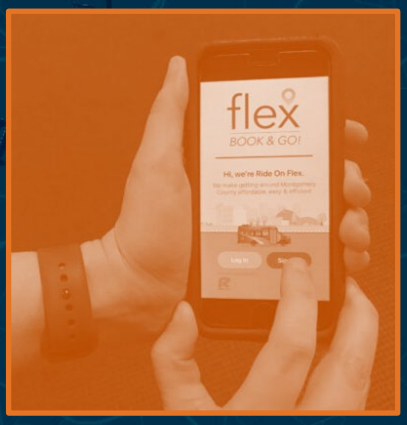
Montgomery County

Flex Expansion Study

September 2024



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Introduction

As Montgomery County works to restart and enhance FLEX Microtransit Service, it is important for the County to gather insights from peer implementations. By using lessons learned from prior service deployments and studies, the County can strategically develop new and improved microtransit services that not only builds upon established practices, but also introduces enhancements for a more efficient service.

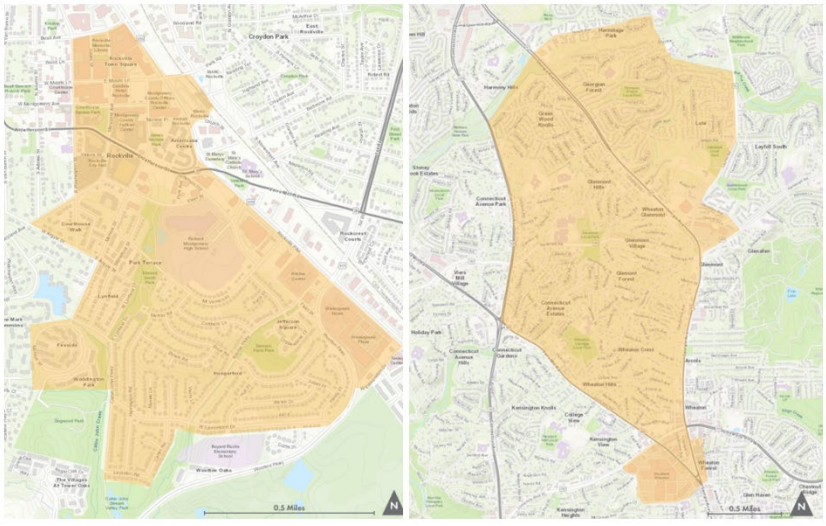
Review of Previous Montgomery County Studies

The following is a review of findings from the 2019 Flex Evaluation, Ride On Reimagined, and the ongoing Better Bus Network Redesign for the Washington Metropolitan Region. These studies will be reviewed in order to better understand the successes of microtransit service in the region and to identify what opportunities exist for future integration with other modes, gaps in service, and the public perception of service.

RIDE ON FLEX MICROTRANSIT PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT (2020)

Montgomery County's Ride On Flex service launched in the summer of 2019 and was the first microtransit program in the state of Maryland and in the Washington DC Area. Flex was planned as a one-year pilot program with two zones which served the Rockville and Wheaton-Glenmont areas, connecting residents to important services nearby and to the region via access to the Washington Area Metropolitan Transit System (WMATA) Red Line. The zones were developed with different use-cases in mind; the Wheaton-Glenmont provided service during peak hours, facilitating commuter connections to Red Line while the Rockville zone

Figure 1: Existing Ride On Flex Zone Maps



provided midday service only, providing important internal connections for residents and workers in the area alike.

The pilot had to be suspended during the pandemic and returned to service in 2021. Ride On Flex was operated by agency operators and vehicles using Via's microtransit software. MCDOT's Ride On Flex Microtransit Performance Assessment provided a comprehensive overview, analysis, and performance assessment of the two zones. The assessment described the service, provided detailed ridership data, and assessed the performance of the service.

Service Analysis Summary

The service analysis of MCDOT's Ride On Flex Performance Assessment compiled data regarding trip characteristics, geography, trip activity, and user demographics which provide important insight into who is using Flex service and where they travel.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The analysis found that in the first six months of service, 1,187 requested trips were completed in the Rockville zone at an average of 9.9 trips day. In the same time period, the Wheaton-Glenmont zone saw 2,808 completed trip requests, averaging at 23.4 trips per day. Trip distance in the Rockville area averaged at 0.8 miles and trip length averaged at six minutes. Trip distance and length in the Wheaton-Glenmont area average at 1.2 miles and eight minutes.

Despite some similarities, the demographic analysis of the zones demonstrated the differences in populations each zone served. While the Rockville zone served 50 percent one-vehicle households, the Wheaton-Glenmont zone only served 34 percent one-vehicle households. The Wheaton-Glenmont zone also served a much higher percentage of minority populations (80 percent in Wheaton-Glenmont compared to 58 percent in Rockville) while the Rockville zone served populations that were slightly older (17 percent aged 65 or older in Rockville compared to 11 percent in Wheaton-Glenmont). These differences could also likely be explained by the differing service hours provided by each one of the zones, attracting different passenger demographics based on trip needs.

RIDERSHIP AND TRIP REQUEST DATA

Data was collected on all trip requests, even when a trip was not provided. Approximately 6,379 trip requests were made during the study period, or an average of 53.2 requests per day. Based on the outcome, trip requests were placed in the following categories: completed, canceled, no-showed, not accepted by the passenger, other error, out-of-zone, seat unavailable. MCDOT found that 62 percent of requested trips were completed in the study period.

Although there were 3,995 total completed trips across both zones, trips can be requested for up six passengers. MCDOT found that a total of 4,550 passengers were transported in the study timeframe, averaging at around 1.14 passengers per trip.

The analysis found that the most popular areas for Flex service were the Glenmont, Wheaton, and Rockville Metro Stations. The Glenmont Metro Station had 675 pickups and 734 drop offs, with a total ridership activity of 1,409 trips, making it the most popular activity center for Flex service. While many ridership hotspots were located throughout residential neighborhoods and serving multi-family housing units, the most popular non-residential locations were Wheaton Mall (14th most active location), Wheaton High School (22nd), and Richard Montgomery High School (26th). Ridership hotspots can be seen in **Figure 2** below.

Figure 2: Ridership Hotspots for Wheaton-Glenmont and Rockville Zones

Ridership consistently grew during the study period; average daily ridership in the first five days of service was 19.2 trips per day while between December 9 to 13th, 2019, average daily ridership was up to 50.2 trips per day (or a 261 percent increase). The Wheaton-Glenmont zone saw greater ridership growth over the study period with an increase of 297 percent while the Rockville zone saw an increase of 214 percent. **The service became increasingly popular throughout just six months of service and demonstrated great potential for growth.**

The analysis also found that 71 percent of all Flex trips are one-way or lack a same-day return trip, indicating that users preferred not to use, or could not use Flex service to complete a return trip. The majority of ridership came from what MCDOT called "super users" or individuals who took almost daily trips. **The analysis found that the top ten most frequent users took 34 percent of the total trips provided, averaging at 135.4 trips per customer.**

One very important metric identified in the analysis was the percentage of regional linked trips. Due to Flex service's fare integration with the regional fare system, MCDOT found that approximately 70 percent of Flex customers used SmartTrip Cards when paying their fare. The data also found that about 50 percent of trips were linked to the regional transit system; 31.6 percent of trips transferred to Metrorail, 9.1 percent of trips transferred to Ride On, 4,8 percent transferred to Metrobus, and 4.5 percent had a linked trip with the Flex, indicating multiple daily trips. **These patterns stress the importance of Flex service's connections to Metro stations and other transportation infrastructure to provide first/last mile connections to the region**.

Performance Assessment Summary

As a novel service, performance standards for microtransit are still being defined throughout the country. While traditional measures that are often used to assess the performance of demand-responsive transportation (DRT) are extremely valuable, they may not show the full picture of what microtransit service is really capable of and underutilize important data that is now available through applications. In order to adequately assess the performance of Flex service, MCDOT created performance standards that combine traditional standards for DRT while identifying potential performance indicators that were more tailored to assess microtransit operations.

Based on the available data, MCDOT used the following five categories to group performance metrics:

- Productivity
- Cost Effectiveness
- Shared Ride
- Connection to Transit
- Customer Satisfaction

Table 1 is a performance summary of the first 120 days of Flex service (June 26, 2019, to December 16, 2019):

Table 1: Performance Assessment Summary

ZONE	ROCKVILLE	WHEATON-GLENMONT (TOTAL)	WHEATON-GLENMONT		TOTAL
			6:00 AM TO 9:00 AM	3:30 PM TO 6:00 PM	
PRODUCTIVITY					
Completed Passenger Trips	1,504	3,046	1,502	1,541	4,550
Average Completed Daily Trips	9.9	23.4	11.6	11.9	35.3
Total Trip Requests	1,845	4,517	N/A	N/A	6,362
Percentage of Completed Trip Requests	64%	67%	N/A	N/A	67%
Percentage of Canceled Trips Requests	3.7%	4.5%	N/A	N/A	4.3%
Passenger Trips/Rev. Hour	1.52	1.95	2.09	1.84	1.81
COST-EFFECTIVENESS					
Operating Cost/Pass. Trip	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	$57.06
Operating Cost/Rev. Hour	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	$83.86
Operating Cost/Rev. Mile	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	$56.50
Fare Collected/Pass. Trip	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	$1.13

ZONE	ROCKVILLE	WHEATON-GLENMONT (TOTAL)	WHEATON-GLENMONT		TOTAL
			6:00 AM TO 9:00 AM	3:30 PM TO 6:00 PM	
SHARED RIDE					
Percentage of Shared Passenger Trips	12%	16%	17%	15%	15%
Percentage of Multi- Passenger Trip Requests	20%	6%	7%	6%	10%
CONNECTING TO TRANSIT					
Percentage of Trips to Metro stations	21%	15% (Wheaton) 24% (Glenmont)	27% (Wheaton) 42% (Glenmont)	2% (Wheaton) 6% (Glenmont)	34%
Percentage of Trips from Metro stations	7%	10% (Wheaton) 22% (Glenmont)	1% (Wheaton) 4% (Glenmont)	19% (Wheaton) 40% (Glenmont)	25%
CUSTOMER SATISFACTION					
Average Wait Time (Mins.)	6.23	8.97	8.87	9.07	8.15
Average Trip Time/ Duration (Minutes)	5.86	7.75	7.47	8.02	7.18
Average Wait & Trip Time (Minutes)	12.09	16.72	16.34	17.09	15.33
Average Trip Distance (Miles)	0.72	1.22	1.19	1.24	1.07
Percentage of Daily Roundtrips	22%	26%	3%	8%	25%
Rider Retention	63%	73%	71%	69%	70%

Key Takeaways:

- In the first 120 days of service, the Ride on Flex completed 4,550 passenger trips, averaging 33.3 passengers per day. Ridership was higher in the Wheaton Glenmont zone, where two vehicles operated averaging 1,523 trips per vehicle while the Rockville zone averaged 1,188 trips using one vehicle.
- Metro stations were key destinations and origins for flex services; in the Wheaton Glenmont Zone 69 percent of morning trips ended at a Metro station while 59 percent of evening trips originated from Metro stations. Although the Rockville station provided midday service which was not aimed at serving commuters, the Rockville Metro station was the most popular destination in the zone (21 percent of trips ended at the station).
- Return trips were low for both zones (26 percent in the Wheaton-Glenmont Zone and 22 percent in the Rockville Zone). This suggests that some customers are finding other alternatives to reach their homes or starting points in the evening.

