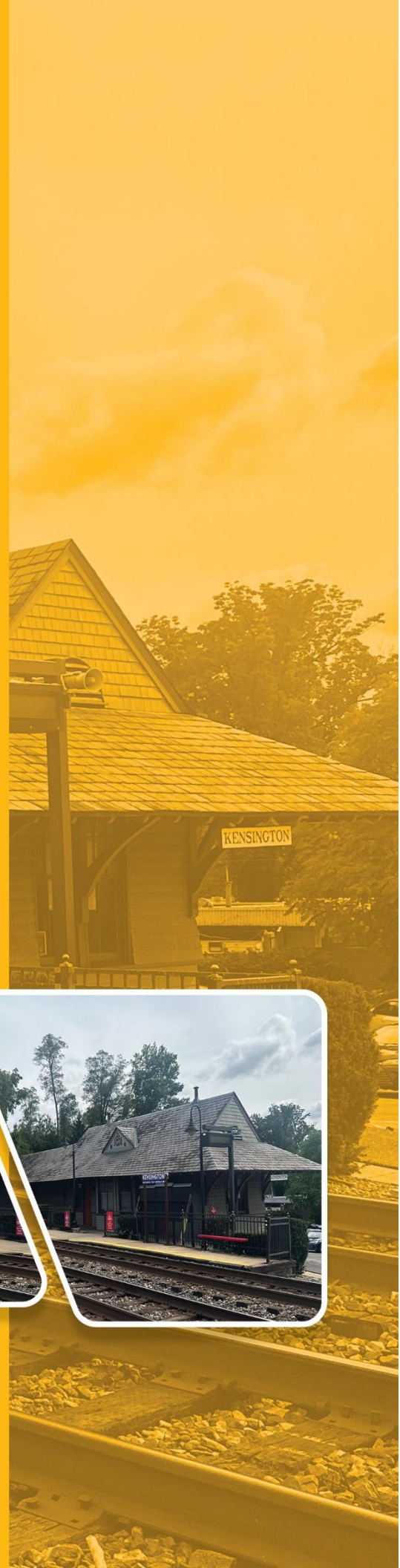
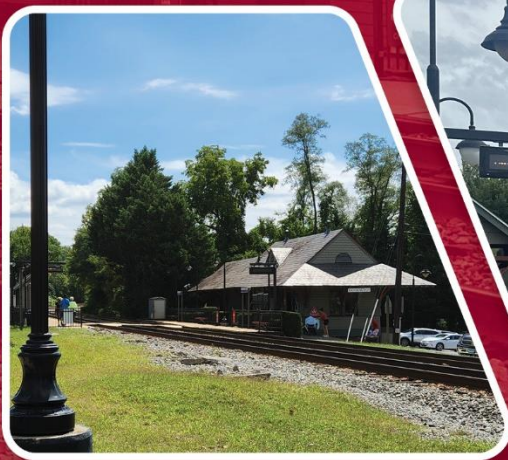


MARYLAND TRANSIT  
ADMINISTRATION (MTA)

# KENSINGTON MARC STATION OVERPASS FEASIBILITY STUDY

September 2024



## 1. Cover Page

Project Title	Kensington MARC Station Overpass Feasibility Study
Project Applicant	Maryland Transit Administration (MTA)
<b>FUNDING</b>	
Amount of RCE Program Funding Requested under this NOFO	\$150,000
Amount of Proposed Non-Federal Match	\$37,500
Does some or all of the proposed Non-Federal Match for the total project cost consist of Preliminary Engineering costs incurred before project selection (but after November 15, 2021)?	No
Other Sources of Federal funding, if applicable	None
Source(s) of Proposed Non-Federal Match	Town of Kensington, MTA
Total Project Cost	\$187,500
<b>PREVIOUS FEDERAL GRANTS</b>	
Was a Federal grant application previously submitted for this project?	No
<b>LOCATION</b>	
City(ies), County(ies), State(s) Where the Project is Located	Kensington, Montgomery County, Maryland
Is the Project Located in a Rural Area or on Tribal Lands?	No
Congressional District(s) Where the Project is Located	Maryland's 8 <sup>th</sup> Congressional District
<b>APPLICATION TRACKS/PROJECT LIFECYCLE STAGES</b>	
Application Track(s) proposed to be funded by this NOFO?	Track 1
Lifecycle Stage(s) proposed to be funded by this NOFO?	Project Planning
Current Lifecycle Stage and Anticipated completion of current Lifecycle Stage?	N/A
<b>RAIL LINE INFORMATION</b>	
Is the Project located on real property owned by someone other than the applicant?	CSX Transportation (CSXT) (ownership) Town of Kensington (ownership)
Host Railroad/Infrastructure Owner(s) of Project Assets;	CSX Transportation (CSXT)
Other impacted Railroad(s)	None
Tenant Railroad(s), if applicable	Maryland Area Rail Commuter (MARC) Amtrak
If applicable, is a <a href="#">49 U.S.C. 22905</a> -compliant Railroad Agreement executed or pending?	Pending, prior to construction activity.
<b>PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS</b>	



<p>Is the project currently programmed in ANY medium- or long-range planning document: <i>For example, State rail plan, or interregional intercity passenger rail systems planning study, State Freight Plan, TIP, STIP, Long Range Transportation Plan, State Long Range Transportation Plan, etc. ?</i></p>	<p>Yes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maryland Highway-Rail Grade Crossing State Action Plan (SAP) – pg. 8 (or pg. 296 of the PDF for the 2022 Maryland State Rail Plan) – In the Mission Statement, “Additionally, the SAP will identify specific strategies for improving safety at grade crossings and pathway crossings, including closures or grade separations.”</li> <li>• 2022 Maryland State Rail Plan – pg. 5-4 (or pg. 181 of the PDF) – In the “Reduce the number of lives lost and injuries sustained on Maryland’s rail system” Objective, the strategy states “Enhance the Highway-Rail Grade Crossing Safety Improvement Program and support grade crossing closures or grade separation.”</li> <li>• 2022 Maryland State Rail Plan – pg. 3-15 (or 152 of the PDF) – “Eliminate At-grade Pedestrian Crossings”</li> </ul>
<p><i>Is the project located on a potential corridor selected for the Corridor Identification and Development Program? <sup>9</sup></i></p>	<p>No</p>

## 2. Project Summary

The Kensington MARC Station Overpass Feasibility Study will address the pathway-grade crossing within CSXT railroad tracks located at the Kensington MARC Station. Currently, the Kensington MARC Station has one existing at-grade pedestrian and bicycle crossing between Metropolitan Avenue (MD Route 192) and Howard Avenue, two streets that serve Kensington’s historic, densely-populated economic hub. This Project will conduct a Feasibility Study that evaluates the viability of a new, ADA-accessible grade-separated pedestrian and bicycle crossing at the existing rail tracks and eliminating the existing pathway-grade crossing. It is anticipated that a new grade-separated crossing would significantly improve the safety and mobility of people between Metropolitan Avenue and Howard Avenue, improving the quality of life for the residents of Kensington and the people that use the MARC rail service.

