

## RTA Fall 2021 Service Update

### Public Hearing – July 15, 2021

#### Summary of Public Comments

Comment Contributor	Comment Summary	RTA Response Summary
Astamay Curtis Chair, RTA Riders' Advisory Council	Support for the proposed changes.	None
David Drasin Citizen of Columbia, MD	Support for the proposed changes.	None
Donna Folkerts Citizen of Ellicott City, MD	Concerned with a bus stop on current route 405 and proposed route 505, believe it to be unsafe and a burden on her community.	Bus stop is among the most popular and safest bus stops in the RTA system but will continue to address concerns in targeted ways moving forward. Howard County investigating potential options.
Yesiga Gwanvalla Citizen of Hanover, MD	Comments regard transit services provided by MDOT MTA.	Forwarded comments to MDOT MTA.
Brian O'Malley on behalf of Central Maryland Transportation Alliance	Support for the proposed changes.	None
Jorge Tirigall, Citizen of Columbia, MD	Increase service span on the proposed 505 and 301. Saturday service on the proposed 301. Overall support for the proposed changes.	Most of RTA's proposals are revenue neutral and aim to better utilize existing service hours and resources. The proposed 301 has no Saturday service so an additional bus can be added to route 302 on Sundays.
Adeline Wilcox, Citizen of Beltsville, MD	Questioned necessity of the 302 serving Chestnut Hills Shopping Center on Baltimore Ave since it is served by MetroBus 86 and 89M. Overall support for the proposed changes.	The proposed 302 differentiates itself from Metrobus 86 and 89M by traveling up Muirkirk Road and serving areas that are currently unserved.

## Public Comments

### **Astamay Curtis, Chair, RTA Riders' Advisory Council, citizen of Ellicott City, MD, at our July 15 Public Hearing via Zoom:**

I am making comment to support the proposed Ellicott City expansion. This expansion addresses a long-awaited connection for Howard County riders to access points in Baltimore City by a more direct route which enhances the RTA's regional connectivity platform.

**RTA response:** Thank you for your support.

### **David Drasin, citizen of Columbia, MD, via email:**

I not able to make the meeting concerning these transit changes, but I live near the mall, and would expect to use the proposed 505 bus which could give a direct connection into a commercial area of Baltimore County, with connections into Baltimore (I know of these from the recent Baltimore Link improvements). I have used the Owen Brown connection, and while this is losing some coverage, the integrity of the route is overall preserved. If these changes are approved, getting this to the public, and making transfers between RTA and MTA should be on the agenda, of course the second item will take time, but will make RTA more effective.

**RTA response:** Per approval of these changes, we will do everything we can to evaluate transfers and iteratively improve these new connections to other services. We're glad to hear these changes positively impact your mobility needs.

### **Donna Folkerts, citizen of Ellicott City, MD, at our July 15 Public Hearing via Zoom:**

My name is Donna Folkerts and I am President of the Legacy at Ellicott's Retreat Condominium Association #2, at Carl's Court in Ellicott City. On behalf of our complete community residents, I am here to testify against some of the proposed plans for route 405 and route 505, specifically the stop at Carl's Court. When the majority of unit owners purchased homes in Ellicott's Retreat, there wasn't a bus stop at Carl's Court. In 2019, a temporary bus stop was placed on Carl's Court at the corner of the Walmart's delivery-only access road to accommodate new construction and repairs to Walmart's parking lot. In a Zoom meeting that we had with Mr. Jason Quan on November 6<sup>th</sup> in 2020, we were reassured that the bus stop location was temporary, and that they would discuss moving it back to the original location even though they were having difficulty getting in touch with Walmart. Because of our numerous complaints regarding safety, the bus stop was relocated from the corner to the middle of the Carl's Court circle. This does nothing to address our overall concerns regarding the narrow road space when trucks park across or along the surrounding roadways. These are the delivery trucks for

