



Larry Hogan
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**J00H01 MDOT Maryland Transit Administration
FY 2024 Operating Budget
Response to the Department of Legislative Services Budget Analysis**

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
Public Safety, Transportation, and Environment Subcommittee
Chair Sarah K. Elfreth
February 24, 2023

House Appropriations Committee
Transportation and the Environment Subcommittee
Chair Marc Korman
February 23, 2023

**J00H01 MDOT – Maryland Transit Administration
MDOT RESPONSE TO DLS ANALYSIS
FY 2024 BUDGET**

DLS Budget Analysis Issues

1. Operating and PAYGO Personnel Data (Page 17)

MTA should comment on its efforts to supplement salaries and wages to make the agency more competitive with peer transit agencies. The agency should also be prepared to discuss how absenteeism affects transit service and details of the new Leave and Absence Management directive.

MDOT Response:

As noted in a report titled “Hiring and Retention Comparison with Peer Agencies and Surrounding Jurisdictions” that was presented in November 2022 to the Maryland General Assembly Senate Budget and Taxation Committee and House Appropriations Committee, salaries for a number of MTA’s key managerial positions lag averages for the transit industry.

As a Transportation Business Unit within MDOT, MTA is covered by Transportation Service Human Resources System (TSHRS) policies, structures, and practices that govern compensation for its managerial and professional employees and some of its administrative employees. MTA does not have autonomy to address all of these compensation challenges unilaterally but is working with MDOT to determine possible paths forward.

Last year, MTA entered into new collective bargaining agreements with its Local 1300 and Local 2 unions which included a significant increase in hourly wages for operators, mechanics, and represented administrative employees over the term of the contract. These efforts will assist MTA in recruiting new hires for these positions.

The MTA Leave & Absence Management Directive, effective on January 16, 2023, defines leave and absence policies and procedures for all ATU Local 1300 and OPEIU Local 2 bargaining unit members. A portion of the MTA’s ability to minimize service disruptions relies on the agency’s ability to respond to unscheduled absences. In response to the ongoing operational impact, MTA has identified areas of opportunity for improving absence management practices with policy development, technology and dedicated case management personnel resources. In 2022, weekly absenteeism averaged at 19.5% with consistent weekend spikes over 22%. The Directive promotes an employee-driven leave management and accountability culture. The Directive provides comprehensive information about collectively bargained employee leave benefits and federal and state entitlements. It clearly defines the types of leave benefits available, eligibility requirements and qualifying absences. Covered employees to have knowledge and understanding of leave benefits, accrual amounts, departmental processes and procedures for reporting absence status, and using leave benefits during an absence period. The Directive also provides guidance for effectively managing employee absences and defines how each form of progressive discipline is determined. Covered employees are required to have knowledge of and are educated on the types of progressive discipline steps, associated action, and progressive discipline status

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DLS Budget Analysis Issues

1. Purple Line Project Challenges, Central MD Transit Studies Ongoing (Page 33)

The agency should comment on efforts to keep the Purple Line project on schedule and maintain transparency if further delays arise. MTA should also be prepared to discuss how community engagement will be prioritized as the Regional Transit Plan for Central Maryland moves forward.

MDOT Response:

Purple Line

MTA, the Concessionaire and the Design-Build Contractor have formed a “Tiger Team” tasked to identify and recommend potential schedule mitigation opportunities with the goal of mitigating delays. The Tiger Team has identified several opportunities within the schedule to create additional concurrency and mitigate potential delays to the critical path. These opportunities relate to Maintenance of Traffic (MOT) phasing and sequencing of construction, and optimization of station platform design, that allow for civil construction to continue concurrent with the remaining utility relocation work. The Tiger Team will continue meeting regularly to anticipate potential schedule impactors and identify mitigation opportunities early.

MTA will maintain transparency through the bimonthly Purple Line Progress Reports that will describe progress on the Purple Line project. In addition, MTA will continue to share updates on progress directly with the public as they are finalized.

Regional Transit Plan for Central Maryland

The North-South and East-West corridor studies are the first corridors to move from their identification in the Regional Transit Plan towards study, design, and ultimately implementation. As these projects advance, key decisions will be made about the destinations that transit investments should connect, what type (mode) of transit best meets the region’s needs, how it should operate, and how stops or stations should be designed and sited. These decisions must be thoroughly informed by community feedback in order to make the best choices and produce the best outcomes.

MTA is in the process of expanding its outreach capacity for these corridor projects, having dedicated additional resources specifically to outreach, engagement, and partnership. One of the next major milestones on these projects will be the production of the Outreach and Engagement plan, which is being designed to incorporate best practices, and follow the most recent Federal Transit Administration guidance on equitable community engagement. Both carrying out and thoroughly documenting robust community and stakeholder engagement are required by the National Environmental Policy Act for projects of this type and are also priorities of MTA.

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DLS Budget Analysis Issues (continued)

2. Mobility Paratransit Performance Improves Following Significant Issues (Page 36)

MTA should comment on the on-time threshold for mobility paratransit in relation to the other modes and if performance improvements may lead to a change in those benchmarks.

MDOT Response:

MTA's Mobility Service window and on-time performance goals are based on industry standards and federal regulatory guidance. Mobility's on-time performance over the last nine months has vastly improved and has been consistently one of the best among its peer agencies. Additionally, a thirty-minute service window is by and large the most common service window in the Paratransit industry.

There are no plans to adjust either the service window or on-time performance goals within the next year. Mobility continues to work on ensuring consistency in performance and modernizing other aspects of the customer experience. Additionally, MTA recently launched a Mobility App which allows riders and their caretakers to track their ride in real time.

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Operating Budget Recommended Actions

- 1. Add language requesting reports on Purple Line progress. (Page 37)**

MDOT Response:

MTA concurs with the DLS recommendation.

PAYGO Budget Recommended Actions

- 1. Concur with Governor's allowance. (Page 37)**

MDOT Response:

MTA concurs with the DLS recommendation.