## 3. Grant Funds, Sources and Uses of Project Funds

MTA is requesting \$150,000 in RCE program funds to support the Feasibility Study of the Kensington MARC Station Overpass, or grade-separated crossing. The Project will be met with a \$37,500 match from non-federal sources.

Task No.	Task Name (Project Component)	Cost	Percentage of total cost	Source of funds and citation, as applicable
1	Project Administration	\$37,500	20%	

	and Management (Feasibility Study)			
2	Purpose & Need Statement and Stakeholder Coordination Plan (Feasibility Study)	\$56,250	30%	
3	Alternatives Analysis (Feasibility Study)	\$93,750	50%	
Total Project Cost		\$187,500	100%	
Federal Funding Requested in this Application (RCE Program Request)		\$150,000	80%	RCE Grant Program
Total Non-Federal Match		\$37,500	20%	
Non-Federal Funding (State)		Cash: \$22,500 In-Kind: \$0	15%	MTA
Non-Federal Funding (Private Sector)		Cash: \$0 In-Kind: \$0	0%	N/A
Non-Federal Federal Funding (Local)		Cash: \$15,000 In-Kind: \$0	10%	Town of Kensington
Other Committed Federal Funding (e.g., Federal Highway Administration, congressionally directed/earmark, other FRA grant program funds— including previous RCE grants, etc.) Note: If there are multiple sources of other federal funding, please break funding down by each source		\$0	0%	
Other Pending Federal Funding Requests Amount (if any) of funding request eligible for set-aside funds as described in section B(1) (Planning, Rural/Tribal set-aside, or Highway-Rail Grade Crossing safety information and education programs)		\$0	0%	
Portion of Total Project Costs Spent in a Rural Area, if applicable Does some or all the proposed		\$0	0%	
Non-Federal Match for the total project cost consist of Preliminary Engineering costs incurred before project selection (but after November 15, 2021)?		No		

## 4. Applicant Eligibility Criteria

MDOT MTA meets the RCE grant program’s eligibility requirements as it is a state transit agency, and MTA is a division of the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT), which is a public agency established by the State of Maryland. Title 2 of the Maryland Statutes establishes MDOT as a principal department of the State government.<sup>1</sup> The Secretary of Transportation is the head of the department and is appointed by the governor. MDOT aims to provide safe, reliable, accessible, equitable, and sustainable transportation options to Marylanders across the State.

## 5. Project Eligibility Criteria

The Kensington MARC Station Overpass Feasibility Study meets the RCE grant program’s requirements because of its goal to plan a grade separation to replace the existing pathway-rail grade crossing of CSXT railroad tracks and improve the safety and mobility of people. The NOFO indicates that a “grade separation or closure, including through the use of a bridge, embankment, tunnel, or combination thereof” is an eligible project for RCE funding, and the Project is consistent with this definition.

## 6. Detailed Project Description

The Kensington MARC Station Overpass Feasibility Study is comprised of one component, which is the Feasibility Study to evaluate the viability of eliminating the existing pathway-rail grade crossing at the Kensington MARC station (U.S. DOT Crossing Number 928522P) and replacing it with a grade-separated crossing for pedestrian and bicycle traffic to cross either side of the CSXT railroad tracks.

The Project will be an opportunity to uphold the historic character of the Kensington community while introducing an important infrastructure need. The Kensington Station was built in 1891 as part of the Baltimore and Ohio (B&O) Railroad and is in the north end of the Kensington Historic District. The Kensington Historic District comprises many of the core residential and commercial buildings that populated the land when the Town of Kensington was incorporated in 1894. The United States Department of the Interior added the Kensington Historic District, including the Kensington Station, to the National Register of Historic Places in 1980. MTA appreciates the historic value of the Kensington Station and, as part of the Feasibility Study, will ensure that the future grade-separated crossing is visually appropriate to fit with the historic context of the surrounding area.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://law.justia.com/codes/maryland/transportation/title-2/subtitle-1/section-2-102/>



Figure 1 A MARC commuter rail train approaching the Kensington station is shown.

## 6.1 Project Components

**Feasibility Study** – The Feasibility Study will comprise three tasks, which include Project Administration and Management (Task 1), the development of a Purpose & Need Statement and Stakeholder Coordination Plan (Task 2), and an Alternatives Analysis (Task 3). The Feasibility Study will be an initial step towards the ultimate outcome of providing new capital improvements. The Statement of Work (SOW), provided as an attachment, specifies the tasks, subtasks, and deliverables for the Feasibility Study. Some of the pertinent key activities of the Feasibility Study will include, but not be limited to, the following:

### **Project Administration and Management (Task 1):**

- Initiate the Project in coordination with the Town of Kensington, CSXT, and other railroad operators.
- Hold a Project kickoff meeting with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) after funds are awarded and hold regularly-scheduled meetings with FRA.
- Select a qualified consultant from one of MTA's Planning and Corridor Planning contracts and issue a work order to conduct the feasibility study.
- Develop a Project Management Plan (PMP) for submittal to FRA, including a schedule and budget.

- Develop a Final Performance Report to describe the Project’s cumulative activities and describe the Project performance and achievements with respect to objectives and milestones.

### **Purpose & Need Statement and Stakeholder Coordination Plan (Task 2):**

- Develop a Preliminary Purpose & Need Statement as the basis for the Alternatives Analysis.
- Develop a Stakeholder Coordination Plan that identifies key agency contacts, civic and business groups, public officials, interest groups, transit riders and users, other stakeholders, and the public. Additionally, local, state, and Federal agencies that require consultation throughout the Feasibility Study will be identified. Public involvement activities associated with milestones for planning and conceptual engineering as well as the Alternatives Analysis will be identified.

### **Alternatives Analysis (Task 3):**

- Develop an Existing Conditions Report including the conditions of operations and infrastructure near the Kensington MARC Station and the at-grade crossing, including roadway crossing features, train operations and safety, maintenance, and engineering or capacity constraints for the current infrastructure.
- Prepare a Transportation Technical Analysis for the existing at-grade crossing.
- In coordination with the Town of Kensington, stakeholders, and FRA, develop Conceptual Engineering, including conceptual design plans and cost estimates for different grade-separated crossing alternatives that indicate the necessary infrastructure investments.
- Develop Capital Cost Estimates for designing, constructing, and implementing each grade-separated crossing alternative.
- Conduct a Preliminary Environmental Analysis to prepare the Project for advancement to subsequent Lifecycle Stages. As part of this due diligence effort, high-level qualitative assessments based on inputs such as socioeconomic conditions, floodplain mapping, wetland and forest stand delineations, threatened and endangered species surveys, and identification of historic and cultural resources will be performed.

## 6.2 Current Challenges

The Kensington MARC Station is located in historic downtown Kensington, Maryland, an area with historic landmarks, shops, restaurants, residences, and churches. The [Kensington Historic Society’s website](#) states that Kensington is the town “where the train still stops ... and the people still walk.” According to Census Transportation Planning Products (CTPP), 11.7% of trips taken in Kensington are primarily by foot. With two rail tracks running through Kensington, and potential for MTA to develop a third track along the MARC Brunswick Line, there are safety and connectivity challenges that the Project’s Feasibility Study can begin to address. Current challenges, anticipated outcomes of the Project’s intervention, and associated performance measures are discussed below.