- While the Rockville Zone had lower ridership, it had shorter customer wait times and shorter trips. This is most likely due to the size of the zone (0.7 square miles) compared to the Wheaton-Glenmont Zone (3.4 miles).

Customer Survey Results

In order to better understand public perception of microtransit, Ride On began a survey effort in September 2019 through the Flex app.

Although the survey successfully identified a few key trends when it came to the use of the app, it was launched only two-and-a-half months after Flex service began in June 2019. Therefore, many respondents had not yet had the opportunity to use the service. For example, 81 percent of respondents indicated that they had never requested a ride using the Flex App. Of the respondents, approximately 18 percent indicated that they had requested a trip and about five percent indicated that they had taken more than ten rides.

Questions from the Ride On Flex Customer Survey

1. How many rides have you taken on the Ride On Flex service?
2. If you have never taken a ride, what are the main reason(s) why you have never done so?
3. Which of the following would make Ride On Flex a more appealing service?
4. In what zip code do you live?
5. What feedback do you have about the Ride On Flex application?

About 73 percent of responses came from Montgomery County residents. Respondents near the Wheaton-Glenmont zone combined for a total of 28 percent of responses and those near the Rockville zone made up about 11 percent of total responses. When asked why app users aren't using the service, 41 percent of respondents indicated that they just wanted to test out the app. Twenty-seven percent of respondents indicated that they did not live in the service area; this point is important because later on in the survey, many people asked for expanded service. When it came to using the app, eight percent of respondents found the wait time too long and five percent of respondents found the app confusing.

The third question focused on service improvements or enhancements. Many respondents (57.5 percent) indicated that they would like to see an expanded service coverage area. Approximately, 19 percent of respondents indicated that they would prefer door-to-door rather than corner-to-corner service and 17 percent of respondents indicated that they would prefer shorter wait times. About seven percent of respondents indicated that they would prefer a better experience using the app.

The final question which requested general feedback in an open-ended comment form, many comments focused on enhancing zones through the extension of service areas or service hours. Many commenters, who said they were just testing the app, noted that the idea of the Flex was exciting.

Stakeholder Interviews

In an effort to gather feedback from a variety of stakeholders, the County engaged with customers, managers, and peers to gather any insight that could improve microtransit service. The following is a summary of findings from the interviews.

FLEX RIDE-ALONGS: The study team conducted ride-alongs on the Flex and interviewed customers. Many customers that were interviewed did not have access to a vehicle and would either have to walk, take a long bus ride, or use Uber or Lyft to reach their destination. Customers noted that as Flex became

more popular, wait times have increased. Many customers also requested improved service hour spans or zone area boundaries.

STUDY ADVISORY GROUP: A project kick-off meeting which included Montgomery County and Ride On staff was held to provide the opportunity for general background information on the Flex service planning and implementation. The service received positive reviews.

OPERATIONS GROUP: The study team interviewed the operations group that manages and runs the Flex during the preliminary research portion of the analysis. At the time of the interviews, there were ongoing discussions about whether it would be more valuable to expand service into new areas or enhance service in existing zones. The operations team also noted that targeted marketing in existing zones could also generate additional ridership.

On the driver side, the group noted that the expansion of service would aid with driver shifts. Because of the varied service spans, Flex drivers had to work split shifts where they would take an extended break. Straight shifts are more desirable for operators. According to the group, with more regular hours, straight shifts would become more common than split shifts. When Flex was launched, many drivers were hesitant to take on the new service. But now, Flex is one of the most sought-after assignments for veteran drivers.

RIDE ON REIMAGINED

The Ride On Reimagined study is a comprehensive assessment of the Ride On bus network that recommends significant changes to transit in Montgomery County based on current and future needs. The study evaluates existing and planned transit systems and infrastructure that operated within the county. Though the project is nearing completion, the study team shared their Draft Network Concept **(Figure 3)** earlier this year, which includes existing Ride On and Metrobus routes, proposed Ride On routes, and **17 new Flex zones and two updated zones.** In an effort to involve the community in the planning process, the study team collected public feedback regarding some of the changes Montgomery County residents would like to see. Many of the comments specifically focused on Flex zones and the changes residents would like to see in the service.

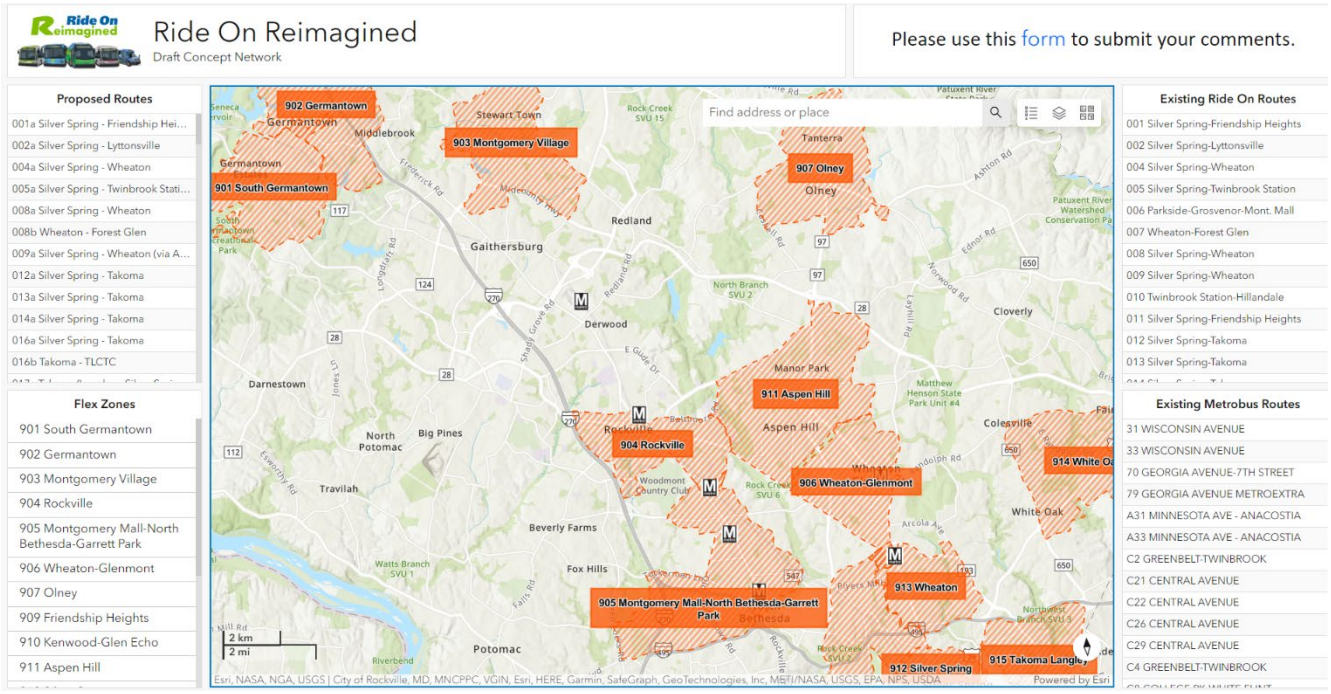
There are currently nine proposed microtransit Flex zones on the periphery of Washington DC and along the WMATA Red Line. The zones will serve as important connectors to regional transit for many residents in the County:

- 905 Montgomery Mall-North Bethesda-Garrett Park (includes service to Twinbrook, North Bethesda, and Grosvenor-Strathmore Metro Stations)
- 904 Rockville (includes service to Rockville Metro Station)
- 906 Wheaton-Glenmont (includes service to Wheaton and Glenmont Metro Stations)
- 909 Friendship Heights (includes service to Bethesda Metro Station)
- 910 Kenwood-Glen Echo
- 912 Silver Spring (includes service to Silver Spring Metro Station)
- 913 Wheaton (includes service to Wheaton Metro Station)
- 915 Takoma Langley
- 916 Chevy Chase (includes service to Wheaton Metro Station)

Ten zones were also proposed in other areas of the county towards the north and northwest. While these zones may not have connections to Metrorail, there are still proposed connections to Ride On transit, commuter routes, and other transportation service. Microtransit zones also provide important internal mobility for residents who do not have access to frequent fixed-route transit. The following zones were proposed:

- 901 South Germantown
- 902 Germantown
- 903 Montgomery Village
- 907 Olney
- 911 Aspen Hill (including Leisure World)
- 914 White Oak
- 917 Universities at Shady Grove
- 918 South Olney
- 976 Germantown-Poolesville
- 990 Damascus-Clarksburg-Milestone-Germantown

Figure 3: Ride On Reimagined Draft Concept Network Zones



Public Comments

The Ride On Reimagined study received 23 public comments regarding Flex between September and November 2023. Feedback regarding Flex could be categorized into three types of comments:

- Respondents who would like to see Flex expanded,
- Respondents who are simply supportive of Flex service, and
- Respondents who were concerned about using resources and replacing bus routes in favor of establishing Flex zones.

Primary Concerns Regarding Ride On Flex Expansion

- Cost-effectiveness and affordability of Flex service.
- The expansion of Flex service in lieu of increased frequency for fixed-route service.
- The replacement of routes that are important to certain communities in favor of Flex service.
- The rapid expansion of Flex service to 19 zones.

A review of public comments on proposed Ride On Flex zones showed the following:

- Ten respondents are hesitant about the expansion, mainly citing concerns about cost effectiveness and the loss of fixed route service.
- Eight respondents stated that they would like to see the service expanded to better serve some areas or communities.
- Three respondents indicated that they were strongly supportive of Flex, citing it as an innovative service that leverages technology to improve connections.

RECOMMENDED RESPONSES

Based on the review of survey data, focus groups, and public engagement, the following recommendations were developed in an effort to promote the successful implementation of Ride On Flex service in Montgomery County.