Walmart. It has just moved the problem to the entrance of our community. The increased interaction between buses, people and property creates a dangerous situation with vehicles entering and exiting Walmart's delivery access road. The hazards and risks to area residents, the Walmart customers, and the Walmart employees are real. There is no pedestrian sidewalk on the delivery-only access road, so when you get off the bus, there is no safe way to get to the front of Walmart. It does not provide a safe environment for disabled passengers, or any person since there is no ADA compliant sidewalk along that stretch of road. Vehicles enter on the wrong side of their access road. Two-way traffic at the entrance of our development has become extremely unsafe. Ellicott's Retreat senior citizens are vulnerable to riders coming into the community while waiting for the bus. Residents with chronic health issues are exposed to harmful exhaust fumes while the buses idle for extended periods of time between layovers and while the drivers and supervisors take breaks. This will only increase with an additional route stopping in Carl's Court. It provides bathroom relief on private property for those waiting for the bus. We've seen it, we got - we don't have pictures, but we've seen it - which causes disease and attract vermin. And finally, for the very few who use the stop, [they] litter the area with fast-food containers, glass bottles, and leave actual Walmart shopping carts on our private property. Restructuring the routes will create an even more dangerous situation for all. In effect, it will certainly double the problems we constantly have to deal with. Prior to learning of this plan, we wrote a letter to Mr. Bruce Gartner, Ms. Elizabeth Walsh, County Council Representative, and Mr. Jason Quan to complain once again about the Carl's Court bus stop. Since nothing has been done to alleviate our concerns by Howard County officials, we feel that as senior citizens we were being ignored, and with this new plan, we are convinced of that fact. While your new plan proposes various ridership opportunities, it doesn't answer several basic questions. We don't understand what the passenger usage data for the Carl's Court bus stop is. From our visual - you know, looking at it, seeing people use it, it's not that very busy. What happens once ridership increases, and risks and hazards increase exponentially? Since it's our property, what is our liability if someone is injured because we do not provide timely repairs to the sidewalks, or even snow or ice removal? Who is liable if somebody injures themselves trying to navigate around the discarded Walmart shopping carts and the garbage and everything else on the sidewalk, in our property? This is a burden RTA and Walmart created and are willing to pass along to marginalized senior citizens. For more than 25 years, route 405 was serviced by a bus stop located in the front of Walmart. We understand the need to temporarily move the stop during the Walmart construction and repairs, however we do not understand the real reason for not moving it back to the original Walmart location. If a bus stop for the same route is acceptable in front of the Catonsville Walmart, why is it not acceptable in front of the Ellicott City Walmart? Carls Court is the only egress into our community. It's the only way we can get in and out of our community, is riding past these buses, past the traffic jam that is right there. We have no alternate route so please take our concerns seriously and relocate the bus stop away from Carl's Court to a more public location. It would be nice to know that our needs for a safe and clean neighborhood are being met, and that we as Howard County senior citizens are being treated fairly.

**RTA response:** RTA and Howard County Office of Transportation staff met with a group of Ellicott's Retreat residents on November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020, to hear concerns similar to the ones shared by Donna above. During that meeting, RTA explained that the bus stop was moved to Carl's Court due to ongoing projects by Walmart that blocked our regular route. Previously, route 405 took the access road around the back of the Walmart building and served a stop on the side of the parking lot. Under no circumstances did RTA want buses to travel in front of the building, due to pedestrians, vehicles, and shopping carts all creating many opportunities for accidents, so the decision was made to move the stop to Carl's Court. The stop is in the public right-of-way and there is an ADA compliant sidewalk along Carl's Court. There have been no traffic incidents between RTA buses and vehicles or Walmart delivery trucks since moving the bus stop to Carl's Court. The proposed changes shorten layover times for vehicles stopping at Carl's Court, and although there will be an additional route serving the stop, buses will layover for a shorter time than they do now. Supervisors do not take breaks at the Carl's Court bus stop. Public urination is a crime and should be reported to law enforcement authorities if witnessed. The Carl's Court bus stop is the 11<sup>th</sup> most popular bus stop in the RTA network of 683 bus stops and approximately 130 boardings occur at the stop each week. Both RTA and Howard County care deeply about our older adult population. RTA and Howard County is working with Walmart to address any concerns regarding the shopping carts left at the bus stop and is continuing to evaluate potential alternatives.

**Yesiga Gwanvalla, citizen of Hanover, MD, via email:**

I feel as though the 75 bus should come to Park Circle Drive every 1 or 2 hours and instead of that bus to stop running at 6:51 but to continue till 8 or 9 like every other bus. Also, why does that bus not stop at park circle drive on weekends? The bus rarely comes there or gets canceled for some reason. I have a job with no car I need to be able to take that bus please.

**RTA response:** These comments relate to MDOT MTA services and not current or proposed RTA services, so RTA has forwarded them on behalf of Yesiga Gwanvalla to MDOT MTA.