### **1. Pedestrian and Bicyclist Safety and Wellbeing**

**Challenge:** Although the at-grade crossing directly serves the Kensington MARC Station, the crossing is the most direct link between Metropolitan Avenue (MD Route 192) and adjacent neighborhoods to the north and Howard Avenue and the Kensington Historic District to the south. Pedestrians in Kensington commonly use the existing at-grade crossing for reasons other than accessing the MARC Station. GPS



resources suggest that pedestrians and bicyclists use the at-grade rail crossing to travel between Metropolitan Avenue and Howard Avenue. People traveling by these ground transportation modes may prefer taking this route to go grocery shopping, attend a place of worship, visit a medical clinic, or eat at a restaurant rather than other grade-separated crossings that are farther away. Immediately northeast of the MARC Station is a parking lot owned by the Town of Kensington that is used by residents and visitors to access community uses, such as the Kensington Farmer’s Market immediately south of the MARC Station, requiring pedestrians to traverse the rail crossing to move between their car and their desired destination south of the railroad tracks. On Saturdays between 9 AM and 1 PM, the Kensington Farmer’s Market, with 22 vendors, receives many patrons who cross the railroad tracks to purchase food, generating steady and substantial volumes of pedestrians along the at-grade crossing and heightening the risks of incidents involving an oncoming train. Fortunately, no reported incidents have been observed for the existing at-grade crossing; however, the likelihood of an incident given the combination of an active railroad and pathway-crossing will not diminish without remediation. Additionally, as MTA continues to plan for rail system upgrades, including a possible third track along the MARC Brunswick Line, ADA compliance of the at-grade crossing may not be possible with three railroad tracks. Therefore, a new grade-separated crossing ensures that ADA compliance may be attained while factoring for the horizontal clearance needed for a potential third track underneath the overpass crossing.





*Figure 2 Pedestrians are seen using the at-grade crossing at the Kensington Station during a farmer's market event on a Saturday, even though MARC trains were not providing service.*

**Outcome:** The Feasibility Study is a proactive step to ensure that no person sustains a serious injury or death because of traveling along the at-grade crossing at an inauspicious moment. The Project would explore the potential options to create a new grade-separated crossing that removes the conflicts with rail traffic that are exposed to at-grade crossing users. According to the Third Edition of the [Highway-Rail Crossing Handbook](#), grade separation ensures the greatest degree of protection to crossing users compared to other grade crossing treatments, because the intersection of crossing modes (pedestrians, bicyclists, and other micromobility devices in the case of the at-grade crossing in Kensington) and rail traffic is eliminated. If a train may be stopped in the railroad tracks where the at-grade crossing currently exists, the presence of a grade-separated during such events would remove the incentive for pedestrians or cyclists to attempt crossing through the blocked at-grade crossing for lack of a safer route. Further, exploration of an ADA-compliant grade-separated crossing would preserve mobility and accessibility for persons with disabilities while enabling MTA to continue planning for a third track.

**Performance Measures:**

1. Reduced reports of trespassing and continued absence of incidents at the Kensington MARC Station as documented under U.S. DOT Crossing Inventory Number 928522P.

2. Reduction in complaints of blocked trains as tracked by FRA’s blocked crossing database.

## 2. Multimodal System Connectivity and Community Access

**Challenge:** The Town of Kensington is bifurcated by existing CSXT railroad tracks, with no grade-separated crossing options for people to move across the tracks for a 0.9-mile stretch between Connecticut Avenue (MD Route 185) and Stoneybrook Drive. Despite the available grade-separated crossing from Connecticut Avenue (MD Route 185), the roadway is a principal arterial with six travel lanes and left turn lanes at intersections. Sidewalks on Connecticut Avenue have minimal buffer space between the curbed edge of the sidewalk and the paved roadway, exposing pedestrians to high volumes of vehicle traffic and traffic noise. By comparison, Stoneybrook Drive’s grade separation requires a greater walking distance to many of the Town’s amenities and connecting streets only provide sporadic pedestrian facilities. The Kensington MARC Station is between the two existing grade crossings, forming a central hub that integrates multi-family housing (including senior housing), commercial uses, the Kensington Historic District, and other community amenities such as the Kensington Farmer’s Market. Many of the local streets that converge at the Kensington MARC Station and expand into the adjacent community have sidewalks and narrower streets than Connecticut Avenue (MD Route 185) that are more suitable for supporting multimodal connections based on active transportation. Yet, residents, workers, visitors, and transit riders alike may only connect to either side of the railroad tracks separating these neighborhoods over a pathway-grade crossing perpendicular to a Class I railroad that carried 28 train movements per day in 2022, including 14 passenger trains per day, with trains having typical speeds between 55 and 70 miles per hour (mph). As of 2024, the number of passenger trains per day has increased to 18 MARC trains per day and 2 Amtrak trains per day.

**Outcome:** The Feasibility Study is a first step towards a long-term solution that would eliminate the pathway-grade crossing and replace it with an ADA-compliant grade-separated overpass crossing that can greatly enhance the connectivity of pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders between communities on either side of the railroad tracks. A new grade separation ensures that people traveling to, from, and within Kensington benefit from lower automobile dependency, safer access to jobs and community amenities, and greater equity for persons with disabilities than the existing condition.

### **Performance Measures:**

1. Reduction in congestion, vehicle miles traveled, and greenhouse gas emissions through mode shifts such as auto commuters moving to commuter rail and active transportation modes.
2. Improvement of economic activity around existing uses in the Town of Kensington enabled by improved multimodal connectivity without detriment to other ground transportation modes.

## 6.3 Current and Proposed Railroad Operations

Kensington MARC Station is part of the MARC Brunswick Line, which is part of a vital, multimodal transportation network that links predominantly rural communities of western Maryland and eastern West Virginia to major employment, goods, and services centers of the mid-Atlantic region. As a tenant railroad of CSXT’s Metropolitan Subdivision, the MARC Brunswick Line near Kensington MARC Station shares track right-of-way with freight and intercity passenger rail services. According to the 2022 U.S. DOT Crossing Inventory Report, the Kensington MARC Station pathway-rail grade crossing carries an average

of 28 total train movements per day, traveling at a maximum speed of 70 mph, and with typical speeds in the crossing ranging from 55 mph to 70 mph.

The Metropolitan Subdivision is a Class I railroad and is part of CSXT's larger Central Division system, which bridges freight movement between the midwestern United States and the mid-Atlantic. Because the Port of Baltimore is in Maryland and is among the United States' busiest ports, and because CSXT's Keystone, Cumberland, and Metropolitan Subdivisions transport high volumes of commodities and finished products that channel to the Port of Baltimore, the State of Maryland is a major hub for facilitating global trade. According to the 2022 Maryland State Rail Plan, 55% of freight volume by tonnage shipped through Maryland in 2019, whereas 38% of volume by tonnage was inbound to the state in 2019. Intercity passenger rail service is provided by Amtrak, which operates one train in each direction per day along its *Capitol Limited* route with service between Chicago and Washington, D.C., via Pittsburgh and Cleveland.

