda and Silver Spring CBDs. For instance, the Discovery Communications World Headquarters, a 545,420 square foot office development, was recently completed at Georgia Avenue and Colesville Road, along with other retail and cultural redevelopment projects.

Major work trip generators outside of the Bethesda and Silver Spring CBDs affecting east-west travel in the area include the National Naval Medical Center (NNMC) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) located north of Bethesda, the Rock Spring Park office complex and Montgomery Mall northwest of Bethesda, the Howard Hughes Medical Institute northeast of Bethesda, and the Walter Reed Army Medical Center Annex in the Forest Glen area north of Silver Spring. Total employment in the expanded Bethesda/Chevy Chase and Silver Spring/Takoma policy areas (not including the CBDs) consists of 48,126 and 21,607 jobs, respectively.

The University of Maryland, located in College Park, is the largest employer and trip generator in Prince George's County. Fall 2003 total enrollment included more than 35,000 students and over 12,000 University employees. The University of Maryland's strong research, academic, and athletic programs receive national recognition. This public research university generated \$5.93 in economic activity for every dollar

appropriated by the Maryland General Assembly, resulting in a statewide impact of nearly \$1.8 billion annually.<sup>1</sup> Comcast Corporation has invested in a new sports facility on the University of Maryland campus, the Comcast Center, which holds more than 15,000 spectators.

Residential concentrations north and west of Bethesda, north and east of Silver Spring, Takoma Park, Langley Park, Berwyn Heights, Greenbelt, College Park, and New Carrollton, which contain a predominance of high-density multifamily residential units, also affect travel and create additional demand in the corridor. Further, the Silver Spring Transit Center (SSTC) project will include a joint development consisting of new high-density residential and office development with approximately 250,000 square feet of office space; 250,000 square feet of residential apartments; 50,000 square feet of retail space; and a 150,000 square foot hotel.

The proposed Bi-County Transitway Silver Spring station would be located at the currently planned expanded SSTC. The expanded SSTC would be a full service intermodal transit center incorporating terminals and pedestrian connections between Metrorail, Metrobus, Ride-On, MTA Commuter Bus, University of Maryland shuttle buses, MTA express bus services, Greyhound, and Maryland Rail Commuter (MARC) service. The SSTC design also includes space for the Bi-County Transitway project, which will be designed with convenient connections to all other modes accommodated at the SSTC. The intermodal center is planned to accommodate up to 38 bus bays (including spaces for intercity buses and outside staging for 5 buses), up to 47 kiss-and-ride spaces and

up to 12 taxi spaces. The Bi-County Transitway project would serve the following travel markets:

- Regional access to employment, entertainment, cultural, and shopping opportunities in the greater Bethesda and Silver Spring areas.
- Linkages to educational opportunities at the University of Maryland College Park campus, Montgomery College Silver Spring campus, and the Metrorail Green Line at College Park.
- Trips from north and south on either branch of the Metrorail Red Line.
- Linkages to the wide range of transit services accommodated at the Silver Spring Transit Center (SSTC).
- Linkages to existing and proposed residential areas in Bethesda, Silver Spring, Takoma Park, Langley Park, Greenbelt, College Park, Riverdale Park, and New Carrollton containing high percentages of multifamily dwellings and apartment units
- Commuters and recreational users utilizing bike/trail connections.
- Linkages to the Metrorail Orange Line, MTA Commuter Bus, MARC commuter rail and AMTRAK intercity rail services at New Carrollton.

The major trip generators and activity centers in the corridor, and the dense residential and employment uses will benefit from the Bi-County Transitway project. Travel demand will increase with the development occurring within the corridor. The Bi-County Transitway project addresses the increased demand for east-west travel options and provides needed

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.umd.edu/university/>

convenient linkages among the employment, retail, educational, and recreational opportunities available in the corridor.

### Travel Time

Table 2 – Annual Delay in Hours

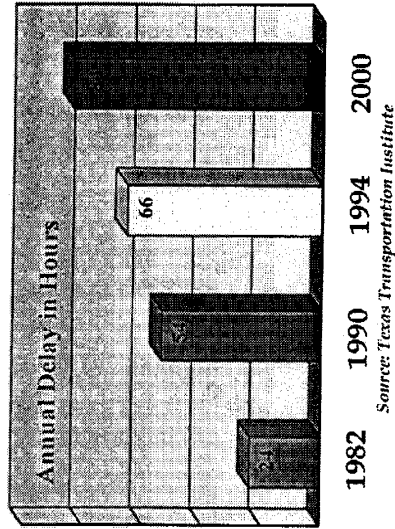


Table 2 presents the Texas Transportation Institute results as contained in the *Urban Mobility Measure and Issues* report (TTI, 2002) which stated, that in 2000 the average round-trip peak period commuter in the Washington, D.C. area lost 84 hours due to traffic delays (an annual person hours of delay of 123,190 hours) ranking 4<sup>th</sup> in the nation. This is more than 1.5 times the 54 hours lost just 10 years before. Reducing travel time is an important element in encouraging people to use transit to access employment, retail, and recreational opportunities. Therefore, transit expansion projects like the Bi-County Transitway are essential to reducing travel time by providing reliable transportation services, at reasonable travel times.