- **Develop and implement zones with customer feedback at the forefront.** Engagement from the Flex app and Ride On Reimagined demonstrated that while there is excitement for the service, many existing and potential users would like to see zones expanded. Although expansion needs to be measured and larger zones can often mean longer wait times, zone development and adjustments must be heavily reliant on community input.
- **Provide additional service to minimize wait times.** Many respondents indicated that one drawback of Ride On Flex is the long wait times. By providing increased service in zones, the County can reduce wait times and attract more riders to the service. Wait times can also be reduced by ensuring zones are properly sized.
- **Expand service hours.** Respondents indicated that microtransit service did not suit them because they had non-traditional work hours. By providing service later in the evening and earlier in the morning, Ride On Flex could capture more riders who may have trouble accessing any form of transit because of reduced service.
- **Educate potential riders on the advantages of microtransit service.** Although microtransit may have its disadvantages in comparison to fixed-route transit, it has many important use cases and can provide service in hard-to-reach areas. The County could provide education regarding the benefits of the service and could also provide potential riders with assurance that microtransit is not in competition with fixed-route service.

Operating Characteristics & Best Practices

The following section describes the available service delivery models for microtransit service and ongoing operations around the United States. This review provides important insight for the development of microtransit service in Montgomery County, identifying best practices and a variety of operating characteristics to determine how to run future Ride On Flex service.

USE CASES

A feature of microtransit services is that they can be designed for a variety of use cases, including integration into existing transit systems. Case studies identified in the Peer Review section of this report provide examples of microtransit programs planned and operated to replace underperforming fixed-route transit lines, provide important first-mile/last-mile connections, and/or help bring new transportation options to geographies previously lacking transit service. Each of these common use cases are described in this section. However, there are some cases in which services may have characteristics of more than one use case.

Underperforming Fixed-Route Replacement

In this use case, a microtransit zone is created in a location where fixed-route transit already exists but is typically underperforming (i.e. low ridership) and the area may have high microtransit suitability. The concept of microtransit suitability refers to the identification of locations where there are relatively high levels of transit service need, but relatively lower levels of other characteristics such as density and walkability that would make fixed-route service more viable. In this use case, microtransit can either replace the route/service entirely or replace just a portion of it (e.g., an unproductive segment or time period such as only during late night hours). The majority of the proposed Ride On Flex zones will be replacing underperforming routes in Montgomery County. Although this use case is very commonly used for new microtransit service, the County must work with stakeholders in order to ensure that the replacement of routes does not have disproportionate effects on communities that rely on existing fixed-route services, as is required under Title VI.

First-/Last-Mile Connections

In places with low intersection density or poor sidewalk conditions, the lack of a first/last mile transit connection can place a significant burden on vulnerable populations and even act as a barrier to transit use entirely. A first/last mile-oriented microtransit service can be deployed to reduce barriers to transit use and to complement existing transit services, especially high-frequency bus or rail. This service type would typically gather riders in residential parts of the zone, and shuttle them to nearby hubs for transit services. Many of the proposed Flex zones will provide important first/last mile connections to WMATA Metrorail stations in the County as well as important hubs for other transit services.

New Service Area

Microtransit can serve as a transportation solution for areas currently lacking transit service. In this use case, microtransit creates new access opportunities. In some cases, it can be implemented as an extension of an existing service area, geographically or temporally, serving places where transit currently does not operate, or does not operate at all times needed throughout the day. New service area

characteristics can vary significantly from one use case to the next – some microtransit services cover entire counties, while others, often much smaller in size, offer local circulation opportunities. The proposed Ride On Flex zones will be providing new service to many areas throughout the county. Zones providing new service include: 918 South Olney, 911 Aspen Hill, 914 White Oak, and 976 Germantown-Poolesville.

Table 2 shows microtransit use cases and identifies the potential benefits associated with each. Benefits are classified as "primary" or "secondary"; primary benefits are those that represent the most common and generally strongest benefits an agency is pursuing in implementing the use case, while secondary benefits are those that may be achieved but are less likely to be driving influencing factors in the decision to implement micro-transit.

Table 2: Intended Primary and Secondary Benefits of Microtransit Use Cases

	UNDERPERFORMING FIXED-ROUTE REPLACEMENT	FIRST/LAST MILE CONNECTIONS	NEW SERVICE AREA
Improved customer experience	✓	✓	✓
Increase ridership on or connection to higher capacity network	✓	✓	✓ (if providing connection)
Increase productivity and/or cost savings	✓	✓	✗
Increased coverage	✓	✓	✓
Improved agency experience	✓	✓	✓
Enhanced safety	✓ (esp. late night)	✓	✓

✓ – Primary intended benefit; ✓ – Secondary benefit (most commonly); ✗ – Not a benefit

Table 3 below summarizes the primary and secondary use cases for proposed Ride On Flex zones. Routes that are being replaced by microtransit zones are listed in the furthest column to the right.

Table 3: Ride On Reimagined- Flex Use Cases

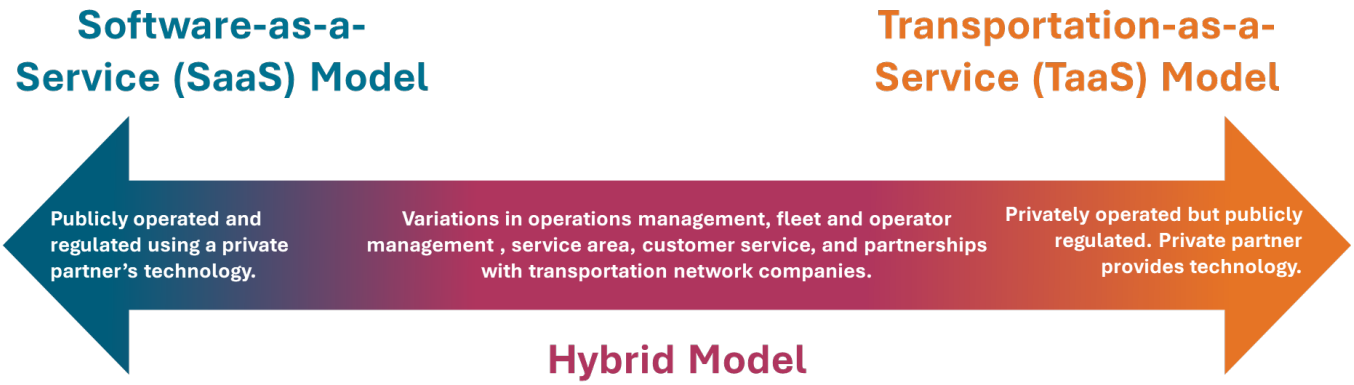
ZONE	SERVICE AREA	PRIMARY USE CASE	SECONDARY USE CASE	ROUTES REPLACED
901	South Germantown	Replacing underperforming routes	Expanded service area	75, 98
902	Germantown	Replacing underperforming routes	Expanded service area	83, 97
903	Montgomery Village	Replacing underperforming routes	Expanded service area	64, 65
904	Rockville	First/Last mile connection	Replacing underperforming route	44
905	Montgomery Mall-North Bethesda-Garrett Park	First/Last mile connection	Replacing underperforming routes	6, 10, 47, 96
906	Wheaton-Glenmont	First/Last mile connection	Replacing underperforming routes	31, 51

ZONE	SERVICE AREA	PRIMARY USE CASE	SECONDARY USE CASE	ROUTES REPLACED
907	Olney	Replacing underperforming routes	Expanded service area	52, 53
909	Friendship Heights	First/Last mile connection	Expanded service area	N/A
910	Kenwood-Glen Echo	First/Last mile connection	Replacing underperforming routes	36, T2
911	Aspen Hill (Includes Leisure World)	Expanded service area	N/A	N/A
912	Silver Spring	First/Last mile connection	Replacing underperforming routes	1, 2, 4, 18, 28
913	Wheaton	First/Last mile connection	Replacing underperforming routes	7, 19, 37
914	White Oak	Expanded service area	N/A	N/A
915	Takoma-Langley Park	Replacing underperforming routes	First/Last mile connection	14
916	Chevy Chase-Kensington	First/Last mile connection	Expanded service area	N/A
917	Universities at Shady Grove	First/Last mile connection	Expanded service area	N/A
918	South Olney	Expanded service area	N/A	Z2
976	Germantown-Poolesville	Expanded service area	First/Last mile connection	N/A
990	Damascus-Clarksburg-Milestone-Germantown TC	Replacing underperforming route	Expanded service area	90

SERVICE DELIVERY MODELS AND CHARACTERISTICS

This section identifies three microtransit service delivery models that Ride On could use to provide microtransit service, and describes how each service model would work. A microtransit service delivery model refers to the division of responsibility in providing microtransit service between public agencies and vendors, also called mobility technology companies. There are three predominant models: the software-as-a-service or SaaS Model, the transportation-as-a-service or TaaS model, and the hybrid model, which uses aspects of both SaaS and TaaS. Although these models describe the predominant practices for the operation of microtransit service, there is opportunity for flexibility between models. **Figure 6** below illustrates the spectrum of responsibilities for the operation of microtransit service and how the delivery models might overalp.

Figure 4: Microtransit Service Model Spectrum of Responsibilities



The following is an overview of each of the predominant service delivery models. Table 4 below describes operational responsibilities, advantages, and disadvantages for each model.

Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) Model

Under this scenario, transit agencies use their own vehicles and operators, and contract with a vendor that supplies the technology platform. The technology enables riders to book trips via mobile app or by calling Ride On by phone. Ride On operators assigned to Flex respond to trip requests in a single zone. Ride On has used this model to provide microtransit service since Flex began in 2019.

Transportation-as-a-Service (TaaS or "Turnkey") Model

Under this scenario, a transit agency would contract with a vendor that would supply the technology, vehicles, and drivers to operate the micro-transit service. The transit agency would define the microtransit service parameters and requirements and oversee the both the service and vendor performance. The vendor would offer an application (app)-based booking option and provide all the technical and customer support functions for the service. The vendor would be responsible for managing driver and vehicle availability to meet performance targets such as wait time targets set by the agency.

Hybrid Model

Under a hybrid model, microtransit service can include elements of both TaaS and SaaS service models. Agencies can decide how much to delegate and which elements they want to manage. Agencies can also leverage partnerships with transportation network companies (TNCs) to fill gaps in service.