The MARC commuter rail system is a multi-state operation serving Maryland, West Virginia, and Washington, DC, with 42 stations along 202 directional miles of track. The Brunswick Line has 19 stations along 88 directional miles of track, including the Frederick Branch. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2019, the Brunswick Line averaged 7,095 boardings per weekday, making it the second busiest of MARC's three lines (Penn, Camden, and Brunswick). Daily weekday boardings on the Brunswick Line rebounded from 2,374 in 2022 to 3,051 in 2023, the most since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and anticipated to continue increasing through 2024. At Kensington MARC Station, average weekday boardings rebounded from a low of 3 in June 2020 to 178 in June 2024, nearly recovering to a same-month high of 189 average weekday boardings observed in June 2019. Currently, the MARC Brunswick Line includes 18 weekday commuter trains, seven of which stop at the Kensington Station in the morning en route to Washington, DC, and eight of which stop in the evening from Washington, DC. Three trains per day do not stop at Kensington.

MTA is continuing discussions with CSXT on the potential of adding capacity to the Metropolitan Branch to support increasing the frequency and service span of MARC Brunswick Line, including adding mid-day, late evening, and weekend service. These discussions have indicated the possible need for a third track through Kensington, which would require the replacement of the current westbound (Metropolitan Avenue side) platform. The potential grade-separated pedestrian crossing feasibility will include the ability to incorporate this new track and platform if subsequently constructed.

## 6.4 Expected Users and Beneficiaries

**CSX Transportation (Freight Service):** This Project will improve operational efficiency for the CSXT freight trains and increase safety for CSXT train operators by reducing the likelihood of incidents with respect to the current pathway-rail grade crossing.

**Amtrak (Intercity Passenger Rail Service):** Amtrak's *Capitol Limited* route passes through the Kensington Station without stopping, providing long-distance passenger rail service between Chicago and Washington, DC, and includes other station stops in Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Maryland. In fiscal year 2023, the *Capitol Limited* route carried 126,309 passengers, providing an important alternative to aviation or private vehicles that commonly complete long-distance travel between the midwestern region of the United States and the mid-Atlantic region. Along the MARC Brunswick Line, Amtrak has station stops at Martinsburg, WV, (station code MRB), Harpers Ferry, WV, (station code HFY), and Rockville, MD (station code RKV). This Project will help to improve efficiency on



the main tracks of the Metropolitan Subdivision by reducing the likelihood of incidents posed by the current pathway-rail grade crossing.

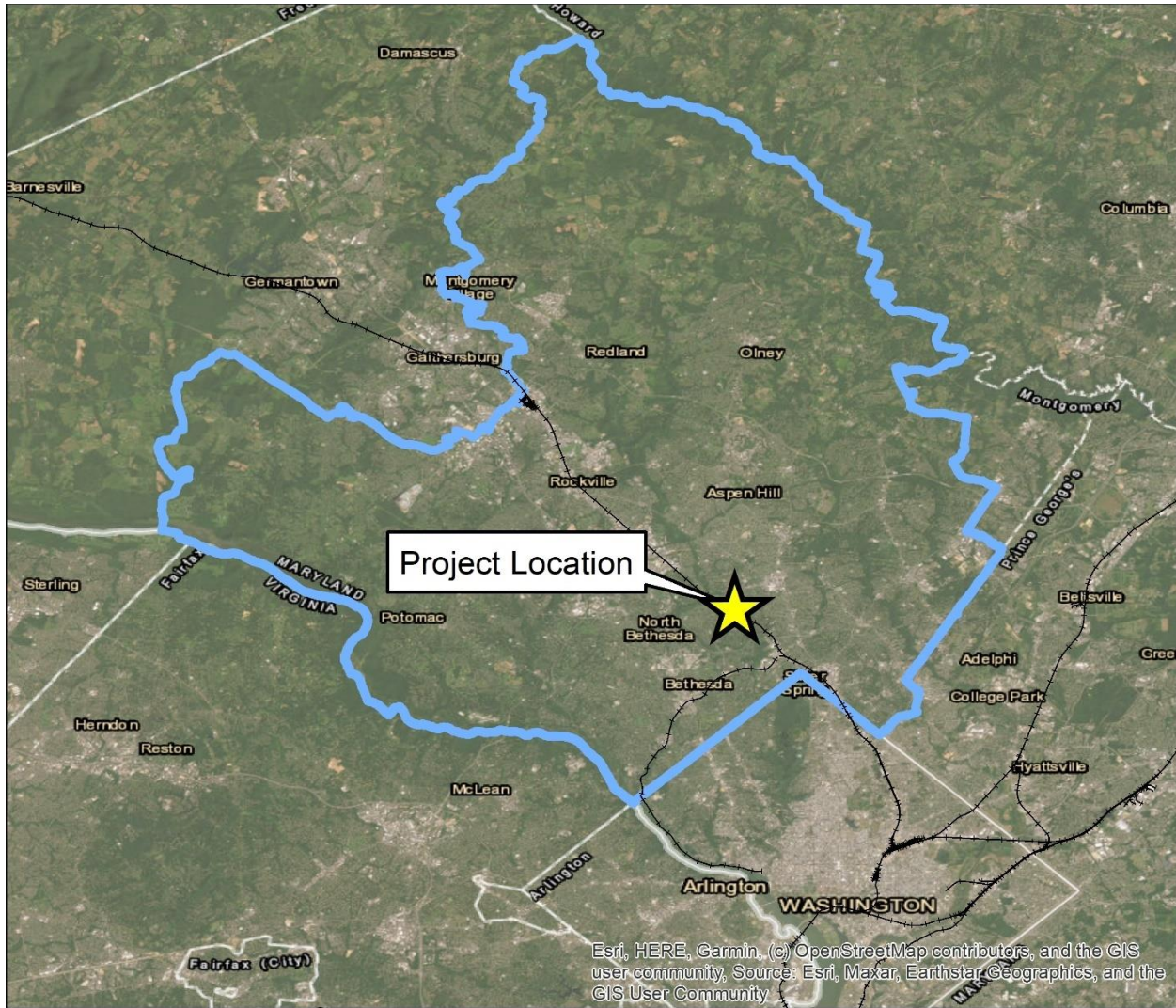
**MARC (Commuter Rail Service):** Maryland’s 203-mile, 43-station commuter rail system serves as a major means of commuting and operates on three lines: the Penn Line, with service between Washington, DC, and Perryville, MD, via Baltimore Penn Station; the Camden Line, with service between Washington, DC, and Camden Station in downtown Baltimore; and the Brunswick Line, with service between Washington, DC, and Martinsburg, WV via Brunswick, MD, and Silver Spring, MD. MARC operates 57 trains per day Monday through Friday, 18 trains on Saturdays, and 12 trains on Sundays over the three lines, and ranks as the 12th largest commuter rail system in the nation based on ridership. The grade-separated crossing would be designed to allow MTA to continue planning efforts to improve train capacity and frequency on the Brunswick Line, such as potentially increasing midday service, adding reverse commute service, adding weekend service, and the potential addition of a third track.