### Travel Patterns

Currently, one-fourth of trips in the region involve travel to and from jobs. These commuting trips are generally twice as long as non-work trips and tend to occur at the same time of day and to go to the same places on a daily basis. This work travel has a major impact on congestion problems in the region. However, most daily travel is not related to work. Three-fourths of trips are not for commuting. When people are not commuting, they are traveling for a variety of reasons – picking up children at school, going to movies, eating at restaurants, or shopping for groceries. The locations of these activities are often more spread out than job sites, and this dispersion affects the kind of transportation services and facilities needed. (*A Citizens Guide To Transportation Decision-Making in the Washington Metropolitan Region: On Travel Patterns in the Region*, MWCOC, April 2002).

As the urban core of Washington, D.C. continues to be the center of economic and tourist activities attracting visitors from across the globe, investment in public transit projects is imperative to the region's socioeconomic vitality. Twenty-five years from now the core will continue to have the greatest concentration of jobs in the region; however, increasingly people are traveling from one suburb to another. Two out of three daily trips in 2025 are expected to be suburb-to-suburb travel. A contributing factor may be dual-worker families that have job destinations that are spread out.

### Travel Choices and the Environment

The 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments (CAAA) require the Metropolitan Washington region to adopt a structured, multi-year approach to attaining Federal clean air standards. Although there are many provisions in the CAAA, the major focus for the region will be on reducing mobile sources such as

automobile usage. Almost half of the emissions that cause ozone in the Washington region come from cars, trucks, and buses. According to MWCOC analyses, motor vehicle emission burdens are projected to increase substantially by 2025. Reducing single-occupancy-vehicle usage is an important component of achieving clean air quality standards.

Due to air quality concerns in the Metropolitan Washington region, there is a need to reduce automobile travel in this congested corridor by shifting trips from automobiles to public transportation. Public transportation services should be provided at an affordable cost but with high levels of comfort, convenience, and speed. Reduction of localized and regional air pollution, improved safety through design of the transit routes and services, use of clean-fueled transit vehicles and reduction of congested traffic operations are needed to foster continued growth in economic development and improved livability in the corridor. The Bi-County Transitway project supports local and regional planning goals for air quality improvements by increasing transit use, providing an alternative to automobile usage between Bethesda and New Carrollton, and enhancing connectivity within the region.

### Access for Transit-Oriented Populations

The corridor contains large minority and low-income populations, especially in the Silver Spring and Langley Park areas, who rely heavily on transit for access to jobs. Takoma-Langley Crossroads, an area centered on the intersection of University Boulevard and New Hampshire Avenue, contains the busiest non-Metrorail bus stop in Montgomery County. While the bus stop serves both Montgomery and Prince George's County residents, it is located in Montgomery County and handles terminal operations for the County's Ride-On bus system. Each weekday, bus routes using the Takoma-Langley

Crossroads bus stop carry more than 12,000 passengers.<sup>2</sup> The area served by the bus stop is home to about one-third of the County's Latino population. The bus stop at Takoma-Langley Crossroads serves a large amount of day laborers; and issues, such as bus overcrowding and pedestrian safety are among the most serious concerns at this site. The 2000 Takoma Park Master Plan and a County Task Force, initiated in July 2001, recommended that a new Takoma-Langley Transit Center be located in the crossroads area which would be user-friendly and offer immediate and near-term bus overcrowding relief. A station in the vicinity of Takoma-Langley Crossroads is considered an important element of the Bi-County Transitway project and would significantly improve public transit access to employment opportunities throughout the corridor.

### **Economic Viability of the Corridor**

The Bi-County Transitway project seeks to provide east-west transit service in a corridor that contains key activity areas and employment centers, as well as communities that need economic stimulation. Bethesda plays a major role in local and regional economic markets. Current planning actions seek to increase the diversity of employment, shopping, and entertainment opportunities to serve current and future workers and residents. Silver Spring, which is also one of the most important business and residential centers in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, is experiencing a strong revitalization exhibited by the over \$400 million that is being invested in renovations and new construction. Other areas such as Takoma Park, Langley Park, Riverdale and New Carrollton are in need

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.geocities.com/larry\\_bassett/public\\_transit/langley/](http://www.geocities.com/larry_bassett/public_transit/langley/)



of economic stimulation. The University of Maryland is another unique area, which would benefit from improved accessibility.

