

Veirs Mill Road BRT
Montgomery County, Maryland
Small Starts Project Development
(Rating Assigned December 2025)

Summary Description	
Proposed Project:	Bus Rapid Transit 7.6 Miles, 12 Stations
Total Capital Cost (\$YOE):	\$193.66 Million
Section 5309 CIG Share (\$YOE):	\$149.99 Million (77.5%)
Annual Operating Cost (opening year 2028):	\$8.42 Million
Existing Corridor Ridership (Warranted):	10,200 Daily Linked Trips
Overall Project Rating:	Medium
Project Justification Rating:	Medium
Local Financial Commitment Rating:	Medium

Project Description: The Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) proposes to implement a corridor-based bus rapid transit line along Veirs Mill Road and Hungerford Drive from a western terminus at Montgomery College in Rockville to an eastern terminus at the Wheaton Metrorail Station. The project includes 12 boarding stations, 2.6 miles of dedicated bus lanes, queue jumps, transit signal priority, all-door near-level boarding, bicycle and pedestrian access improvements, high efficiency fare payment, and real-time transit display signage. Service is planned to operate from 5:00 AM to 1:00AM with buses running every 7.5-minutes during peak periods and every 15 minutes during off-peak periods.

Project Purpose: The project serves a high ridership corridor connecting users to major activity centers in Rockville and Wheaton and to regional destinations via Metrorail’s Red Line. The corridor also connects to Amtrak and Maryland Area Rail Commuter (MARC) trains in Rockville. Rockville and Wheaton are located on opposite legs of the Red Line, and traveling between these destinations by Metrorail is circuitously routed through Washington, D.C. The project is planned to provide a more efficient, high-frequency, rapid transit option to improve connection between two stations at the termini of “U” shaped Red Line. The project serves a high concentration of low-income populations, and riders who live and work along the corridor.

Project Development History, Status and Next Steps: MCDOT selected a locally preferred alternative (LPA) in June 2017, and the LPA was adopted into the region’s long range transportation plan in May 2020. The project entered Small Starts Project Development in September 2022. MCDOT completed the environmental review process with receipt of a Categorical Exclusion from FTA in August 2024. MCDOT anticipates receiving a construction grant in February 2026 and starting revenue service in 2028.

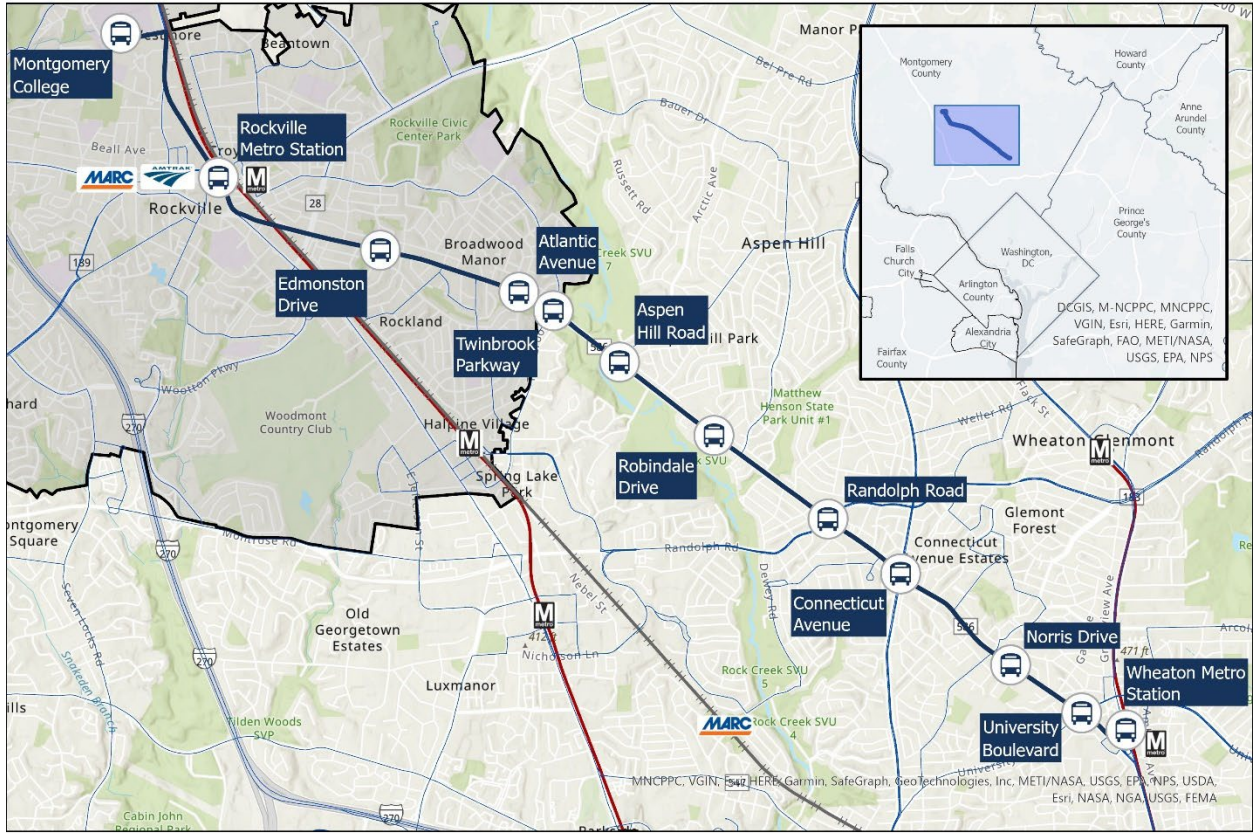
Significant Changes Since Last Evaluation (November 2024): Since the Project was rated and evaluated in November 2024, the total capital cost increased from \$165.40 million to \$193.66 million. The amount of CIG funds being requested increased from \$132.32 million to \$149.99 million, changing the CIG share request from 80.0 to 77.5 percent.

