

# Expanding Rural Transit Options:

## WASHINGTON COUNTY BUS FACILITY PROJECT

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION



2025  
BUILD Grant Application



## Project Description

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) Maryland Transit Administration (MTA), in partnership with Washington County, is seeking **\$2,832,390** in BUILD planning funds to complete final design of a new administrative, maintenance, and transit vehicle storage facility in Washington County, Maryland. The **Expanding Rural Transit Options: Washington County Bus Facility Project** (the Project) will enable Washington County Transit (WCT) to meet the demands of the growing Hagerstown-area population and a burgeoning industrial and logistics job base by providing safe, reliable, and community-responsive transit services.

Upgrading and expanding WCT's existing transit facility will be a vital step in ensuring the sustainable and equity-focused growth of the rapidly growing Hagerstown area. Over the next two decades, Washington County is expected to experience population growth of approximately 6% to 9% per decade, representing an overall growth rate of 16% from 2020 to 2040. Notably, the growth rate of Hagerstown is approximately 7% higher than the Maryland average. It is therefore crucial for WCT to plan now to provide increasing levels of transit service for the rapidly growing ridership base.

The population growth, particularly in the city of Hagerstown, has also fueled economic growth. Between 2024 and 2050, the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) projects Washington County will add over 13,000 new jobs, an overall increase of more than 13%. Because Washington County is projected to grow, both in population and economic opportunity, it is imperative that WCT plan to increase transit service levels throughout its service area. WCT's [2020 Transit Development Plan](#) anticipates ridership to grow by at least 30% by 2030, which will further strain the already limited operational resources the agency is able to store and maintain in its existing facility.

WCT is the primary public transit provider in Washington County, alongside MTA, which provides commuter bus services connecting to economic hubs throughout Maryland. WCT operates a fixed-route system consisting of nine routes, along with operating Washington County's only paratransit and demand-responsive service, the Job Opportunity Access Program (JOBS Shuttle). In Fiscal Year (FY) 2023, WCT's fixed-route system exceeded ridership of nearly 350,000 trips, which has been on an upward trend since FY 2020.

Since 1989, the physical dimensions of WCT's existing bus facility have remained the same, despite the population it serves having grown by nearly one third. To provide effective and efficient transit service throughout Washington County, WCT has determined its existing bus facility requires at least 20,000 additional square feet, encompassing space for administrative offices, new maintenance facilities, and more indoor storage for the growing fleet of buses. Through a robust public engagement process, the agency has identified key improvements to meet the needs of the community, including new routes to key employment centers, extended service in the evenings, and added Sunday service, as well as technology and customer experience upgrades. Each of the planned service enhancements will require WCT to upgrade, expand, and modernize the existing facility.

## Detailed Statement of Work

The Project will pave the way for targeted and necessary improvements to WCT's existing bus facility, which will enable the agency to meet the goals and objectives outlined in the [2020 Transit Development Plan](#). MTA, on behalf of WCT, is requesting BUILD funding to complete final design and *National Environmental Policy Act* (NEPA) in preparation for construction activities. Improvements and capacity enhancements align into four primary categories, all of which are designed to ensure WCT has the adequate space and resources to deliver increasing levels of transit service, as Hagerstown and regional economy continues to grow:

**Fleet Storage:** In its 2020 Transit Development Plan, WCT identified three long-term improvements that will increase the number of transit vehicles needed in revenue service. The improvements include





the introduction of Sunday service, a new route (Hagerstown to Boonesboro), and system-wide evening service. The Project seeks to more-than-double the current vehicle storage space, ensuring WCT can accommodate the new buses needed to provide high-quality service throughout the Hagerstown area.

**Maintenance:** The Project will also enhance and modernize the agency’s maintenance operations as WCT plans an expansion and reconfiguration of service bays, parts storage, wash systems, administrative offices, and functional equipment placements.