### Expansion and Revitalization of Businesses

The Bi-County Transitway project will complement and support ongoing revitalization efforts currently underway. The Bethesda CBD is already densely developed. The transit-oriented policies of Montgomery County have combined to encourage continuing infill and redevelopment. Silver Spring is a regional transit hub. Frequent and reliable transit service is important for providing access and support for the planned mixed-use development in the Silver Spring CBD. Other redevelopment initiatives at Takoma Park, Langley Park, College Park, and New Carrollton rely on the existing and future transit components serving the community to support economic development plans.

With the implementation of the Bi-County Transitway, travel choices and opportunities in the corridor would drastically increase, thus improving the efficiency of transit and aiding those who cannot commute via automobile. Transit enables new and varied traffic patterns to match the changing geography of economic activity. By connecting various routes of the existing Metrorail system, the Bi-County Transitway will provide an essential link in an east-west corridor, thereby creating an alternative to driving and linking suburban job centers, as well as improving connections between suburban residential areas and employment hubs.

In addition to providing linkages to job centers, the Bi-County Transitway would create opportunities for economic development in the region. WMATA's development activities have played a key role in local economic development efforts and in helping to shape better use of land around Metro

stations. Since WMATA's land development program was initiated in 1976, the agency has advanced 56 separate, revenue-producing joint development projects. These projects have generated more than \$129 million in revenue for Metro, an amount that is expected to almost double to \$214 million in the next five years.

There is quantitative evidence supporting the concept that there are relationships between transit expansion and economic development, particularly in the Washington, D.C. region. Transit improvements generate employment and economic growth. Based on research conducted by the Center for Transportation Excellence, Washington, DC's Metrorail has generated nearly \$15 billion in surrounding private development. WMATA projects that this amount is likely to double to as much as \$30 billion in the next 10-12 years. Between 1980 and 1990 alone, 40% of the region's retail and office space was built within walking distance of a Metro station. A study by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), *The Benefits of Public Transportation, Essential Support for a Strong Economy* found that, by 2010, the Metrorail in northern Virginia was expected to generate \$2.1 billion in additional Commonwealth tax revenues (\$1.2 billion net); over the period 1995 to 2010, the Commonwealth is projected to achieve a 19.2% return on its contribution to Metrorail.

### **System Connectivity**

As discussed in the section on Mobility and Accessibility, suburb-to-suburb travel is increasing in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area. Despite this trend, current transit plans give priority to completing and maintaining the radial transit services linking suburban areas to the regional core. Little provision has been made for the addition of circumferential



connections to the radial network. Most of the region's existing transportation arteries - including the Metrorail system - were built to serve travel between the suburbs and downtown Washington, D.C. The Bi-County Transitway project addresses the need for transit linkages within an east-west corridor and would facilitate connectivity between suburban areas.

WMATA, the second largest rail transit system and the sixth largest bus network in the United States, operates 12,490 bus stops and has an average 163,565 weekday scheduled miles. Metrorail's total system extends 103 miles and when the current expansion projects are completed in late 2004, the system will be 106 miles with 86 stations. Because of the importance of this corridor within the Metropolitan Washington region, there is a need for continual improvement of service. These needs include improvement in the predictability, reliability, speed, and quality of transit service despite adverse effects of rising traffic congestion. The Bi-County Transitway project would provide substantially better connectivity to Metrorail and Metrobus as well as to other services, such as connecting to Ride-On and TheBus local service.

The Bi-County Transitway would connect with rail and bus services at the Metrorail Red Line in both Bethesda and Silver Spring, the Green Line in College Park and the Orange Line in New Carrollton.

Increased system connectivity is key to maximizing the benefits of a transit system. Where transit users are able to access a wide variety of destinations in different directions, ridership will be higher as the system is able to meet the needs of a wider range of riders. By providing a transit network with convenient connections the investment in transit is most cost effective.

## Enhancement of Communities and Support of Public Policies

This transitway is needed not only to provide basic transportation, but also to enhance existing communities and to support public policies at the Federal, State and local levels.