Two prevailing hybrid models currently exist:

- **Zone-Specific TaaS or SaaS Model:** Agencies will use the TaaS model for some zones and the SaaS model for other zones. This type of hybrid model is often used to provide service in more remote areas that may be hard to access or are currently outside of an agency's existing service area.
- **Partnerships with Transportation Network Companies (TNCs):** Agencies develop partnerships with TNCs to fill gaps in existing microtransit service, providing more options for riders. Arrangements with TNCs include, but are not limited to:

- ☐ TNC provides app-based booking and trips. The agency subsidizes trips that fall under microtransit parameters but that they are unable to fulfill.
- ☐ Agency and TNC share an app where riders can select their preferred provider.
- ☐ Agency runs microtransit service but can bring in TNC when demand outpaces agency supply.

Table 4: Service Model Responsibilities, Advantages, and Disadvantages

SERVICE MODEL	RESPONSIBILITIES		ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
	AGENCY	VENDOR		
Software-as-a-Service (SaaS)	■ Develop microtransit zones. ■ Requires additional human resources to serve a variety of functions. ■ Provide vehicles, drivers, and maintenance. ■ Market the service and educate the public. ■ Consider how the new service aligns with CBA requirements and identify any needed changes	■ Offer an application (app)-based booking option. ■ Provide technical and customer support functions for the service or to agency staff if agency provides customer support directly. ■ Provide the agency with performance data including ridership, pick-ups, origins/destinations.	■ Operational control and flexibility ■ In-house staffing and ability to train staff to agency standards	■ Higher costs. Cost is impacted by procuring vehicles if they are not already readily available. ■ Need for increased internal capacity. ■ Potential updates to established CBA terms to account for microtransit operators

SERVICE MODEL	RESPONSIBILITIES		ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
	AGENCY	VENDOR		
Transportation-as-a-Service (TaaS)	■ Develop microtransit zones. ■ Define microtransit service parameters and requirements. ■ Oversee the performance of the service and the vendor. ■ Market the service and educate the public	■ Offer an application (app)-based booking option. ■ Provide technical and customer support functions for the service. ■ Manage driver and vehicle availability to meet agency performance standards. ■ Provide drivers, vehicles, and maintenance	■ Lower cost option ■ Requires less staff admin time for ongoing management. ■ Ability to specify and enforce performance standards. ■ Service can transition to the SaaS model if it is successful. ■ Service can be implemented within a shorter time frame.	■ Additional training will be necessary for independent contractors which could be costly. ■ Requires extra consideration and effort to interface with the established CBA terms. ■ Customer service functions may be subpar if outsourced and not closely monitored for quality
Hybrid Model	The hybrid model is scalable and responsive to agency needs. Service responsibilities can be distributed in a way that best fits agency needs. Factors may include driver availability, vehicle availability, ridership demand, agency capacity, microtransit service zone constraints, and/or financial limitations.		■ Can be a lower cost alternative. ■ Can fit specific agency needs. ■ Can potentially create more choices for riders. ■ Can create new or build upon existing partnerships with TNCs	■ Independent contractors may not be as well trained or compensated as bus operators. ■ If more than one TNC participates, riders may be required to choose between providers. ■ May not be as operationally efficient if multiple providers participate.

CASE STUDIES

The following is a review of other microtransit operations in the United States. Agencies using a variety of service models and for a variety of use cases were identified to demonstrate potential operating models for Ride On Flex service.

DART Connect (Delaware)

DART Connect provides on-demand microtransit service throughout the state of Delaware. Service is currently operating in the Newark, Georgetown, and Millsboro areas. The service was originally launched in Georgetown to **replace routes 901 and 902, which were underperforming deviated-fixed routes** that provided service between the towns of Georgetown and Millsboro. The pilot program was funded by an Accelerating Innovative Mobility (AIM) FTA grant and extended through January 2023 with additional state funds.

DART Connect Service Summary

Service model: Software-as-a-service model
Use case(s): Replacing underperforming routes.
Productivity: 70 to 80 riders per day (April 2021- January 2023)

Figure 5: DART Connect Vehicle - Credit: DART First State social media.

Service is provided by First Transit via contract, with trip booking and routing services provided by Via using the SaaS model. DART operates a call center that uses Via's Operations Center product to handle phone bookings – about 50 percent of rides are booked via app and 50 percent by phone. The agency continues to operate statewide paratransit service, including in the DART Connect zone. Since its launch date in April 2021, DART Connect has provided over 34,000 total rides (as of January 2023), averaging 70 to 80 riders per day.

DART Connect provides an example of a microtransit service that replaced underperforming fixed route service in rural parts of its service area. The agency's experience replacing routes provides valuable insight for the implementation of Ride On Flex zones in rural areas.

RTA Connect On-Demand Service Summary

Service model**: Hybrid model**. Partnership with TNCs
Use case(s): Replacing underperforming routes, first/last mile connections, expanded service.
Productivity: 70 to 80 riders per day (April 2021- January 2023)

RTA Connect On-Demand (Dayton, Ohio)

RTA Connect On-Demand provides microtransit service across four zones throughout the Dayton area. The service was launched in June 2017 with Lyft as a partner, following the reduction of $4 million in RTA's budget due to state-level sales tax changes. The service was launched to maintain service where fixed-route reductions were needed. Uber and other partners were added to the service after a year and a half of service.

Service is provided using the hybrid model, through a combination of in-house drivers and vehicles, as well as contracts with non-dedicated service providers (NDSPs) – Uber, Lyft, and a local taxi company. Riders directly select which provider they want to use and book directly with provider. RTA Connect On-Demand trips are free and TNC apps are programmed to automatically make fares free if a trip is within the zone.

The service was developed for a variety of use cases. Primarily, it was **created to replace fixed-route service following funding loss**. **It was also implemented to provide first/last mile connections and**

expand service in areas previously without it. In a recent assessment of RTA Connect On-Demand, the service provided rides for about 500 passengers per day or 6,000 trips per month at its busiest month.

HRT OnDemand Pilot (Hampton Roads, Virginia)

Hampton Roads Transit piloted their OnDemand microtransit service between July 2022 and February 2023. Through their pilot, the agency sought to explore how on-demand transportation can be used to **expand service and to make it easier for residents to connect with existing transit services**. The program was funded using a State Demonstration Grant.

Service was operated in two zones, one in Newport News and the other in Virginia Beach. The pilot was operated under the Transportation as-a-Service model or "turnkey" model, where a vendor provided the software services as well as the drivers and vehicles.

HRT OnDemand Service Summary

Service model**: Transportation-as-a-Service model.**
Use case(s): First/last mile connections, expanded service.
Productivity: 26,258 total ride requests in Newport News, and 13,037 in Virginia Beach

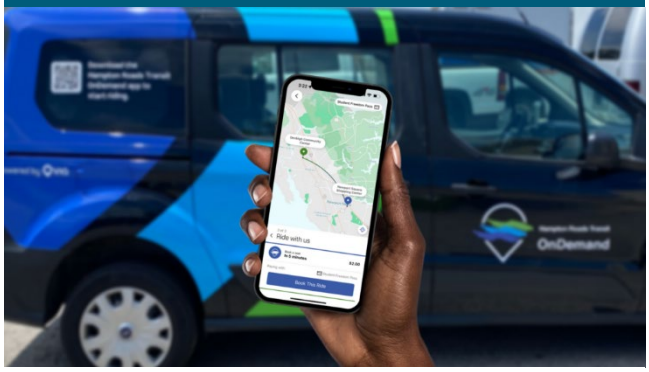


Figure 6: HRT OnDemand - Credit: Via

Following the termination of the pilot program, the agency reported a total of 26,258 ride requests in the Newport News zone and 13,037 ride requests in the Virginia Beach zone. HRT is currently exploring OnDemand as a new mode of service.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **The SaaS model is currently the most suitable for future Ride On Flex operation.** Ride On operated pilot zones by using agency vehicles and operators while contracting out the microtransit software service. Because of the County's experience with software as a service and investments in their vehicles, operating new zones using the SaaS model would require the least additional level of effort for the agency. Although procurement and hiring will take time, the agency has learned many lessons from the pilot program which could be leveraged to improve any future service.
- **Montgomery County must continue to engage with the public.** Sentiment around the deployment of new Ride On Flex Zones, and their potential for the replacement of fixed route services, is mixed. The County must work to message the benefits of microtransit adequately while ensuring that feedback from the public is integrated into the development of zones, adjusting zone boundaries accordingly. Customer input can also guide aspects such as service hours and wait times.

2. Re-examination of Expansion Opportunities

Introduction

To enhance public transportation system within Montgomery County, this chapter presents a comprehensive analysis of proposed microtransit zones as identified by the County's Ride On Reimagined initiative. Ride On Reimagined is a comprehensive assessment of the Ride On bus network that plans to make significant recommended changes to transit in Montgomery County based on current and future needs. An in-depth analysis of ridership and transit performance made two major findings: most trips within Montgomery County are short and many existing fixed-route circulators are underperforming.

Based on these findings, Montgomery County established 19 new Ride On Flex zones throughout the County to enhance coverage and better accommodate short trips. Additionally, the County plans to pilot three new deviated fixed routes (included within the 19 total zones), known as Fixed-Flex, to connect residents to commercial centers and high-frequency transit. This innovative, user-friendly service differs from traditional fixed-route transit by continuing to provide transit to important destinations while maintaining the flexibility on demand software can offer.

This analysis will provide a data driven foundation for the strategic expansion of Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT)'s microtransit network, thereby improving accessibility and fostering a more equitable transportation system. By evaluating these zones against various metrics under different use case scenarios, zones will be refined and prioritized for deployment.