Locally Proposed Financial Plan

<u>Source of Funds</u>	<u>Total Funds (\$million)</u>	<u>Percent of Total</u>
Federal: Section 5309 CIG	\$149.99	77.5%
State: Maryland State BRT Fund	\$30.00	15.5%
Maryland State Aid via Senate Bill 291	\$3.50	1.8%
Local: Montgomery County General Obligation Bond Proceeds	\$4.00	2.1%
FY 2024 Impact Tax	\$3.67	1.9%
Montgomery County Mass Transit Tax Revenues	\$2.50	1.3%
Total:	\$193.66	100.0%

NOTE: The financial plan reflected in this table has been developed by the project sponsor and does not reflect a commitment by DOT or FTA. The sum of the figures may differ from the total as listed due to rounding.

Veirs Mill BRT - Rockville, MD and Wheaton, MD



Veirs Mill BRT Stop	Metro Station	MARC Brunswick Line/CSX Railroad/Amtrak	Amtrak Station
Veirs Mill BRT Alignment	Metrorail Red Line	MARC Station	City of Rockville

0 0.5 1 Miles

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Factor	Rating	Comments
Local Financial Commitment Rating	Medium	
Non-Section 5309 CIG Share	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The CIG share of the overall project is 77.5 percent.
Summary Financial Plan Rating	Medium	
Current Capital and Operating Condition (25% of local financial commitment rating)	Medium-High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The average age of the bus fleet is 7.3 years, which is in line with the industry average. The most recent bond ratings for Montgomery County issued in September 2024 are as follows: Moody's Investors Service, Aaa, Fitch's, AAA and Standard & Poor's Corporation, AAA. Montgomery County's current ratio of assets to liabilities as reported in its most recent audited financial statement for the Mass Transit Facilities Fund, which is the fund where MCDOT operates its program from, is 5.2 (FY 2024). There were no cash flow shortfalls in recent years.
Commitment of Capital and Operating Funds (25% of local financial commitment rating)	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All of the non-Section 5309 CIG capital funds are either committed or budgeted. Sources of funds include State of Maryland funds (State Aid, State BRT Funds), the Montgomery County Mass Transit Tax (levied on real and personal property), property tax revenue from new developments, and proceeds from County-issued General Obligation bonds. All of the funds needed to operate and maintain the transit system in the first full year of operation are committed or budgeted. Sources of funds include State Aid, local Mass Transit Tax revenues, and other revenues from advertising, taxes, and fees.
Reasonableness of Capital and Operating Cost Estimates and Planning Assumptions/Capital Funding Capacity (50% of local financial commitment rating)	Medium-Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assumed growth in capital revenues is reasonable compared to recent historical experience. Based on the Project Management Oversight Contractor (PMOC) report, the capital cost estimate is reasonable. Regarding growth in operating revenue assumptions, the forecasted Federal Grants, State Aid, Mass Transit Tax revenues and Other Advertising, Taxes and Fees are reasonable compared to recent historical experience. Operating cost estimates are optimistic compared to recent historical experience. Montgomery County has access to funds via additional debt capacity, cash reserves, or other committed funds to cover unexpected cost increases or funding shortfalls equal to at least 25.0 percent of the estimated CIG capital cost, and at least 15.0 percent (2 months) of annual system wide operating expenses.