The transitway is needed to enhance existing residential and mixed-use communities, particularly in East Silver Spring and Takoma Park. A well-designed transitway will contribute significantly to an upgrade in the character and identity of several key communities: Takoma Langley Crossroads, the International Corridor in general, and Long Branch University Boulevard, which is a primary candidate for a portion of the transitway alignment, is currently a wide and unattractive highway that is a barrier. It is currently an unappealing place to access transit. A highly visible transitway with associated improvements will transform this corridor. With the implementation of other policies, it will help to greatly improve community character and identity in key communities along its length.

The transitway is needed to support and implement other public policies, including the State of Maryland's Priority Places Strategy and the Federal Clean Air Goals for the region.

The State Priority Places Strategy has a strong emphasis on "restoring and protecting quality of life in Maryland's existing communities through the revitalization of established com-



munities across the State”:<sup>3</sup> This is captured in a series of goals established by the State. The transitway is needed to achieve the following State goals:

**Community Revitalization** – *protect the investments made in older communities and direct new investments to these established areas.* The transitway serves a string of established communities: Bethesda, Silver Spring, Long Branch, Takoma Langley Crossroads, College Park, New Carrollton. As stated earlier in this report in the section on Planned Redevelopment Opportunities (page 7) and Economic Viability of the Corridor (page 14), several communities along the transitway are either undergoing redevelopment or are targeted for future revitalization efforts. Silver Spring is undergoing major revitalization and the transitway would further support this ongoing effort. Long Branch is in need of revitalization, and current local efforts include a Task Force to identify problems and solutions. Takoma Langley Crossroads is also the focus of revitalization/economic development efforts.

**Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)** – *build livable communities that provide people with a range of transportation options and reduce congestion, while maximizing the existing investments in transit.* The transitway will serve several existing communities where transit-oriented development is already in place (Bethesda, Silver Spring) and will serve other existing communities, such as Takoma Langley Crossroads, where redevelopment associated with future transit stations can be achieved by following TOD principles.

The CAAA of 1990 and the Final Conformity Rule (40 CFR Parts 51 and 93) direct the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to implement environmental policies and regulations that will ensure acceptable levels of air quality. The CAAA and the Final Conformity Rule affect proposed transportation projects such as the Bi-County Transitway project. According to Title I, Section 101, Paragraph F of the amendments, “No federal agency may approve, accept or fund any transportation plan, program or project unless such plan, program, or project has been found to conform to any applicable State Implementation Plan (SIP) in effect under this act.” The Final Conformity Rule defines conformity as follows:

“Conformity to an implementation plan’s purpose of eliminating or reducing the severity and number of violations of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) and achieving expeditious attainment of such standards; and that such activities will not:

- i. cause or contribute to any new violation of any NAAQS in any area;
- ii. increase the frequency or severity of any existing violation of any NAAQS in any area; or
- iii. delay timely attainment of any NAAQS or any required interim emission reductions or other milestones in any area.”

The portion of the Bi-County Transitway between Bethesda and Silver Spring located in the Master Plan alignment is already in the conformity transportation network for the Washington region.

<sup>3</sup> State of Maryland, Office of the Governor, Press Release – Department of Planning, October 9, 2003 “Governor Ehrlich Establishes Priority Places Strategy Executive Order – Vision for Smart Growth includes redevelopment and revitalization”

Section 107 of the 1977 CAAA requires that EPA publish a list of all geographic areas in compliance with the NAAQS, as well

as those not in attainment of the NAAQS. Areas not in compliance with the NAAQS are termed non-attainment areas. Areas that have insufficient data to make a determination are unclassified, and are treated as attainment areas until proven otherwise. Areas that were designated as non-attainment when the CAAA were implemented but have since attained compliance with the standards are classified as "maintenance areas". The designation of an area is made on a pollutant-by-pollutant basis.

Montgomery County was classified, between 1992 and 1995, as a serious non-attainment area for carbon monoxide (CO). It was reclassified as a maintenance area on March 3, 1996. The County is currently classified as serious non-attainment area for ozone (O3). On January 3, 2001, the EPA finalized its approval of the DC-MD-VA Revised Phase II Attainment Plan. EPA also approved the extension of the 1-hour standard attainment date to 2005. On July 2, 2002, the US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit ruled that the EPA did not have the authority to grant the area this extension. EPA has not yet decided if it will appeal this decision. The MWCOG has begun work to find ways to bring the region's air quality into attainment with federal standards.

Montgomery County and Prince George's County are classified as in attainment for particulate matter (PM<sub>10</sub>), lead (Pb), and nitrogen oxide (NO<sub>x</sub>).

The Bi-County Transitway supports local and regional planning goals for air quality improvements by increasing transit use, providing an alternative to automobile usage between Bethesda and New Carrollton, and enhancing connectivity within the region.