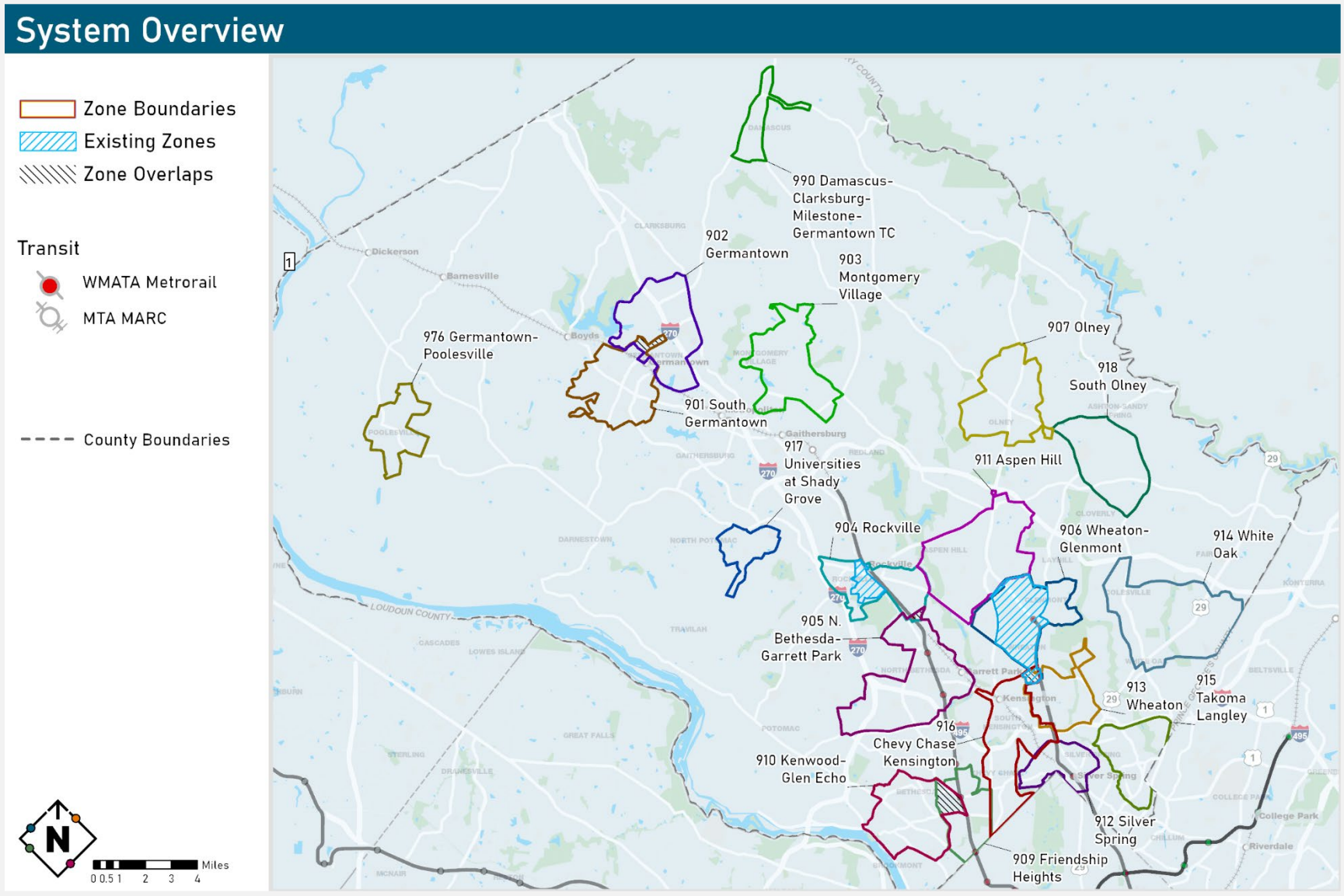
Zone Overview

The Ride On Reimagined effort highlights 19 microtransit zones throughout Montgomery County, including two existing zones, covering 85.1 square miles. Approximately 485,815 people and 235,964 jobs will be within this proposed microtransit network. The service area is comprised of a population where 61.7 percent identify as minorities and 14.0 percent as low-income individuals, as shown in **Table 5**. **Figure 7** illustrates the proposed microtransit zones, as well as the County's existing Ride On Flex zones in the Wheaton/Glenmont and Rockville areas.

Table 5: Demographic Characteristics for Proposed Microtransit Zones

METRICS	VALUE
Area	**85.1 square miles**
Population (2020)	**485,815**
Jobs (2019)	**235,964**
Minority Population Percent (2020)	**61.7%**
Percentage of Low-Income Population (2020)	**14.0%**
No Car Households Percent (2020)	**10.1%**

Figure 7: Proposed Microtransit Zones



Zone Evaluation

Microtransit services offer the opportunity to reimagine community transit, offering a fresh perspective on how to better meet the needs of people living in areas where fixed route transit is not feasible to enhance accessibility with community resources. To pinpoint where microtransit is most appropriate, several metrics such as density, need for transit, where vulnerable populations reside, and access to transit were assessed.

To ensure equitable distribution of microtransit service, candidate zones were compared against the Metropolitan Washington Council of Government's Equity Emphasis Areas (EEAs) and Montgomery Planning's Equity Focus Areas (EFAs) to determine which zones provide greater coverage in areas where low-income, minority populations, and people with limited English proficiency reside. Additionally. zones were also overlayed over existing rail transit infrastructure to identify which zones provide access to the broader transit network. Lastly, maps of intersection density and regional activity generators including shopping centers, grocery stores, schools, hospitals, and other key community institutions were developed to illustrate which zones serve major activity centers in the region.

Following the assessment of equity, access to transit, and access to regional activity centers, microtransit suitability was examined by conducting an evaluation of transit potential and transit need throughout the County to assess which zones are most suitable for prioritized implementation. Transit potential assesses the job and population density to determine whether an area is suitable for service while transit need assesses whether the populations in the study area are reliant on transit. A bivariate analysis that integrates datasets on transit potential and need was utilized to assess proposed Ride On Flex zones for Montgomery County's Ride On Reimagined.

The findings of this existing conditions and suitability analysis will inform the County about which zones have the greatest potential to fill transit gaps in the County and should be prioritized in the following implementation phase.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Equity

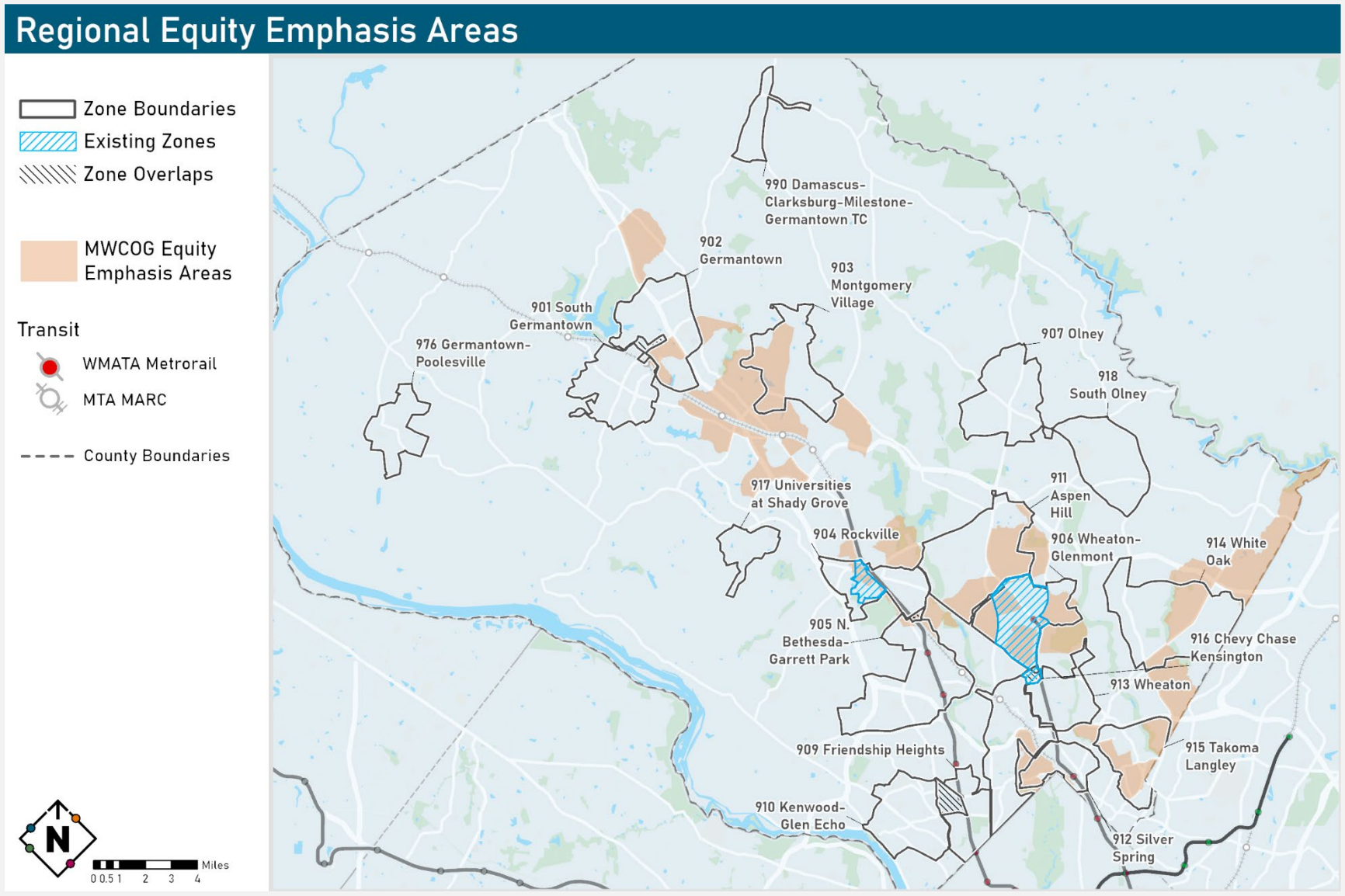
To assess equity, zones were overlayed over MWCOG's Equity Emphasis Areas. MWCOG determines EEAs as census tracts with a high concentration ratio of the following populations:

- Low-Income (defined as household income less than one-and-a-half times the federal government's official poverty threshold which varies by household size).
- African American
- Asian, and
- Hispanic or Latino.