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RATING: Medium

Supportive Zoning in Station Areas: Medium

- The Montgomery College part of the Twinbrook Parkway station area falls within the City of Rockville’s zoning, while the rest of Twinbrook Parkway through the Wheaton Metro station area follow Montgomery County’s zoning. The proposed station areas— particularly at each end of the corridor – are zoned for moderate to high density mixed-use. Other station areas are primarily zoned for low- to medium-density residential. Several parcels along the corridor have been upzoned for higher density and mixed-use redevelopment. Zoning ordinances include requirements to support a pedestrian-friendly built environment.

Performance and Impacts of Plans and Policies: Medium

- *Transit-Supportive Corridor Policies:* State, regional, and local plans generally encourage redevelopment along the corridor to support transit and higher densities. Plans recommend infill redevelopment and rezoning of parcels to allow for new developments to have higher densities. Montgomery County’s *Thrive Montgomery 2050 General Plan (2022)* promotes concentrated growth along corridors that have robust transit service (existing or planned). Veirs Mill Road is identified as a “growth corridor” and infill development is encouraged around activity centers such as the City of Rockville and Wheaton. Montgomery County’s *Veirs Mill Corridor Master Plan (2019)* is another key document that promotes limited redevelopment near existing and future transit – particularly for residential parcels and commercial nodes. Upzoning recommendations from the plan have been incorporated into the Montgomery County Zoning Code.
- *Tools to Implement Plans and Policies:* The *Veirs Mill Corridor Master Plan* outreach efforts were recognized with the 2018 Harold Foster Award for Distinction in Community Outreach. Other county and city planning efforts included robust engagement with business community, developers, advocacy groups, agencies, and the public. Montgomery County offers the Optional Method Public Benefit incentive for density and height increases as well as the More Housing at Metrorail Stations Act to incentivize transit-oriented developments on WMATA properties; however, there are very few regulatory and financial incentives to promote transit-supportive development for the BRT project.
- *Performance of Plans and Policies:* Mixed-use, high-density development is present at three of the Project’s 12 station areas: Rockville Metro Station, Twinbrook Parkway Station, and Wheaton Station. In addition, six development proposals are noted across the Rockville Metro, Randolph Road, MD 193/University Boulevard, and Wheaton station areas.
- *Potential Impact of Transit Investment:* The project corridor is anchored by two major activity centers (Rockville CBD and Wheaton) that can accommodate significant higher density, mixed-use redevelopment, as promoted in the *Veirs Mill Corridor Master Plan*. The percent of parcel vacancy or land available for development for the 12 station areas ranges from 0.6% to 25.5%. Notably, Montgomery College has 25.5%, Rockville Metro has 13.7% and University Blvd has 6.7%.

Tools to Maintain or Increase Share of Affordable Housing: Medium-High

- Within the project corridor, 10% of the population are considered low-income. Rockville CBD and Wheaton include market-rate housing (defined as affordable to households earning under 80% of the region’s median income). The City of Rockville and Montgomery County each have a diverse set of policies and tools to preserve and increase affordable housing in the corridor – as is evidenced by the inclusion of affordable housing options in new development projects.