



ONE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 1961, the Washington National Pike, now known as Interstate 270 (I-270), was envisioned as a transit corridor – a vision further embraced by Montgomery County’s 1964 General Plan and reaffirmed through decades of master plans. While many corridor residents and employees use and enjoy existing transit services along the corridor today, a vision to serve the I-270 corridor with transit requires recommitment. Key midcounty and upcounty transit connections need to be established to link the corridor cities of Rockville, Gaithersburg, Germantown, and Clarksburg to the county’s high-quality transit network. Transit access to neighboring Frederick and Fairfax counties could also be improved to be more frequent, direct, and competitive.

Policymakers and the public have offered numerous transit options that could satisfy these needs, but with so many options to consider, there is no shared

perspective about which potential transit projects have the most merit and where to focus resources. Planned concepts, like the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT), have partially advanced without full investment by stakeholders and funding partners, inviting the opportunity for numerous adjustments, revisions, and delays. Additionally, the county’s historical growth policies, which prioritized automobile travel, have ensured convenience for drivers, but have overshadowed the implementation of high-quality transit. While most stakeholders agree that serving the I-270 corridor with transit is a priority, it is unclear what this means or how it will be achieved.

In response, *Corridor Forward: The I-270 Transit Plan* offers a refocused vision for the corridor. It proposes a transit network, which includes near-term recommendations for **dedicated bus lanes** and long-term recommendations

for an extension of Metrorail's Red Line and enhancements to MARC commuter rail along the Brunswick Line. The near-term network of dedicated bus lanes, referred to as the Corridor Connectors, builds on existing master-planned projects, including the MD 355 and Veirs Mill Road Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) projects, to create a transit network that serves communities and employment centers along the I-270 corridor.

The transit network was determined through an iterative planning process, which began with the identification of general stakeholder values and priorities pertaining to transit, as well as an inventory and initial evaluation of potential transit options. Next, metrics were developed to consider the cumulative benefits, costs, and risks of six compelling transit options retained for detailed analysis. Based on performance, implementation, and policy considerations, components of the six transit options were combined and subsequently evaluated to develop the transit network.

PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

The Plan recommendations are organized into four groups: Near-Term Transit Network, Long-Term Transit Vision, Supporting Recommendations, and Regional Opportunities.

Near-Term Transit Network

This Plan recommends the MD 355 BRT and Veirs Mill Road BRT projects as the most crucial first steps in improving transit accessibility along the I-270 corridor. Following implementation of these services, the Plan recommends new dedicated bus lanes, referred to as the Corridor Connectors, to connect key activity and employment centers to the county's primary north-south rapid transit lines, as well as Metrorail and the MARC Rail Brunswick Line.