**Administration and Job Creation:** Because WCT plans to introduce new technologies and transit services in the coming years, the agency will also substantially expand administrative spaces within the new facility. The expansion will include new space for cubicles/workstations, conference and meeting rooms, and a new training room, all to support the everyday operations of the agency. There are approximately 45 employees supporting WCT. A new facility would create one new full-time position and nine new part-time roles, including new operators and maintenance workers.

**Resilience:** Based on the environmental screening analysis, preliminary designs of the proposed facility include over 8,000 square feet of new bioretention facilities. The new facilities will prevent harmful pollutants (such as cleaners and fuel) from contaminating local waterways, in addition to aligning with local and state regulations.

In 2024, WCT completed an initial needs assessment to understand which elements in an expanded facility would be necessary to accommodate not only existing service, but also the space and new equipment that will be required to meet future transit demand throughout Washington County. Plans for the expanded facility are intended to facilitate WCT operations through 2050, guided by the Hagerstown/Eastern Panhandle Metropolitan Planning Organization’s (HEPMPO’s) [Direction 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan](#). Table 1 outlines the additional space required to fulfill WCT’s future and current service objectives.

**Table 1. WCT Facility Spatial Requirements (Present to 2050)**

Facility Component	Existing Space (square feet)	Needed Space (square feet)	Required Area Increase
Administration	2,314	5,230	126%
Maintenance	5,191	6,882	33%
Interior Vehicle Storage	7,715	24,458	217%
Total Building Area	15,220	36,570	140%
Stormwater Management	0	8,000	New stormwater management facilities will be constructed as part of the facility expansion.

WCT anticipates the proposed facility expansion will qualify for a categorical exemption, identified in [Code of Federal Regulations \(CFR\), Title 23, Chapter I, Part 771](#). The Project will be subject to the City of Hagerstown’s stormwater management regulations, which will require substantial investment in new stormwater management facilities to be included in the final design.

### Transportation Challenges

Since 1989, the physical dimensions of WCT’s only maintenance and storage facility have remained unchanged. During the same time period, the population of Washington County has grown by nearly one third (from 1989 to 2023). The agency has increased transit service to accommodate a rapidly growing population and the increased demand for affordable transportation options. HEPMPO forecasts, that by 2050, the economy of the MPO’s region is expected to more than double—growing by an additional \$36.1 million in gross domestic product. The fastest-growing industry of the next 25 years



is expected to be food service workers, which will require new transit options and service patterns to ensure every Washington County resident, particularly in disadvantaged communities, are able to access and benefit from the region's growing economic opportunity ([HEPMPO Regional Freight Plan \[2023\]](#)).

WCT's service area encompasses the entirety of Washington County, which is made up of primarily rural communities. As of the 2020 Census, the urban area including Hagerstown is below the population threshold required to be designated an urbanized area (population of 197,557 in Hagerstown and nearby small towns). The relatively dense areas in and around Hagerstown receive the majority of transit services. However, WCT also provides affordable transit and paratransit options to the rural communities of the county as well. Providing transit service throughout rural areas requires special attention to resource allocation, as the distance between bus stops strains the agency's operating resources.

To effectively serve the growing population and employment base of Washington County, WCT must increase transit service levels. However, the agency is constrained by its current facility, which cannot currently support expanded service and the use of alternative fuel vehicles. By total area, the agency will require over 20,000 square feet of additional space for vital sectors such as administration, maintenance, and fleet storage. Because of the age of the facility, issues, such as the larger size of modern buses and equipment, have hastened the need for an expanded facility. WCT is also acutely aware of the need to begin transitioning its existing bus fleet (consisting only of diesel and gasoline models) to more sustainable variants, such as battery-electric and compressed natural gas buses, which is not feasible given the agency's existing spatial constraints.

