

State Designated TOD Narrative

Silver Spring Downtown

The Silver Spring downtown is one of four Central Business Districts (CBDs) in Montgomery County, Maryland and includes two transit stations, the Paul Sarbanes Transit Center which co-hosts the Silver Spring hub on the eastern segment of the Red Line, the MARC Brunswick Line, and the BRT and Purple Line station. An additional Purple Line station is located at the Silver Spring Library near the civic building. Downtown Silver Spring converges on three major state roadways including Colesville Road (MD 29), Georgia Avenue (MD 97) and East-West Highway (MD 410) and is adjacent to the northern boundary of the District of Columbia. The US 29 Bus Rapid Transit (BRT/Flash) is currently in service from Burtonsville to the Silver Spring Transit Center with an additional stop at Fenton Street. The BRT route on Georgia Avenue is planned from Olney to Montgomery College at the DC line. Four stops are planned for this route through the downtown area.

The Capital Crescent Trail (CCT), a major bicycle and pedestrian trail under construction, will follow the Purple Line through the heart of the downtown running east to west and connecting other major hubs. The CCT transitions to the Metropolitan Branch Trail (MBT) at the Transit Center, connecting cyclists, walkers and rollers to Union Station in the District. Other bicycle infrastructure investments are planned or have been implemented.

This downtown embodies Transit-Oriented Development strategies and components including some of the tallest heights and densities in Montgomery County and a diverse mix of residential and commercial land uses, including biohealth, office, institutional, industrial, hospitality, retail and housing. The downtown hosts some major employers, such as NOAA and United Therapeutics, and major cultural attractions, including the AFI Silver Theatre and The Fillmore.

Silver Spring Downtown – Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Justification

Project Area: Silver Spring Downtown, Montgomery County, Maryland

Lead Agency: Montgomery County Planning Department (M-NCPPC) + MCDOT

Transit Assets: Metrorail Red Line, MARC Brunswick Line, Purple Line (under construction), BRT/Flash, Local/Regional Bus Network

TOD Type: High-Intensity, Mixed-Use, Multimodal Urban Center

1. Strategic Transit Access

- Silver Spring is one of the region’s most significant multimodal hubs, anchored by the Paul S. Sarbanes Transit Center, which integrates:
 - Metrorail Red Line
 - MARC Brunswick Line
 - Purple Line
 - Flash Bus Rapid Transit
 - Local and regional bus services
 - CCT and MBT trail connections
- The US 29 BRT/Flash line, providing high-frequency service to the Transit Center with an additional stop at Fenton Street.

- A Georgia Avenue BRT service is planned, with four stations proposed within the downtown.
- All TOD parcels fall within a five-to-ten-minute walkshed of heavy rail, commuter rail, light rail, and BRT.

2. Alignment With Adopted Plans

- Silver Spring is designated as a major CBD in Montgomery County's General Plan and is supported by multiple adopted plans emphasizing transit-oriented growth.
 - [*Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan \(2022\)*](#)
 - [*Greater Lyttonsville Sector Plan \(2017\)*](#)
 - [*Eastern Silver Spring Communities Plan \(in progress\)*](#)
- Local and regional plans prioritize:
 - High-density, mixed-use development
 - Pedestrian-oriented design
 - Reduced auto dependence
 - Integration of rail, BRT, and trail networks
- The district is a priority area for public-sector investment and multimodal infrastructure improvements.
- The district is designated a Regional Activity Center by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOCG)

3. TOD-Supportive Land Use and Development Patterns

- Silver Spring exhibits some of the tallest building heights and highest densities in Montgomery County.
- Land use patterns include:
 - Biohealth and life sciences
 - Office and institutional uses
 - Industrial and maker spaces
 - Hospitality and entertainment
 - Retail and restaurant clusters
 - A substantial and growing residential base
- Major employers and cultural anchors include NOAA, United Therapeutics, AFI Silver Theatre, and The Fillmore.
- The district's compact, mixed-use form supports high transit ridership and efficient infrastructure utilization.

4. Active Transportation Connectivity

- The Capital Crescent Trail (CCT) runs through the downtown, paralleling the Purple Line corridor and connecting Silver Spring to Bethesda and regional trail networks.
- At the Transit Center, the CCT transitions into the Metropolitan Branch Trail (MBT), providing a continuous bicycle and pedestrian route to Union Station in Washington, D.C.
- This integration of rail, BRT, bus, and trail systems positions Silver Spring as one of the most multimodal districts in the region.
- Investment in bicycle infrastructure.

5. Equity and Community Benefit

- Silver Spring is one of the most diverse communities in the Washington metropolitan area, with multilingual households and a wide range of income levels.
- TOD investment advances equity goals by:
 - Expanding access to high-frequency transit for underserved populations
 - Supporting affordable housing near transit
 - Improving pedestrian and bicycle safety
 - Enhancing access to jobs, education, and essential services
- The district’s demographic profile aligns strongly with federal Justice40 and state equity priorities.

6. Economic Development Potential

- Silver Spring is a major employment center with significant redevelopment capacity.
- TOD investment will:
 - Catalyze infill development and adaptive reuse
 - Support small business retention and expansion
 - Strengthen the biohealth and innovation ecosystem
 - Increase commercial and residential tax base
 - Leverage existing public infrastructure investments

7. Readiness and Implementation Capacity

- Montgomery County and M-NCPPC have extensive experience delivering complex, multimodal planning and development initiatives.
- The district benefits from investments in active transportation:
 - Adopted plans with clear TOD policies
 - Active Purple Line construction
 - Operational BRT and planned BRT expansion
 - Zoning that supports high-density mixed-use development
 - Strong interagency coordination with MDOT, WMATA, and Montgomery County DOT
- These factors demonstrate a high level of readiness for TOD-related funding and implementation.

Summary

Silver Spring Downtown meets key state and federal TOD criteria, including multimodal access, supportive land use, equity benefits, economic development potential, and strong implementation readiness. Investment in this district will advance regional mobility, support sustainable growth, and deliver long-term benefits to residents, businesses, and the broader metropolitan area.

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