Although there are many ways equity populations can be defined, using MWCOG's metric for equity provides a regionally appropriate metric that has been used for other equity analyses throughout the greater Washington D.C. region. **Figure 8** illustrates the prevalence of equity populations in the southeastern portion of Montgomery County along US-29 and I-95. Other pockets can be found in the Aspen Hill area along Georgia Avenue, and along I-270 in the northwest in the Gaithersburg and Germantown areas. Candidate zones that would provide service to EEA's include the following:

- 901 South Germantown
- 902 Germantown
- 903 Montgomery Village
- 904 Rockville
- 905 N. Bethesda-Garrett Park
- 906 Wheaton-Glenmont
- 911 Aspen Hill
- 912 Silver Spring
- 914 White Oak
- 915 Takoma Langley
- 916 Chevy Chase-Kensington

Figure 8: Regional Equity Emphasis Areas

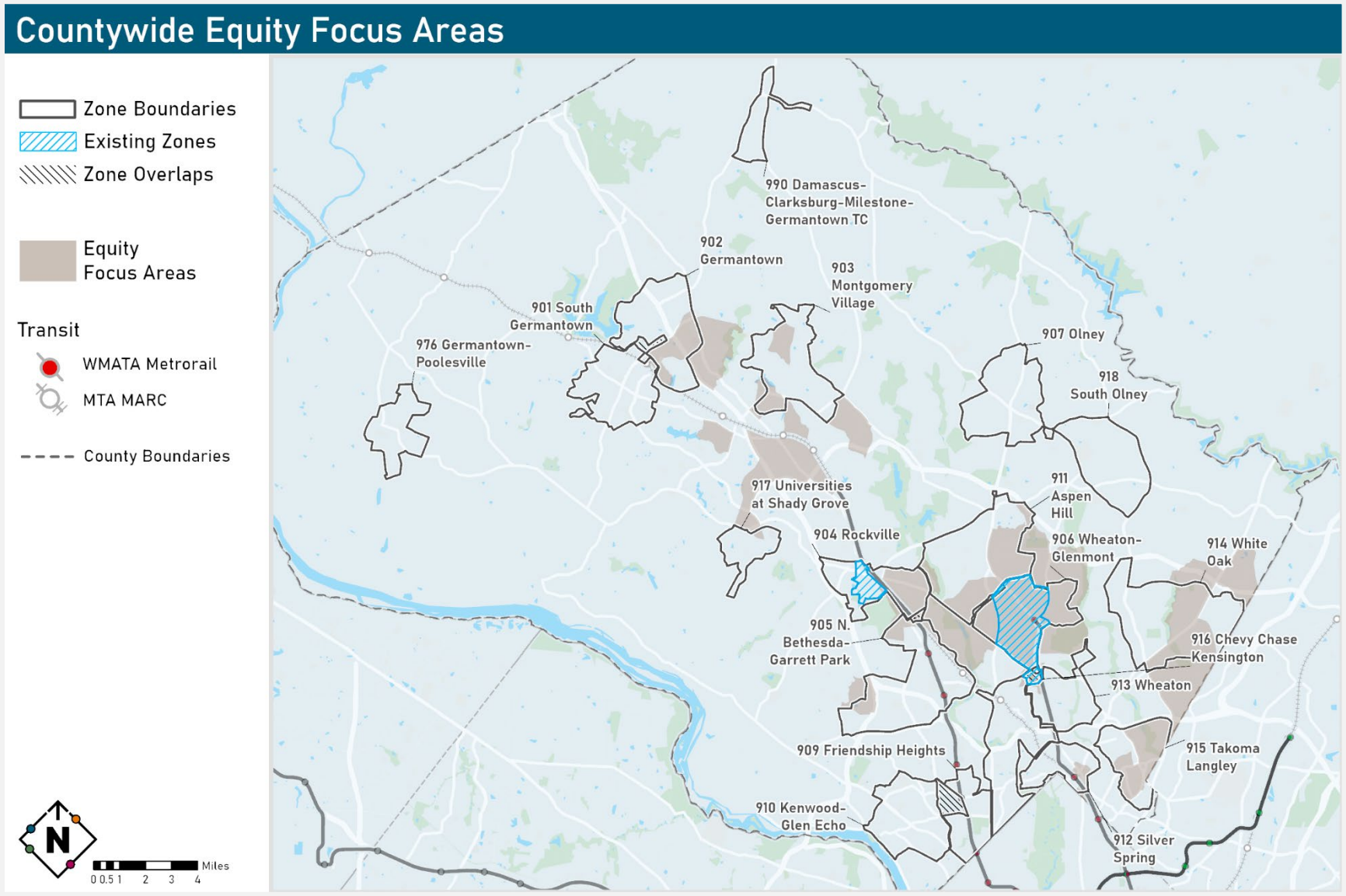


Similar analysis was conducted by overlaying zones over Montgomery Planning's Equity Focus Areas (EFAs). EFAs within Montgomery County are identified census tracts with significant populations of low-income people of color, who may also have limited proficiency in English. **Figure 9** visualizes EFAs across the county. Approximately 275,875 people, or 26.5 percent of the county's population, reside in EFAs. These areas are predominantly located along the I-270 Corridor, the US- 29 Corridor, and the eastern portion of Down-County, which is similar to the regional EEAs. Proposed zones that offer services to EFAs include the following:

- 901 South Germantown
- 902 Germantown
- 903 Montgomery Village
- 904 Rockville
- 905 N. Bethesda-Garrett Park
- 906 Wheaton-Glenmont
- 909 Friendship Heights
- 911 Aspen Hill (and Leisure World)
- 912 Silver Spring
- 914 White Oak
- 915 Takoma Langley
- 916 Chevy Chase-Kensington
- 917 Universities at Shady Grove

It is important to note that while this analysis demonstrates which zones serve EEAs and EFAs, the subsequent section of this chapter provides numerical equity scores that are not based on EEAs or EFAs. Numerical equity scores are calculated based on how well zones serve equity populations in relation to each other. Thus, while this analysis offers a broad geographical overview of zones serving equity populations and potential areas for future research, the numerical equity scores furnish a more detailed comparison of these zones' performance in serving equity populations. This dual approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of both the spatial distribution and the quantitative effectiveness of microtransit services in addressing the needs of equity populations.

Figure 9: Montgomery County Equity Focus Areas



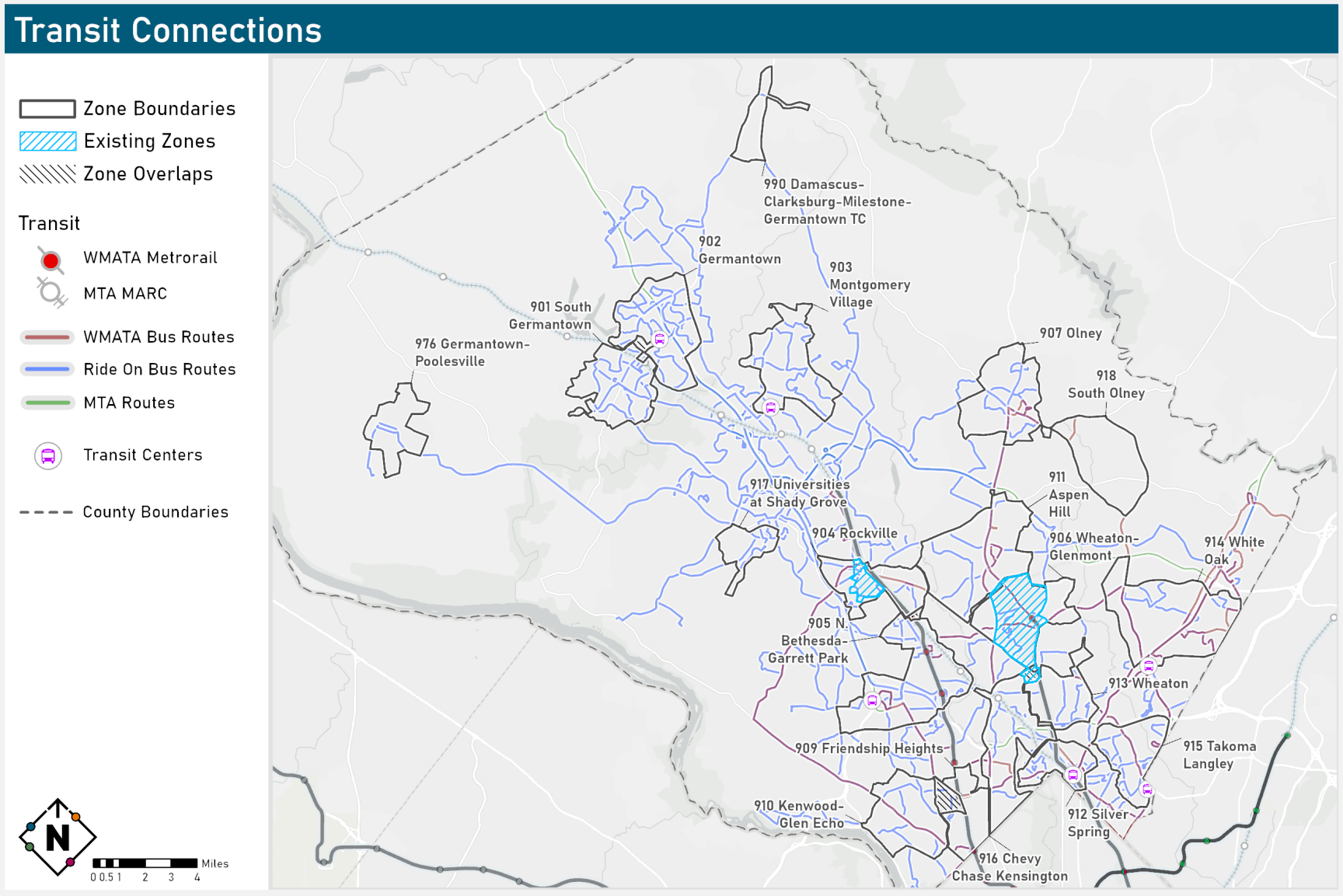
Access to Regional Transit

One of the principal use-cases of microtransit service is its potential to provide first/last mile connections between transit stations and neighborhoods that are often disconnected due to the lack of service. Microtransit can provide an easy and reliable connection to commuters who live too far to walk from a station but benefit from the regional connections service such as MCDOT Ride On, WMATA Metrorail and Metrobus, or MTA's MARC and Commuter Bus provide**. Figure 10** provides an overview of candidate zones that overlap with significant number of transit stations which include:

- 901 South Germantown
- 902 Germantown
- 903 Montgomery Village
- 904 Rockville
- 905 Montgomery Mall
- 906 Wheaton-Glenmont
- 909 Friendship Heights
- 912 Silver Spring
- 915 Takoma Langley
- 916 Chevy Chase-Kensington

Similar to the equity analysis, a more in-depth analysis of transit connections is conducted in the latter portion of this chapter.