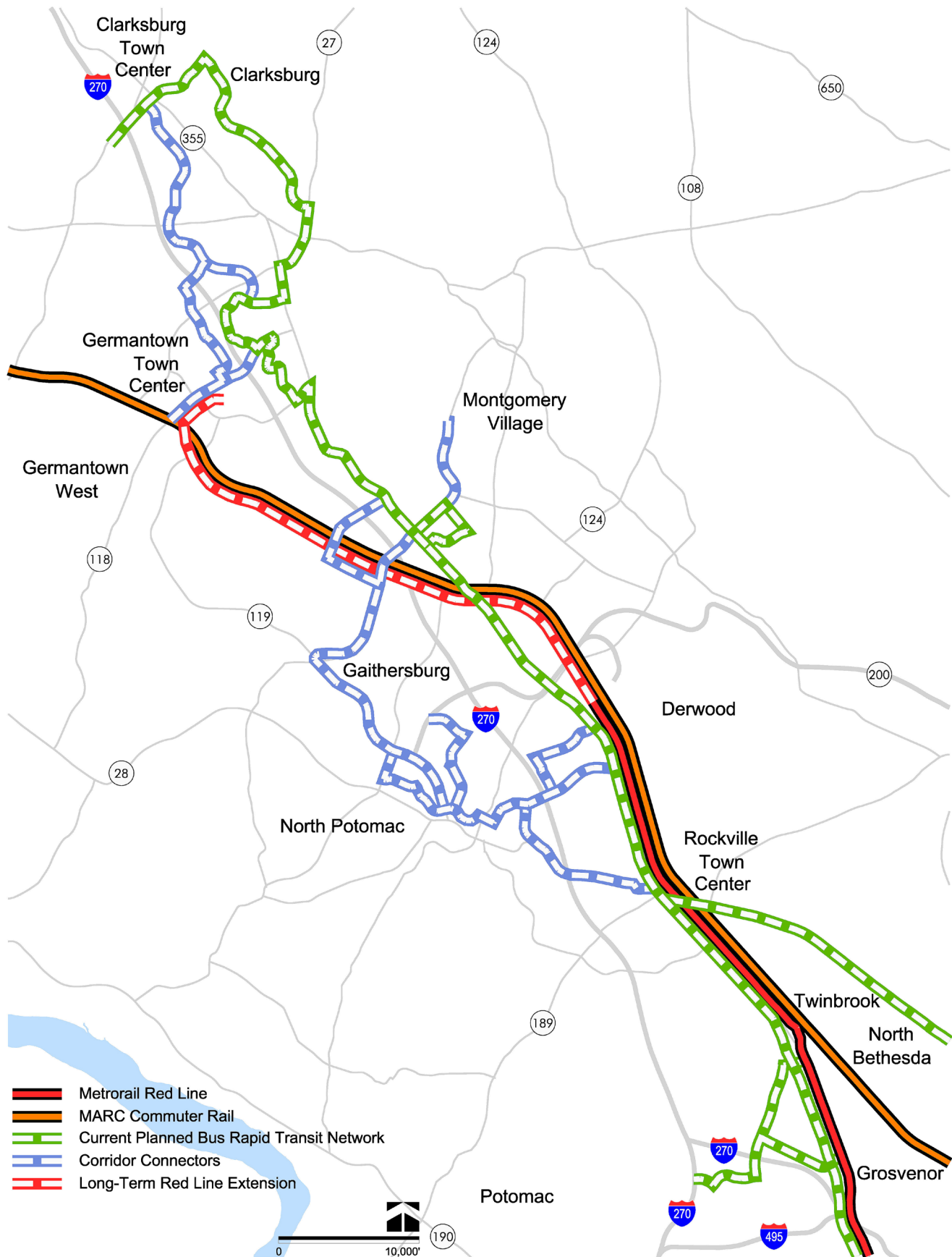
The transit network, with additional dedicated bus lanes beyond the MD 355 and Veirs Mill Road BRT services, is shown in Figure 1. This network augments the planned BRT routes in midcounty and upcounty to maximize connectivity, reduce implementation obstacles, and unlock multiple community-serving **service patterns**. The transit network's dedicated bus

lanes can serve as individual dedicated bus lanes (if implemented in a piecemeal fashion following the MD 355 and Veirs Mill Road BRT projects) and as a network, providing significantly improved transit connectivity for communities in the midcounty and upcounty once they are fully constructed. Corridor Forward shifts the focus from single branded services, like the CCT, to a flexible network of Corridor Connectors—dedicated bus lanes that can support multiple routing patterns. Dedicated bus lanes do not need to be restricted to a single purpose or route, and the county does not need to wait to fund the full system to advance components of the Corridor Connectors. The Corridor Connectors are listed below:

- The Rockville Connector
- The Life Sciences Connector
- The Crown Connector
- The Great Seneca Connector
- The Lakeforest/Montgomery Village Connector
- The Germantown Connector
- The Manekin West Connector
- The Milestone/COMSAT East Clarksburg Connector

The Plan supports the implementation of the Great Seneca Transit Network, prioritizing investments that increase frequencies and provide meaningful travel time benefits for transit users. This network, proposed by the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT), envisions a series of new local bus routes serving the Great Seneca vicinity. These routes are enhanced with operational improvements such as transit signal priority, queue jumps, and express bus lanes. In addition, the Corridor Connectors can be used by commuter bus services to support off-highway diversions to key points of demand. In this regard, the infrastructure becomes multifunctional. Also, while not studied extensively in this Plan, the recommendations include continued support for the North Bethesda Transitway.

Figure 1 – Corridor Forward Transit Network



Long-Term Transit Vision

In addition to the Near-Term Transit Network, the Plan also includes recommendations for a long-term extension of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority's (WMATA) Metrorail Red Line to Germantown Town Center and enhancements to the Maryland Area Regional Commuter (MARC) Brunswick Line. These long-term transit investments are ambitious due to the additional detailed analyses required, the magnitude of coordination, and existing WMATA and MARC priority projects. For example, the work that must be done within the core of the existing Metrorail system must be addressed prior to advancing an extension of the Red Line.