**Brian O'Malley, on behalf of the Central Maryland Transportation Alliance, via mail:**

Dear Chairman Cornell and Commissioners: I write to express the Central Maryland Transportation Alliance's support for the Regional Transit Agency's (RTA) fall 2021 service changes which will improve connections between Columbia, Ellicott City, and greater Baltimore, connecting residential communities and regional job centers. They also adapt to ridership trends to ensure wise use of operators and vehicles. In the Baltimore region the typical resident can reach 100 percent of jobs by car but only 9 percent of jobs by transit within 60 minutes. That makes owning and maintaining a car the price of admission to fully participate in the job market. It also forces people to contribute to traffic congestion and air pollution by making trips

in a car they might otherwise make by bus. The proposed new 505 bus route, by connecting the RTA system of bus routes to the MTA's 77 and CityLink Purple bus routes, would unlock the potential of the RTA and Maryland Transit Administration networks to improve access to jobs and reduce travel times for thousands of residents. It would also provide access to retail and services for many people. The other proposed fall service changes respond to changing ridership patterns. Given that there are limited resources to serve the RTA area with transit service, we want the agency to periodically adjust planned service to run buses when and where they will benefit the most people. The Transportation Alliance believes it is important to help people improve access to life's opportunities through fast, frequent, reliable transit in walkable places. The fall 2021 service changes will make significant improvements toward that vision and we urge their approval.

**RTA response:** RTA agrees with the comments made by the Central Maryland Transportation Alliance and believe these changes will have a positive impact on thousands of Maryland residents. Thank you for your support.

**Jorge Tirigall, citizen of Columbia, MD, at our July 15 Public Hearing via Zoom:**

First of all, I want to say that I would favor the discontinuation of routes 402B and the 30-minute 407, and I would also favor the fact that the simplest revisions of routes 302 and 502 is I think very very wonderful for everybody out there. The only thing that I have though is two suggestions that you must keep in mind. The first suggestion that I have is the new route 505 that will start at the Columbia mall that will go to Catonsville. The only suggestion that I have for the route 505 is the service span. Now I understand the fact that there will be a 60-minute frequency. However, I suggest that on the weekdays you guys wanna make it running between 6 AM and 10:45 PM and on Saturdays you want to make it between 8 AM and 9:45 PM and on Sundays you've gotta run it from 9 AM to 7:45 PM on Sundays. As for the route 301 from Towne Centre Laurel to South Laurel, I have suggested that there should be not only weekday service but also Saturday service as well. And what I suggested; on the 60-minute frequency on the route 301 is that on the weekdays, it should run between 6 AM and 6:34 PM and the 301 should have Saturday service between 9 AM and 6:54 PM in the same limit. I hope that everyone here could take those suggestions very carefully and insightfully.

**RTA response:** Every effort has been made to expand geographic coverage and increase the ability for our bus routes to connect to other routes. Unfortunately, most of these service proposals are cost-neutral and we are not able to expand our service hours at this time. The current route 301 is almost entirely covered by the new 302 route, and the reason the new version of route 301 has no Saturday service is because we are adding an additional bus to route 302 on Sundays.

**Adeline Wilcox, citizen of Beltsville, MD, via mail:**

1) Except to poach MetroBus passengers, I don't see why proposed 302 needs to pass in front of the Chestnut Hills Shopping Center, 10474 Baltimore Ave. Passengers who need to connect to MetroBus 86 or 89M can do so at the present Rhode Island Ave and Route 1 Sa/Su stop. 2) A few times a year a member of this household needs to cover travel from Beltsville to Frensham Ct, Laurel when no car is available for them. Proposed 302 solves this problem. 3) Additional opportunities for bus service on Route 1 between Powder Mill Rd and Rhode Island Ave may help when the 86 and 89M schedules don't meet this occasional bus rider's needs.

**RTA response:** RTA route 302 already services the Chestnut Hills Shopping Center at 10474 Baltimore Avenue each day that the mentioned Rhode Island Ave / Baltimore Ave stop has bus service. We're glad to hear these changes positively impact the mobility needs of a member of your household, and agree that the proposed route 302 differentiates itself from Metrobus 86 and 89M services by traveling up Muirkirk Rd. The proposed route 302 expands service to many areas currently without any bus service, including Frensham Ct.