**Town of Kensington:** The Project’s improvements would benefit the residents and visitors of the Town of Kensington by creating a safer pathway to traverse between the Kensington Historic District area and the growing economic hub. With this Project, pedestrians will be able to avoid direct interactions with train traffic to reach either side of the railroad tracks. Improved mobility across the railroad tracks will allow for more seamless economic development and historic preservation in the area.

## 7. Project Location

The Project is in the Town of Kensington, which is within Montgomery County in the State of Maryland. The Project is also within the 8<sup>th</sup> Congressional District of Maryland. The specific coordinate points of the existing at-grade crossing are 39.026883° N, 77.071754° W based on the spatial reference from the World Geodetic System 1984 (WGS84). The at-grade crossing is located within CSXT’s Metropolitan Subdivision, which is part of CSXT’s larger Central Division system. The railroad milepost for the at-grade crossing is CSXT Milepost 11, or BA Milepost 10.97. There are two tracks at the Kensington MARC Station which are used for freight, intercity passenger, commuter, and shared-use transit purposes.

Figure 1. Project Context within Maryland's 8<sup>th</sup> Congressional District



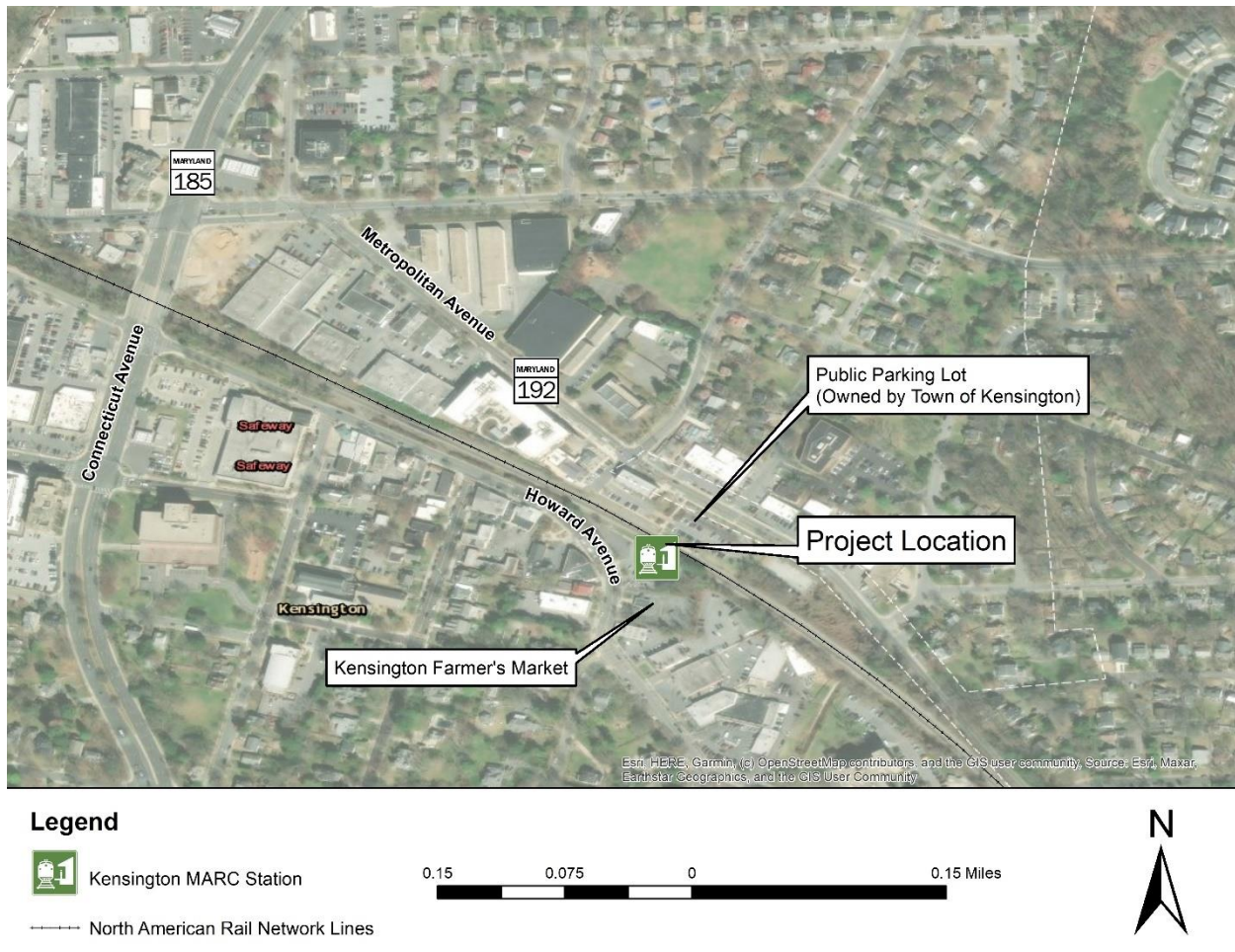
**Legend**

- North American Rail Network Lines
- Maryland 8th Congressional District Boundary





Figure 2. Project Context within Town of Kensington



## 8. Grade Crossing Information

The crossing at the Kensington MARC Station is identified as the U.S. DOT Crossing Inventory Number 928522P. The railroad is primarily owned and operated by CSX Transportation freight service and services the MARC commuter rail service and Amtrak. The crossing is a pathway-rail grade crossing, as it is traversed by pedestrians and bicyclists but not vehicular traffic.

Table 1: Grade Crossing Information

U.S. DOT Grade Crossing Inventory #	Proposed Improvement	Rail Operators	Railroad Owner	Latitude Coordinates	Longitude Coordinates
928522P	Pedestrian/Bicycle Overpass/Grade-Separated Crossing	CSXT, MTA (MARC), Amtrak	CSXT	39.0268830	-77.0717540



## 9. Safety Benefit Data

In the Third Edition of the Highway-Rail Crossing Handbook ([Highway-Rail Crossing Handbook, 3rd Edition | FRA \(dot.gov\)](#)), various benefits of at-grade crossing elimination and grade separation are indicated. The principal benefit of grade separation is that it ensures the greatest degree of protection to crossing users compared to other grade crossing treatments. The grade separation design obviates the need for pedestrians to interact with trains and encourages pedestrians to use safe crossings rather than trespassing through CSXT right-of-way. Eliminating at-grade crossings can reduce the number and frequency of incidents, serious injuries, or death. Additionally, a grade separated crossing can increase efficiency of trains by reducing the likelihood of obstacles on the tracks and therefore the number of crashes. This increases safety for the residents and visitors of Kensington, as well as train operators and riders.