Figure 10: Regional Transit Connections

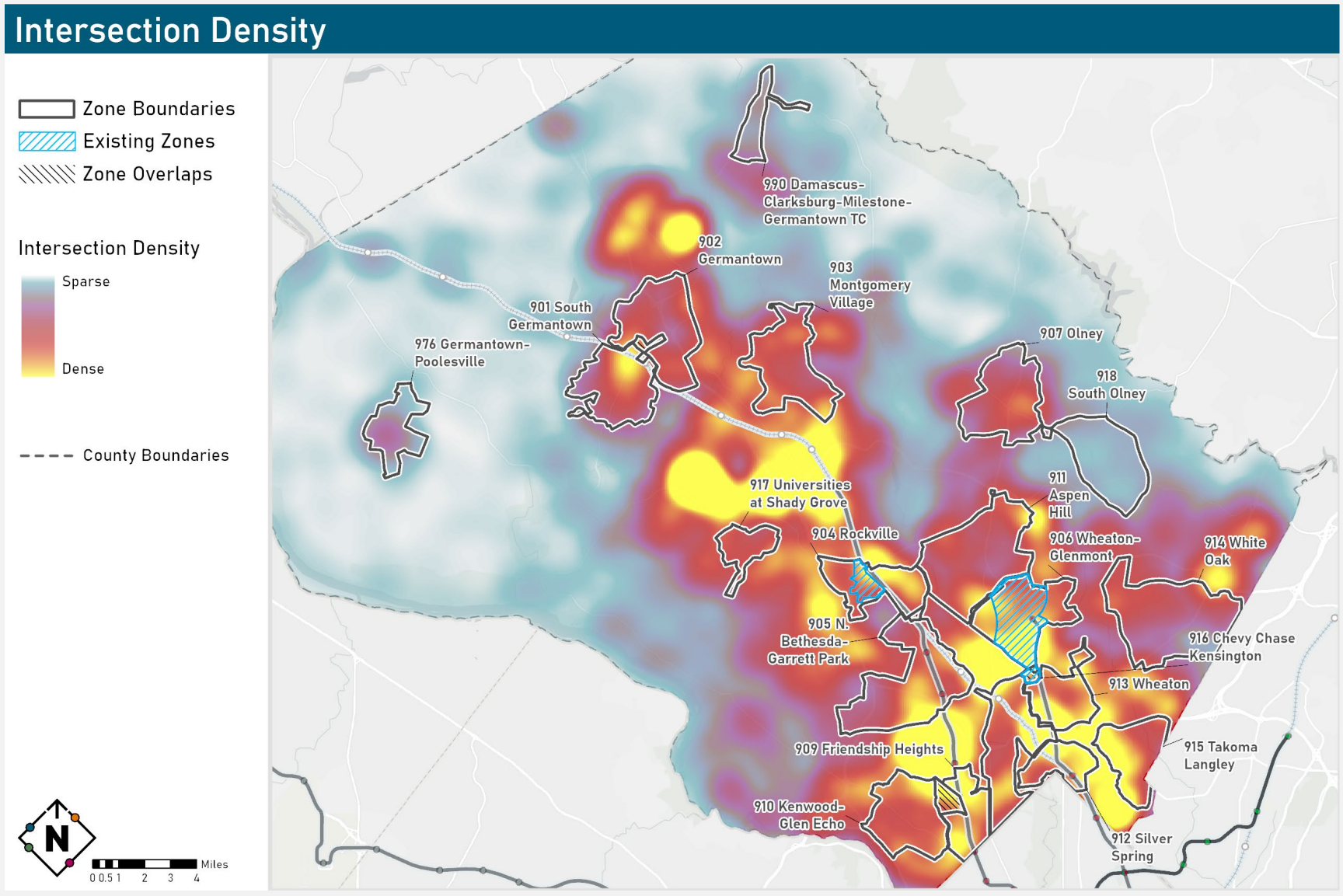


Intersection Density

Intersection density refers to the number of signalized/unsignalized intersections per square mile and is a crucial factor in understanding the efficiency of microtransit services. Lower intersection densities typically suggest the presence of longer roads with fewer pick-up points and less direct paths for fixed-route transit systems to operate efficiently. This layout can result in longer travel times and less efficient operations for traditional fixed-route transit. Additionally, areas with lower intersection densities may lack comprehensive pedestrian infrastructure, leaving residents without safe or convenient access to various transit options. Microtransit uses smaller vehicles and can offer pick-ups and drop-offs closer to a rider's actual starting point and destination. These characteristics provide more viable transportation solutions in areas with lower intersection density where population and destinations are spread out. Ridership demand is often more dispersed, so fixed-route services can struggle with low ridership and inefficiencies in such areas, while microtransit can dynamically adjust to varying demand levels. For each proposed zone, the intersection density has been analyzed to assess the potential for microtransit to effectively serve as a solution to first/last mile connectivity challenges. As shown in **Figure 11**, the zones which are more feasible for microtransit regarding intersection density includes:

- 902 Germantown
- 907 Olney
- 914 White Oak
- 918 South Olney
- 976 Poolesville
- 990 Damascus-Germantown

Figure 11: Intersection Density



Access to Regional Activity Generators

Following the assessment of transit and equity in the region, an analysis of activity generators was conducted by collecting points of interest throughout the county. Activity generators were identified under the following categories:

- **Community:** Community centers, libraries, senior centers, government buildings, recreational centers, commuter hubs, parks, and places of worship
- **Education:** Elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, colleges, universities, community colleges, other educational institutions
- **Medical:** Clinics and hospitals
- **Shopping:** Malls, grocery stores and retail stores

Figure 12 was created by calculating the total number of points of interest within each zone, indicating the accessibility of the proposed microtransit service to key locations. Light green areas represent zones with fewer activity generators, while dark blue areas denote zones with the highest concentration of activity generators. As is evidence in the map the following five zones demonstrated a minimum of 75 of activity generators per zone:

- 905 North Bethesda-Garret Park
- 914 White Oak
- 912 Silver Spring
- 906 Wheaton-Glenmont
- 902 Germantown

Zones that ranked moderately with a minimum of 50 activity generators per zone included:

- 916 Chevy Chase Kensington
- 904 Rockville
- 909 Friendship Heights
- 903 Montgomery Village
- 915 Takoma-Langley
- 911 Aspen Hill
- 901 South Germantown
- 910 Kenwood-Glen Echo
- 913 Wheaton

Although **Figure** 12 is largely illustrative, the scoring section of this chapter provides more detailed information and rankings based on total activity generators.

Figure 12: Regional Activity Generators

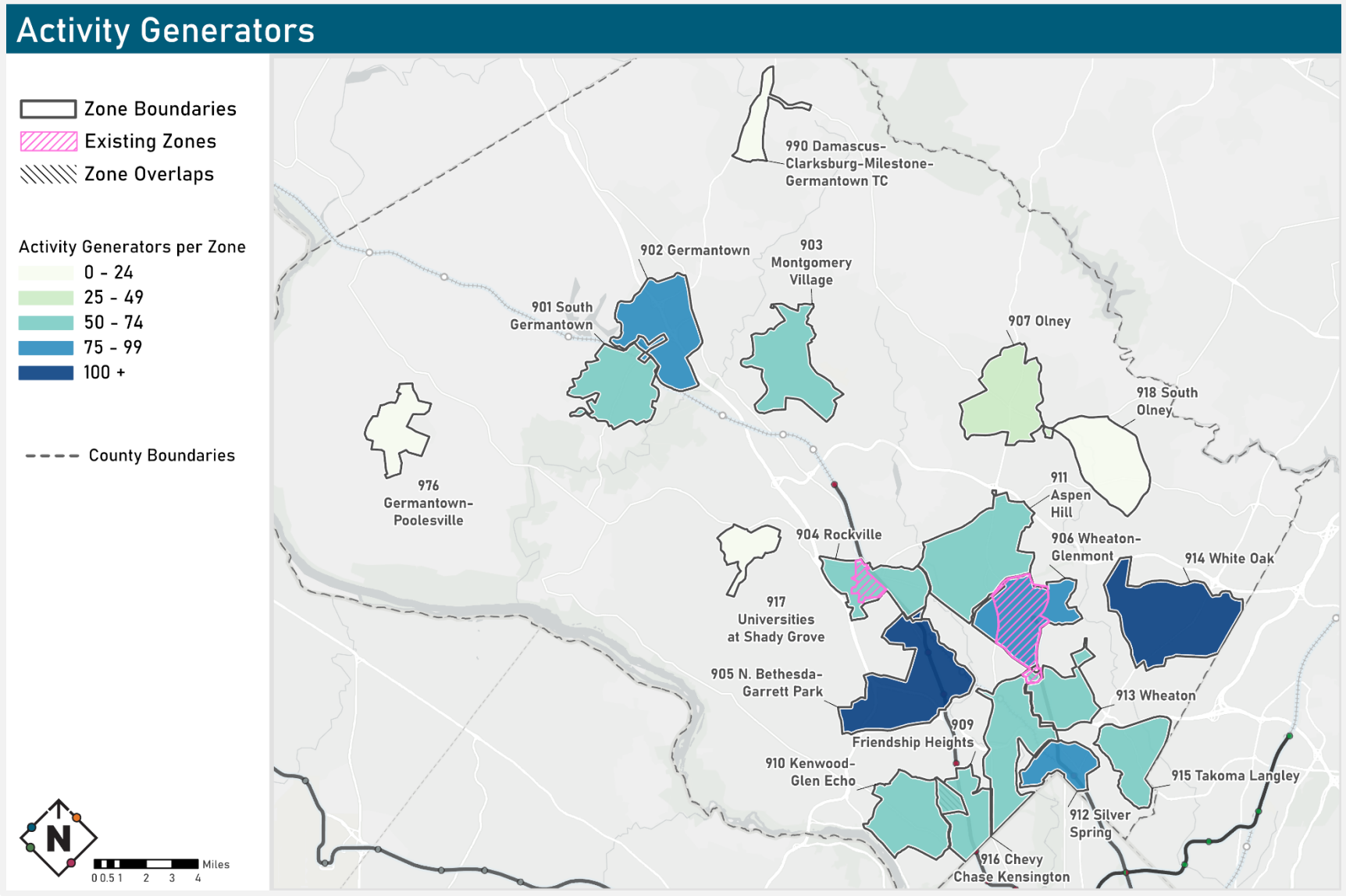


Table 6 provides an overview of the equity and access metrics that apply to each zone.

