

## **An Open Letter from Paul Comfort, CEO & Administrator, Maryland Transit Administration**

Dear Baltimore:

Today marks 100 days until the Maryland Transit Administration unveils a historic redesign of our transit system. On June 18, 2017, BaltimoreLink will launch a plan that will transform outdated bus lines into routes that connect you to the places that matter most. The Baltimore region has changed a lot over the last 50 years, when most of the current bus routes were designed. BaltimoreLink will align routes with present-day job centers, hospitals, grocery stores, as well as connect with Metro Subway, Light Rail, MARC train and Bikeshare stations.

The need for an overhaul of our bus network is long overdue. The MTA has a contract with the public to provide the best transit possible, and to be honest, we have broken that contract in the past. Many of you have been left at bus stops, late for work, and stood on overcrowded buses, and you deserve better. We want to be a reliable transit agency that you can depend on.

With BaltimoreLink, we are shaking up the transit model for the city. We are taking the lengthy bus routes that run from one side of the city, through the congested heart of downtown, to another side of the city, and splitting them up to be more manageable. We are increasing our high-frequency service, which comes every 10-15 minutes during peak hours, and expanding access to 30% more people. We are connecting important suburbs to each other, eliminating the need to come downtown when traveling from White Marsh to Towson. We are committed to making sure that the service that you see on schedules is the service that is delivered on the street.

Thank you so much to those of you who engaged in our three phases of outreach over the last year and a half. From hundreds of community and stakeholder meetings, the MTA has received nearly 4,000 comments on BaltimoreLink drafts and incorporated many of those suggestions into the final version of the plan. Although we have reached many people, we still have a long way to go to make sure all citizens are prepared for the changes coming on June 18.

Here is what you can expect over the next 100 days:

- You may have already seen our BaltimoreLink wrapped buses on the streets. We will continue to wrap our entire bus fleet to create a comprehensive and easy to recognize brand.
- We are replacing over 5,000 of our bus stop signs! The current signs are being taken down and replaced with new signs that include important route destination and frequency information to help you get where you're going. The new signs will have a temporary cover over them containing current route information that will be removed on June 18 to reveal the new bus stop signs.
- Red dedicated bus lanes were installed on Pratt & Lombard streets this fall, and more will be painted on corridors throughout the city this spring and summer. These dedicated lanes allow buses to get through congestion with ease and maintain their reliability.
- Construction has begun and will continue on our new transfer facility locations, including the West Baltimore MARC Station. Additional amenities such as new bus shelters and real-time information signage are being installed throughout the city.
- Finally, MTA staff will be hitting the streets and educating riders on their changing routes. We will be riding every single route, and handing out brochures about how that route is changing. We will have BaltimoreLink Ambassadors out in teams on our buses handing out information. We will have booths set up at our highest ridership stops answering questions. We will be meeting with community organizations and providing travel training on the new network.

- From June 18 through June 30, the MTA will be offering FREE riders on our Bus, Light Rail, and Metro Subway services. This is to help our riders learn the new system while we work out the kinks.

Baltimore, we need your help. We need to reach as many people as possible and let them know that BaltimoreLink is coming on June 18, 2017. Help us spread the word by letting your family, friends, neighbors, and coworkers know. Visit [baltimorelink.com](http://baltimorelink.com) and interact with the new route maps, print out route sheets, and use our comparative trip planner. Together, we can give Baltimore the reliable transit system that it deserves.

Paul Comfort