New infrastructure for a grade-separated crossing may also include other techniques and features such as physical barriers and visual cues to direct pedestrians and enhance overall safety. Examples of accessory components to the grade-separated crossing may include intertrack fencing, wayfinding signage, and connecting pathways with access to the Kensington Station platforms and parking area.

## 10. Evaluation and Selection Criteria

### Evaluation Criteria

#### Project Readiness

MTA is prepared to deliver the Feasibility Study in coordination with the Town of Kensington, CSXT, and other key stakeholders. The letters of support and funding commitments for this Project demonstrate support for the Project and are included as attachments.

**Lifecycle Stage:** As the Project's singular component, the Feasibility Study would represent the Project Planning Lifecycle Stage, demonstrating the first step towards achieving ultimate grade separation. NEPA has not yet commenced, however MTA expects that the Feasibility Study will qualify as a categorical exclusion (CE) and will work expeditiously with FRA for CE determination. Documentation of environmental compliance is not included in this application since the NEPA process for the grade-separated crossing infrastructure will commence after the production of the Feasibility Study. The Feasibility Study will prepare MTA to advance and complete the subsequent Project Development Lifecycle Stage.

As a non-construction activity, potential risks for the Feasibility Study are minimal and would have minimal impact on the Project's timeline to completion. For any potential site visits required for the Feasibility Study, standard safety procedures will be followed.

**Right-of-Way:** Concept plans for the grade-separated crossing will indicate impacts of future infrastructure construction for right-of-way entities including CSXT, the Town of Kensington, and the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA). The railroad tracks bisecting the existing at-grade crossing at Kensington MARC Station are owned by CSXT. Conceptual plan development for the grade-separated crossing will require coordination with CSXT to ensure adequate vertical clearances to allow the movement of double-stack freight trains, as well as the horizontal clearance of the crossing ramps, footings, abutments, and piers. The bridge's footprint may potentially encroach the Town of Kensington, Maryland SHA, and privately-owned property adjacent on either side of the railroad tracks. Encroachment

agreements or right-of-way acquisitions needed to construct the grade-separated crossing would require coordination with the respective real property owners. MTA anticipates that an agreement with CSXT, the host railroad, required by 49 U.S.C. 22905(c)(1) will be executed prior to Project-related construction impacting CSXT right-of-way.

### Technical Merit

As the lead agency and grant recipient, MTA will coordinate with key stakeholders to ensure that all federal grant regulatory standards will be met. MTA has the legal, financial, technical capacity, and past performance experience to carry out the Kensington MARC Station Overpass Feasibility Study. MTA is supported by the Maryland Trust Fund, is one of the largest transit operators in the United States and has extensive experience executing and successfully completing FRA grants and projects in compliance with Federal grant requirements.

**Statement of Work:** MTA has prepared a Statement of Work (SOW) commensurate with FRA and program standards to deliver the Feasibility Study and progress the Project Planning Lifecycle Stage. The Statement of Work (SOW), provided as an attachment, includes the specific tasks, subtasks, and deliverables for the Feasibility Study.

**Technical Qualifications and Key Personnel:** The MTA team has the experience required to effectively complete this Project. They have a proven track record of delivering large rail construction projects within budget and on schedule. MTA staff have experience with property and right-of-way acquisition, NEPA, and design and implementation of large capital facilities projects such as the design and construction of the Wedge Yard in Washington, DC; the purchase of the Riverside Maintenance and Layover Facility from CSXT; and, as part of the Camden Station Replacement Project, design and construction of a new commuter rail station located adjacent to CSXT-owned railway in downtown Baltimore. MTA, in coordination with the Town of Kensington, will lead the Feasibility Study and will be responsible for overseeing the work.

**Legal, Financial, and Technical Capacity:** Proposed key personnel have the technical qualifications, experience, and resource capacity to complete a Feasibility Study in consideration for a new ADA-accessible grade-separated pedestrian and bicycle crossing. The subtasks to the Feasibility Study task outlined in the SOW are appropriate to achieve the expected outcomes of the proposed Project.

- **Legal Feasibility:** As mentioned in the “Project Implementation and Management” section, MTA staff have the legal capacity to carry out project contracting and oversight, minimize and mitigate risks, and conform to federal requirements for Project progress reporting. MTA will request recurrent (monthly) updates from technical consultants covering the Project scope, schedule, budget, and performance to proactively address Project risks, describe cost and schedule impacts, assess mitigation options, and documenting resolutions of risks. MTA will also hold recurrent meetings (monthly) with technical consultants to go over schedule and status of the feasibility study.
- **Financial Feasibility:** MTA has a strong record of developing and delivering similar projects utilizing previous financial contributions. Additionally, by working closely with rating agencies and maintaining financially prudent criteria regarding the Maryland Transportation Trust Fund, the department has one of the highest credit ratings given to transportation agencies.
- **Technical Capacity:** MTA staff possess the technical qualifications and experience to lead and perform technical efforts and successfully execute the proposed Project within proposed

timeframe and budget. The Project is consistent with planning guidance and documents set forth by U.S. DOT, including those required by law or State rail plans developed under the Title 49, United State Code Chapter 227. The Project is consistent with the 2022 Maryland State Rail Plan, which identifies MTA initiatives that will improve safety, efficiency, and reliable service. MTA initiatives to achieve this include generally improving MARC station access and the need to eliminate at-grade pedestrian track crossings along the Brunswick Line, which includes U.S. DOT Crossing Number 928522P at Kensington MARC Station. The State Rail Plan's goal for a safe, secure, and resilient rail system includes an objective to "Reduce the number of lives lost and injuries sustained on Maryland's rail system." One of the listed strategies for that objective is to "Enhance the Highway-Rail Grade Crossing Safety Improvement Program and support grade crossing closures or grade separation." One of the State Rail Plan's projects is to "Eliminate At-Grade Pedestrian Crossings" as part of station improvements along the MARC Brunswick and Camden Lines. The mission statement for both the State Rail Plan and the Maryland Highway-Rail Grade Crossing State Action Plan (SAP) describes the intention to "identify specific strategies for improving safety at grade crossings and pathway crossings, including closures or grade separations."

**Innovation:** The Project will deploy innovative technology to minimize greenhouse gases and other environmental impacts through an approach based on a 2017 Executive Order by the Governor of Maryland that established a sustainable materials management (SMM) policy for Maryland. The SMM policy focuses on the lifecycle of materials during every step from extraction to the management of the materials' end-of-life stage to minimize environmental impacts.

### Project Benefits

The Project will initiate the planning process for a new grade-separated pedestrian and bicycle crossing at Kensington MARC Station, which will generate benefits for freight service on CSXT's Metropolitan Subdivision, Amtrak's *Capitol Limited* route providing intercity passenger rail service, MARC commuter rail service on the Brunswick Line, and the residents and visitors within the Town of Kensington. A new grade-separated crossing at Kensington MARC Station is expected to produce the following benefits:

**Proposes to grade separate and eliminate a pathway-rail grade crossing:** The long-term goal for the Project is to eliminate the pathway-rail grade crossing at Kensington MARC Station by grade separation. A key benefit of providing ADA-compliant grade separation would be the enhanced safety to pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders because conflicts with rail traffic would be removed. Although no reported incidents have occurred at the existing at-grade crossing, the Project would be a proactive measure to prevent future incidents. The Feasibility Study will include an Alternatives Analysis that develops conceptual design alternatives that can viably replace the at-grade crossing with a grade-separated crossing, thereby separating rail traffic from pedestrian and bicycle traffic and helping to eliminate the risks of injury or death on the transportation system.