### The Solution: How the Project Addresses the Transportation Challenges

To meet existing and future transit demand in Washington County, WCT must invest in facility expansion. The current facility is strategically located, proximate to the economic core of Hagerstown; however, its spatial constraints prevent WCT from achieving goals defined in the agency's current Transit Development Plan (2020):

- Enhancing on-time performance (short term)
- Hiring additional staff (medium term)
- Incorporating new routes currently operated by other transit providers (medium term)
- Introducing Sunday and evening service (long term)
- Creating new routes to serve transit-dependent populations and economic growth areas (long term)

The improvements will make a substantial improvement in quality of life for the transit-dependent communities of Washington County, enabling more people to access bus routes and rely on the timeliness of service. The Project will also address the current inconvenience of limited service hours that prevent community members from accessing job opportunities that require work on Sundays and into the evenings. WCT anticipates overall system ridership to grow by at least 30% before 2030, and the Project will enable the agency to provide higher-quality and more convenient, accessible, and affordable transportation to a continually growing number of residents and riders.

WCT has already begun planning for service expansions to equitably serve areas of growth within the county, such as new routes to the transit-dependent communities within Boonesboro. The agency's upcoming proposals also include new transit service to the west of Hagerstown and to Sharpsburg, which are experiencing growth in the manufacturing sector. The Project will enable WCT to be responsive to new developments and growth areas throughout the county, positing WCT to support the influx of new jobs that are expected in Washington County over the next 25 years.



## Project Background and History

Located less than 1 mile away from Downtown Hagerstown, WCT's existing transit facility was originally constructed as a car dealership (Hoffman Chevy; Figure 1) until the site was acquired by the Washington County Government in 1974. The acquisition of the strategically located parcel enabled Washington County to convert the existing structure and surrounding parking lots into a transit-focused facility.

In 1989, with a growing local population and increasing demand for transit service, Washington County completed a substantial expansion of the facility. The expansion was focused on increasing the transit agency's capacity for vehicle storage and maintenance and optimizing the operational efficiency and aesthetic appeal of the building. Almost 20 years later, in 2009, the facility underwent a comprehensive renovation that modernized administrative offices, maintenance areas, and vehicle storage enhancements.

Since the 1970s, MTA has provided technical assistance and funding support to Locally Operated Transit Systems (LOTS) across the state of Maryland. This partnership ensures local governments and local services, like WCT, may effectively access federal funding, meet federal service standards, and provide vital expertise and knowledge to support local service planning. Today, MTA supports over 20 local transit programs through its Office of Local Transit Support, which strengthens community transit services across the state.

Figure 1: WCT's Project Site in 1972 (Hoffman Chevy)



## Previously Completed Components

In 2024, WCT produced a needs analysis, the objective of which was to better understand to what extent the agency's existing facility would need to be expanded to meet its current and future operational needs. The needs analysis targeted three primary areas for improvement and expansion: administration, maintenance, and fleet storage. The analysis used both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods—a robust analysis of the site's existing conditions—while considering the projected staffing and service levels that will be needed up to 2050.

Concurrently with the needs assessment, WCT also performed preliminary environmental screening of the Project. The environmental screening memorandum indicates there are no substantial obstacles to the proposed facility expansion by studying components such as land use and zoning, stormwater compliance, hazardous waste regulations, water resources, and threatened or endangered species within the Project area.

To maximize the efficiency of the expanded facility, WCT has determined that the public alleyway that bisects the existing facility (separating the administrative offices from the vehicle storage and maintenance lot) will need to be closed to the public. The alleyway area is integral to any potential expansion because its closure would facilitate the expansion of critical infrastructure. In September 2024, Washington County submitted a Quit-Claim deed to the Hagerstown City Council.

## Other Transportation Infrastructure Investments

With an annual ridership exceeding 400,000 trips, the success of WCT is vital to the continued development and growth of the region. The [visionHagerstown 2035](#) comprehensive plan outlines



multiple implementation actions that will have a direct impact on public transit in the Hagerstown area. These actions include a comprehensive review of multimodal facilities and their effectiveness, evaluation of commuter bus service (provided by MTA) with the goal of adding additional commuter services, and expanding the city's pedestrian and bicycle network, which will improve nonmotorized access to existing and future transit options.