Supporting Recommendations

Beyond the transit network itself, Corridor Forward offers additional recommendations that support the transit network and strengthen local and regional transit connectivity.

Regional Opportunities

The Plan includes recommendations that focus on connections to adjacent jurisdictions, such as Frederick County and Fairfax County, Virginia. Recommendations include studying an extension of the Purple Line west of Bethesda, designing the American Legion Bridge to support rail transit, and exploring a direct transitway connection to Frederick City.



Shady Grove is currently a terminal station for the Metrorail Red Line. The long-term transit vision includes an extension of the Red Line to Germantown Town Center.

RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

County actions, included in Chapter 5, accompany each of these recommendations, which are organized by category and champion—meaning which jurisdiction(s) would likely take the lead on advancing a recommendation given the anticipated benefits. As shown in Table 1, champions to advance recommendations include both Montgomery County as well as multiple stakeholders within the region. Table 2 provides the complete set of recommendations

that strengthen the network and support regional connectivity.

Advancing the I-270 corridor’s transit future is possible. Renewing the county’s commitment to transit will require embracing policy trade-offs that ensure our transit investments result in efficient and competitive service. If the county intends to achieve its economic, equity, and climate goals, priorities must be clear and intentional.

Table 1 – Recommendation Structure



Champion	
Montgomery County	Shared by County and Others
	
Montgomery County government is the lead agency responsible for advancing a recommendation, and the county’s constituents stand the most to gain from a recommendation’s advancement.	Multiple parties within the region, including Montgomery County government, are necessary to advance a recommendation. Benefits are relatively distributed across various regional stakeholders.



Table 2 – Summary of Recommendations ^{1,2}

Near-Term Transit Network	Champion
A. Implement the MD 355 BRT and Veirs Mill Road BRT projects.	
B. Implement the Corridor Connectors, a network of dedicated bus lanes in the midcounty and upcounty, which include refinements to the Corridor Cities Transitway.	
C. Support the Great Seneca Transit Network.	
D. Support the North Bethesda Transitway alignment as master-planned.	
E. Continue state-provided commuter bus service on I-270, making use of the Corridor Connectors when diverting to bus stations in Montgomery County's population and employment centers via the Corridor Connectors.	
Long-Term Transit Vision	Champion
F. Work with local, state, and regional partners to advance the recommendation for a Red Line Extension to Germantown Town Center.	
G. Support the long-term potential of the Maryland Transit Administration MARC Rail Brunswick Line.	
H. Promote strategic and equitable MARC Rail access by supporting new stations.	
Supporting Recommendations	Champion
I. Convert existing general-purpose travel lanes to dedicated transit lanes on targeted streets to maximize person throughput and improve the relative travel time competitiveness and convenience of transit, including—but not limited to—the streets detailed in the right-of-way table.	
J. Prioritize the provision of dedicated transit lanes and spaces for walking, bicycling and other micromobility modes over auto capacity to maximize person throughput and improve the relative travel time competitiveness and convenience of transit.	

Supporting Recommendations	Champion
K. Develop a multimodal transit hub within the vicinity of Metropolitan Grove as part of implementation of the Red Line Extension to serve local bus, BRT, Metrorail, and MARC services.	
L. Ensure safe and efficient access to planned transit stops for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other micromobility modes.	
M. Update relevant land use plans and guidelines to support master-planned transit facilities.	
N. Where beneficial and/or necessary, support the incremental implementation of dedicated bus lanes.	
O. Maximize the travel potential of dedicated bus lanes.	
Regional Opportunities	Champion
P. Study extensions of the Purple Line to understand if and where extension(s) of the county's light rail service may be warranted.	
Q. Design and construct the American Legion Bridge to support rail transit.	
R. Explore a direct transitway connection between the recommended WMATA Metrorail Red Line terminus and Frederick City.	

¹The order of the recommendations presented in the table is not intended to suggest a rank of importance.

²Some recommendations contained in this Plan could require inter-jurisdictional cooperation, as the boundaries of that portion of the Regional District within Montgomery County are prescribed in the Land Use Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland.



Photo Credit: Montgomery County
Department of Transportation