**Improves the mobility of both people and goods:** Through the Alternatives Analysis in coordination with the Town of Kensington and stakeholder engagement, a concept design alternative will be chosen that will preserve the movement of intercity passenger rail, double-stack freight rail, and commuter rail service along the CSXT Metropolitan Subdivision tracks, while eliminating conflicts between rail traffic and other ground transportation modes. Grade separation will reduce the likelihood of incidents involving trains and ground transportation modes that can impede both modes' mobility. Moreover, without the Project's



intervention, the existing at-grade crossing has the potential to be blocked by stopped trains, forcing pedestrians to wait for trains to clear the at-grade crossings before they can safely move across railroad tracks. Grade separation eliminates the chance that train blockages will disrupt pedestrian movement between neighborhoods north and south of the railroad. A grade-separated crossing at Kensington MARC Station has the potential to enhance the efficiency of movements between the commuter rail station and adjacent communities, allowing passengers to board and alight commuter rail trains in either direction of travel without navigating at-grade crossings. ADA-compliant design of the grade-separated crossing would also ensure that persons with disabilities are beneficiaries of these mobility improvements.

**Improves access to communities:** With respect to the existing at-grade crossing at Kensington MARC Station, the nearest existing grade-separated crossing over the CSXT railroad tracks is 0.3 miles to the northwest via Connecticut Avenue. Otherwise, the next nearest grade-separated crossing is 0.6 miles southeast from Stoneybrook Drive. Thus, there is a nearly one-mile gap between grade-separated crossings in the Town of Kensington. The Project would alleviate the limited available choices to safely walk or bike between neighborhoods. A new grade separation within  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile walking distance of multifamily housing, the Kensington Farmer's Market, a United States Postal Service facility, a Safeway grocery store, places of worship, St. Paul Park, and other amenities would be among some of the multiple community uses that would benefit from expanded access created by a new and safe, grade-separated crossing.

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## Selection Criteria

### Administration Priorities

The Kensington MARC Station Overpass Feasibility Study will address key Administration Priorities in the following ways:

**Safety:** The Project will contribute towards making a critical pathway within the Town of Kensington, the MARC Brunswick Line, and the CSXT Metropolitan Subdivision safer for the movement of people and goods. Grade separation design of the pedestrian and bicycle crossing at Kensington MARC Station, to be conceptualized by the Feasibility Study, will obviate the potential for pedestrians to trespass through CSXT right-of-way, while reducing the risk of serious injury or death.

Similarly, land development activity in the Town of Kensington will potentially contribute to a growth in the volume of pedestrian, bicycle, and transit trips to and from the crossing. An example of recent growth near the Kensington station was the construction completion of Moderna Reserve at Kensington in 2021, a 135-unit independent senior living apartment building one-tenth of a mile walking distance from the Kensington station. One-quarter mile from the Kensington station, the Glen at Kensington was formerly used as temporary housing for missionaries of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and recently transitioned to permanent market rate housing in 2023, and presently houses 41 households. And one-third mile from the Kensington Station, the Crossroads at Kensington development is under construction, which will add 11,000 square feet of commercial space with tenants including a bank and multiple

restaurants. Altogether, these projects exemplify Kensington’s ongoing transformation towards denser housing and neighborhood-serving commercial uses that will work synergistically with the surrounding community. While helping to enliven the streetscapes throughout Kensington, the potential for increasing pedestrian traffic is occurring within the context of a present at-grade crossing that may absorb greater volumes of pedestrians and bicycles. Kensington’s growth will benefit from the elimination of the Kensington station’s at-grade crossing, ensuring that a new overpass crossing can accommodate new influxes of pedestrians who can safely travel across Kensington with minimal risk of exposure to rail traffic.

Additionally, MARC ridership along the Brunswick Line continues to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and MTA continues to plan for expanded additional train capacity. For instance, at Kensington MARC Station, average weekday boardings increased from 101 in June 2023 to 178 in June 2024, nearly eclipsing the 189 average weekday boardings observed in June 2019 before the pandemic. These growth factors will necessitate a proactive investment of a grade-separated crossing to ensure that residents and visitors in Kensington have limited exposure to rail traffic. Reducing the likelihood of incidents through grade separation will also increase safety for CSXT train operators, as well as MARC train operators and riders.

**Climate Change and Sustainability:** If the Feasibility Study corroborates the potential to build a new grade-separated crossing, the new construction would contribute to a reduction in the transportation system’s impacts on climate change and be based on design that incorporates resiliency features to withstand extreme weather. The Project would support features consistent with the U.S. DOT Navigator Climate checklist, including:

- **Reducing Transportation Greenhouse Gas Emissions:** By improving access to the adjacent communities and improving the travel efficiency of low carbon transportation modes (i.e. pedestrian, bicycle, and transit movement), a new grade-separated crossing would accelerate a reduction in transportation sector greenhouse gas emissions. Maryland’s 2030 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Act (GGRA) Plan promotes the investment in clean, reliable transportation options as a key initiative to reduce vehicle miles traveled. The 2030 GGRA Plan identifies enhancing multimodal connections, especially for bicycle and pedestrian movement as a key implementation strategy to promote this mode shift. Correspondingly, the Project will promote future investment that can provide safe access to transit while expanding the active transportation system around Kensington.
- **Addressing Climate Resilience and Adaptation:** The Feasibility Study will develop concept plans that incorporate design elements focusing on resilience and adaptation of the new grade-separated crossing. The Project is in Zone X of the FEMA Flood Map, inferring that this area has a minimal flood hazard. The Feasibility Study will proactively identify elements of the crossing design that will protect new assets against natural disasters such as flooding and other extreme weather events.

The MTA has demonstrated leadership in pursuing emissions reduction and resiliency strategies. The [Federal Transit Administration \(FTA\) announced MTA as one of three winners](#) of the Sustainable Transit for a Healthy Planet Climate Challenge for MTA’s production of a Climate Action Plan (CAP) to build strategies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions that will improve air quality, promote energy efficiency, and create adaptation and resiliency tools to prepare and protect transit assets from climate-related vulnerabilities.

**Equity and Justice40:** According to the U.S. DOT Equitable Transportation Community (ETC) Explorer, the Project is within Census Tract 7042 that is in the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile for Environmental Burdens. The table below identifies the following indicators are met for Environmental Burdens in Census Tract 7042.