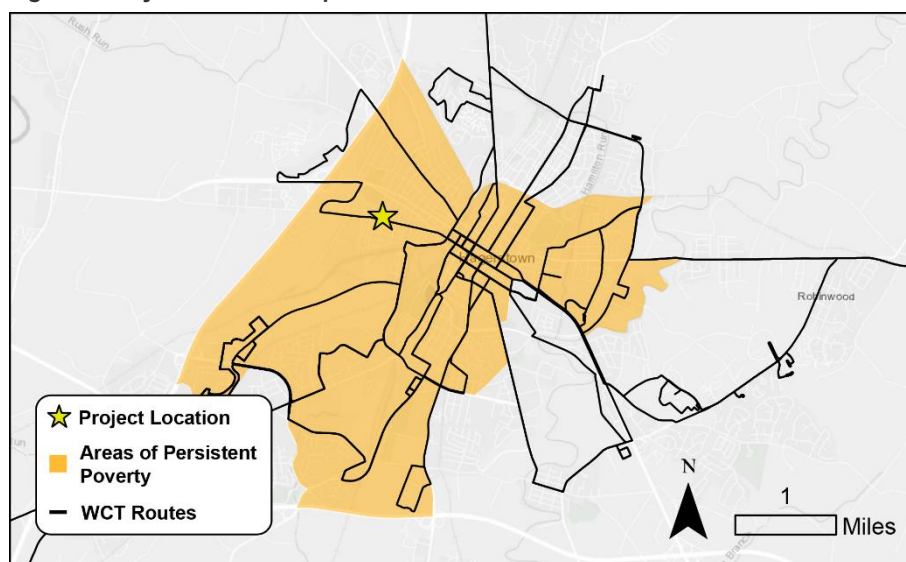
The MDOT State Highway Administration (SHA) is also prioritizing multimodal access and safety throughout recent projects in Washington County. Notably, as part of MDOT SHA's [Pedestrian Safety Action Plan](#) (PSAP) program, the administration has identified US Highway 40 (US-40), which stretches east to west throughout Washington County, traversing Downtown Hagerstown, for targeted safety improvements. MDOT SHA, in coordination with HEPMPO, the City of Hagerstown, and WCT, has begun the public engagement process to better understand which multimodal improvements will have the most beneficial impact on active transportation throughout the corridor. US-40 is integral to WCT's fixed-route system because the majority of routes operate on the roadway and the agency's largest transfer hub is located directly on US-40 in Downtown Hagerstown. The Project site itself also has direct access to US-40, located less than 0.25 mile away. PSAP improvements will be coordinated with WCT to ensure transit users, who rely on active transportation infrastructure on US-40 to access the WCT system, are prioritized throughout the design.

As one of MTA's supported LOTS, WCT received consistent state funding that will ensure the agency is able to continually invest in service improvements after the facilities completion. In FY 2025 alone, WCT will receive over \$1.3 million from MTA for operating expense and over \$100,000 for capital improvements, an amount that is subject to increase based on need in future funding cycles.

## Project Location

The Project is located in Washington County, Maryland, within the city of Hagerstown, approximately 1 mile from the downtown core of the city (Figure 2). The Project is directly located within Census Tract 3.01, which was designated as an Area of Persistent Poverty in the 2020 Census. WCT services the entire geographic area of Washington County, which is home to over 155,000 residents, which is expected to have an annual growth rate of up to 9% annually, until 2050.

Figure 2: Project Location Map



Although the majority of WCT routes and transit services are within the city of Hagerstown and its surrounding suburbs, the agency has studied the needs and transit dependency of rural communities throughout the county and will be able to provide more transit service in these less-dense rural communities with enhanced operational capacity.