Disadvantage Components	Census Tract 7042
<b>Environmental Burdens</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 74<sup>th</sup> percentile for ozone levels</li> <li>• 87<sup>th</sup> percentile for diesel particulate matter (PM) levels</li> <li>• 72<sup>nd</sup> percentile for air toxics cancer risk</li> <li>• 87<sup>th</sup> percentile for hazardous sites proximity</li> <li>• 93<sup>rd</sup> percentile for toxic release sites proximity</li> <li>• 88<sup>th</sup> percentile for pre-1980s housing</li> <li>• 86<sup>th</sup> percentile for high-volume road proximity</li> <li>• 93<sup>rd</sup> percentile for railways proximity</li> <li>• 72<sup>nd</sup> percentile for airports proximity</li> <li>• 69<sup>th</sup> percentile for impaired surface water</li> </ul>

The Feasibility Study will evaluate the potential to introduce a grade-separated crossing that promotes multimodal and ADA-compliant design. The nearest grade-separated crossing spanning the CSXT railroad tracks, with respect to the existing at-grade crossing’s west, is via Connecticut Avenue (MD Route 185) approximately 0.3 miles away. Toward the southeast, the nearest grade-separated crossing is via Stoneybrook Drive, approximately 0.6 miles away. If a grade-separated crossing is built at Kensington MARC Station, this investment would establish a new multimodal connection that more directly and safely integrates the communities to the north and south of the CSXT railroad tracks. Because of an improved connection, the crossing may contribute to mode shifts that encourage pedestrian, bicycle, and transit trips and thereby promote a reduction in vehicle miles traveled. Removal of roadway traffic via a mode shift can mitigate roadway volume burdens, as well as tailpipe emissions of greenhouse gases, diesel PM, and air toxics that are contributing to the Environmental Burdens of Census Tract 7042 in the immediate vicinity. Additionally, a new crossing enables a growing number of residents, including residents of the recently-developed Moderna Reserve at Kensington independent senior living, to benefit from a more walkable Kensington, promoting an affordable mode of travel around the community for senior adults with fixed incomes.

**Workforce Development, Job Quality, and Wealth Creation:** The Project will support workforce development opportunities as the Project advances through subsequent Lifecycle Stages, particularly during construction of a new grade-separated crossing. Fair contracting and subcontracting opportunities that open during the Project’s construction phase will be available to small, women-owned, and minority-owned businesses. A 2023 Executive Order by the Governor of Maryland also authorizes the use of project labor agreements (PLA) with community hiring provisions on construction projects with State investments greater than \$5 million.



## 12. Project Implementation and Management

### Team Organization

MTA will lead the Feasibility Study in close coordination with the Town of Kensington and CSXT. MTA will designate the Director of Statewide Planning as the Project Manager responsible for oversight and implementation. The Project will be managed by a dedicated team composed of staff from the MDOT Office of Rail & Intermodal Freight. The project team will be responsible for Project Contracting, Oversight, and Change Order Management. There will also be coordination with the Town of Kensington on an ongoing basis to harmonize the goals and objectives of the Feasibility Study and to conduct community and stakeholder engagement. The Town of Kensington will have the following key roles for the Project:

- Guide and support the public engagement process
- Guide the incorporation of community input into the development of the Purpose & Need Statement
- Provide input on conceptual plans development, preliminary cost estimates, and refinement of both
- Review the Project's interim and final deliverables

To support this, the Town of Kensington will delegate the Town Manager as the Town's lead staff point of contact. MTA will also work closely with CSXT during the development of conceptual plans and preliminary cost estimates for new grade-separated crossing designs.

Consultants will supplement MTA personnel as needed for the Project. As the grant recipient, MTA will coordinate with CSXT, Amtrak, Town of Kensington, Montgomery County, the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA), and all other involved stakeholders to ensure that federal grant regulatory standards are being met. Community and stakeholder engagement with the Town of Kensington, residents and businesses of Kensington, CSXT, and other stakeholders will be recurring through the course of the Project. MTA will utilize a combination of in-person and virtual engagement methods to keep the public involved with the Project's progress, while also seeking input on conceptual design aspects that impact residents and businesses of the surrounding community as well as transit riders and operators and freight operators.

### Project Contracting and Oversight

MTA will hold regular meetings to review the schedule, the effectiveness of community and stakeholder engagement, and the deliverables status on Feasibility Study. These meetings will involve the relevant agency staff, key project stakeholders, and technical consultants.

MTA's technical consultant will be responsible for managing risk through monthly updates of scope, schedule, budget, and performance. MTA will request recurrent (monthly) updates from the technical consultant to review the schedule and status on the Feasibility Study. The schedule will account for items such as review and comment periods, deliverables, milestones, and the critical path which will be distinguishable from non-critical activities. It will also depict activities, descriptions, durations, start and finish dates, and the logical relationships between activities.

## Federal Reporting

The Maryland Department of Transportation's Office of Planning and Capital Programming, led by the Director of Rail and Intermodal Freight, will submit the required FRA progress reports, including FRA quarterly progress reports, Federal financial quarterly reports, and the final performance report.

## Steps to Employ Small Businesses

MTA will utilize its Minority Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (M/DBE) Programs to facilitate the solicitation of fair contracting and subcontracting opportunities for small, women-owned and minority-owned businesses as part of the Project. MTA will include registered small, women-owned and minority-owned businesses in solicitation lists for contracted work. MTA will make the effort to divide project tasks into separate contracting or subcontracting opportunities as feasible to enhance the participation of these small businesses. As evidence of MTA's continued efforts to provide fair opportunity to M/DBE firms, MTA's M/DBE participation goal for fiscal years 2023 to 2025 is set to 30%.

Maryland is currently updating its statewide disparity study, which will determine the presence of racial and/or gender discrimination in markets in which Maryland conducts business. The study will provide the legal framework that authorizes Maryland's M/DBE programs and ensure that preferences are evidenced-backed and can withstand strict scrutiny. The study will be used by both Maryland and the U.S. DOT to set and evaluate future M/DBE participation goals. The study will identify and open new opportunities for small, women-owned and minority-owned businesses to contract with Maryland to provide goods and services.

## Past Experience

As mentioned in the "Evaluation and Selection Criteria" section, the MTA team has the technical qualifications and experience to successfully complete the Feasibility Study. As noted previously, MTA has demonstrated that it can deliver large rail construction projects within budget and on schedule and MTA staff have experience with property and right-of-way acquisition, NEPA, and design and implementation of large capital facilities projects. Examples include a categorical exclusion for the CRISI-funded Worton Track Safety Project on the Chestertown Freight Line as well as environmental assessment and FONSI for the BWI Rail Station and 4th Track Improvement Project. Additional relevant projects of the MDOT Office of Rail & Intermodal Freight include a feasibility report and alternatives analysis for the Brunswick Pedestrian Crossing Project at MARC Brunswick Station; new platforms and a pedestrian bridge at MARC Halethorpe Station; and new platforms, stairs, and ramps at MARC Laurel Station. MTA also has experience providing oversight of track infrastructure capital projects such as interlockings, undercutting, and other capital right-of-way improvements as part of oversight of joint venture projects with both Amtrak and CSXT on their respective rights-of-way.