Table 6: Zone Overlaps with EEAs and EFAs

ZONE	SERVICE AREA	MWCOG EQUITY EMPHASIS AREAS (EEAS)	MONTGOMERY PLANNING EQUITY FOCUS AREAS (EFAS)	TRANSIT CONNECTIONS	INTERSECTION DENSITY	ACCESS TO REGIONAL ACTIVITY GENERATORS
901	South Germantown	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
902	Germantown	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
903	Montgomery Village	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
904	Rockville	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
905	North Bethesda-Garrett Park	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
906	Wheaton-Glenmont	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
907	Olney	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗
909	Friendship Heights	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓
910	Kenwood-Glen Echo	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
911	Aspen Hill (Includes Leisure World)	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓
912	Silver Spring	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
913	Wheaton	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓
914	White Oak	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
915	Takoma-Langley Park	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
916	Chevy Chase-Kensington	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
917	Universities at Shady Grove	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗
918	South Olney	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗
976	Germantown-Poolesville	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗
990	Damascus Clarksburg-Milestone-Germantown TC	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗

MICROTRANSIT SUITABILITY

Transit Potential

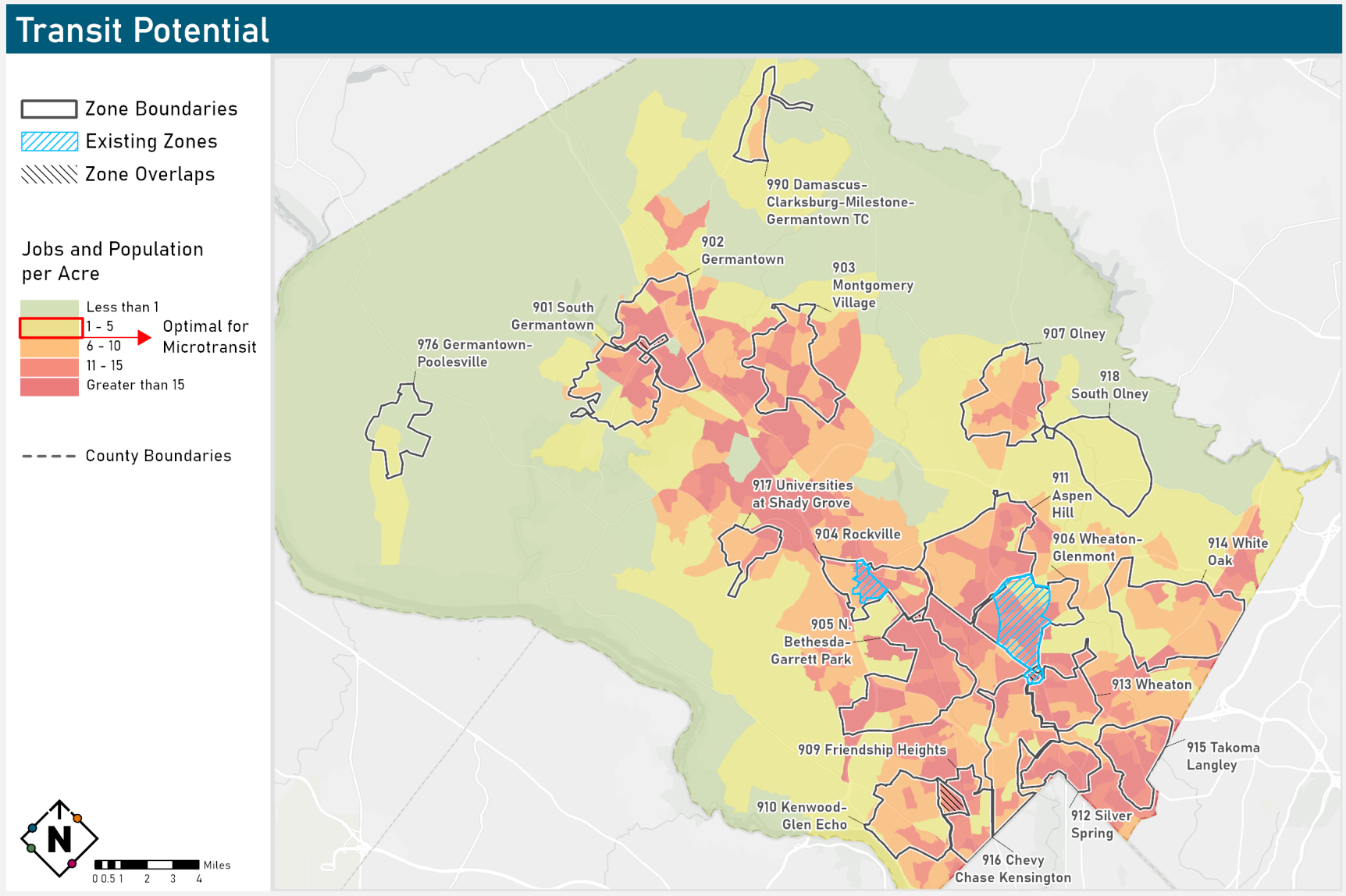
Transit potential evaluates areas based on population and employment density, crucial factors in determining the viability and efficiency of different types of transit services. Densities of at least five people and jobs per acre support a base level of fixed-route service, and slightly lower densities of between one to five people and jobs per acre could be better served with microtransit service. In such environments, smaller vehicles are ideally suited to meet the less intense demand, providing a more efficient and responsive transit solution compared to traditional large-scale fixed route systems in densely populated areas.

Figure 13 provides a regional view of transit potential in Montgomery County, with block groups shaded yellow representing lower densities that could be more suited to microtransit service. Much of the southern part of the county is most suitable for fixed-route service due to the high density of jobs and population. However, in areas further from WMATA Metrorail stations, MTA MARC stations, or major arterial roads, lower density becomes more apparent. These pockets meet the demand for fixed-route service but might lack existing service or physical infrastructure to connect residents to the greater transit system. The proposed zones in the area could provide important first/last mile connections to Metrorail and MARC as well as fixed-route Metrobus and Ride On routes.

It is important to note that microtransit can be more effective in lower density areas but still viable in higher density ones. Service type should be determined based on ridership patterns, the road network, and desired headways. In many suburban neighborhoods of Montgomery County, fixed-route service struggles with efficiency due to small-lot single-family homes that are car-dependent, in contrast to apartment complexes on large lots. Both fixed and microtransit services are being considered for many residential areas, which may not physically accommodate large buses or have insufficient ridership for fixed-route service.

Rural areas in the north and western parts of the county present the minimum required population density for microtransit service. The proposed 976 Poolesville and 990 Damascus/Germantown zones would provide service that could enhance internal circulation and connections to regional transportation for residents of the area.

Figure 13: Transit Potential with Proposed Zones

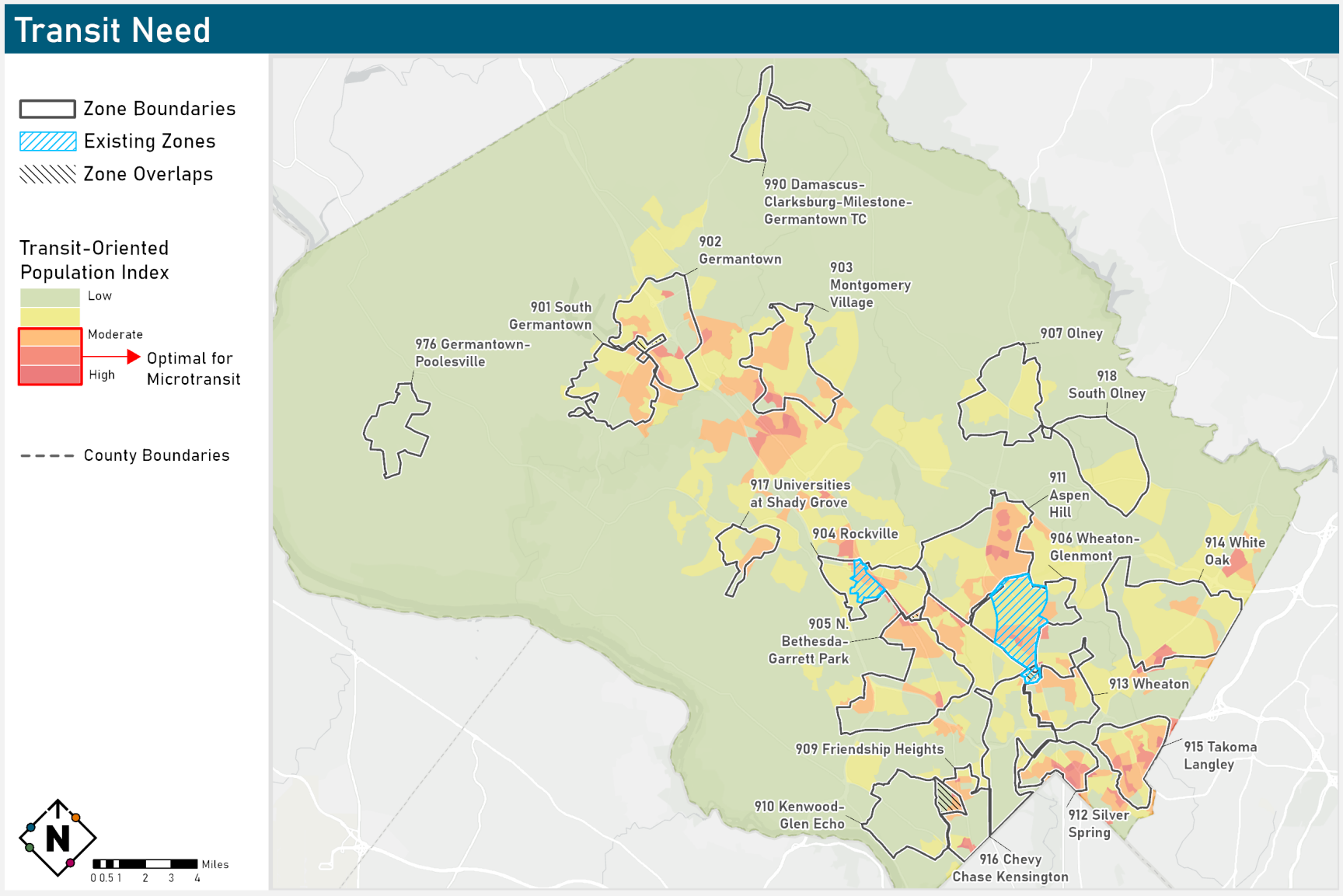


Transit Need

Transit need shows the transit-oriented population index, which is a composite index that consists of five categories: age, income, vehicle ownership, disabled population, and density of overall population as well as density of minority population and households. The index is indicative of where persons that are likely to be more reliant on transit. This approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of transit need, focusing on both transit-oriented populations and the nature of activities generating consistent transit use across different times.

Figure 14 provides a regional view of the transit need assessment of Montgomery County with the proposed and existing Ride On Flex zones overlayed. Census Block groups with high transit need are concentrated in the southern part of the county, in the Aspen Hill area, and along the I-270 corridor to the northwest. The proposed Ride On Flex zones cover most areas with high transit need, only missing a few small pockets along the corridor and in the easternmost part of the county. However, many of these areas already have existing transit connections.

Figure 14: Transit Need with Proposed Zones



Zone Prioritization

Building upon the zone evaluation conducted above. Metrics were developed to score and prioritize each proposed microtransit zone.

METRICS

Although suitability metrics are important for the success of microtransit, zones have the potential to thrive under specific conditions based on the type of service they provide and the populations they serve. For a comprehensive evaluation, a detailed set of feasibility metrics were utilized for prioritizing microtransit zones, detailed in **Table 7**. These metrics were applied to each candidate zone, allowing for a comparative scoring based on their relative performance across each criterion. Zones that achieved higher scores were deemed more suitable for microtransit services. For transparency and further analysis, raw data and score for each candidate zone is shown in Route Profile in **Appendix: Zone Profiles**, facilitating a clear understanding of how each zone was evaluated. This refinement helped focus on areas with the greatest likelihood for microtransit success, initially labeling them as priority zones.

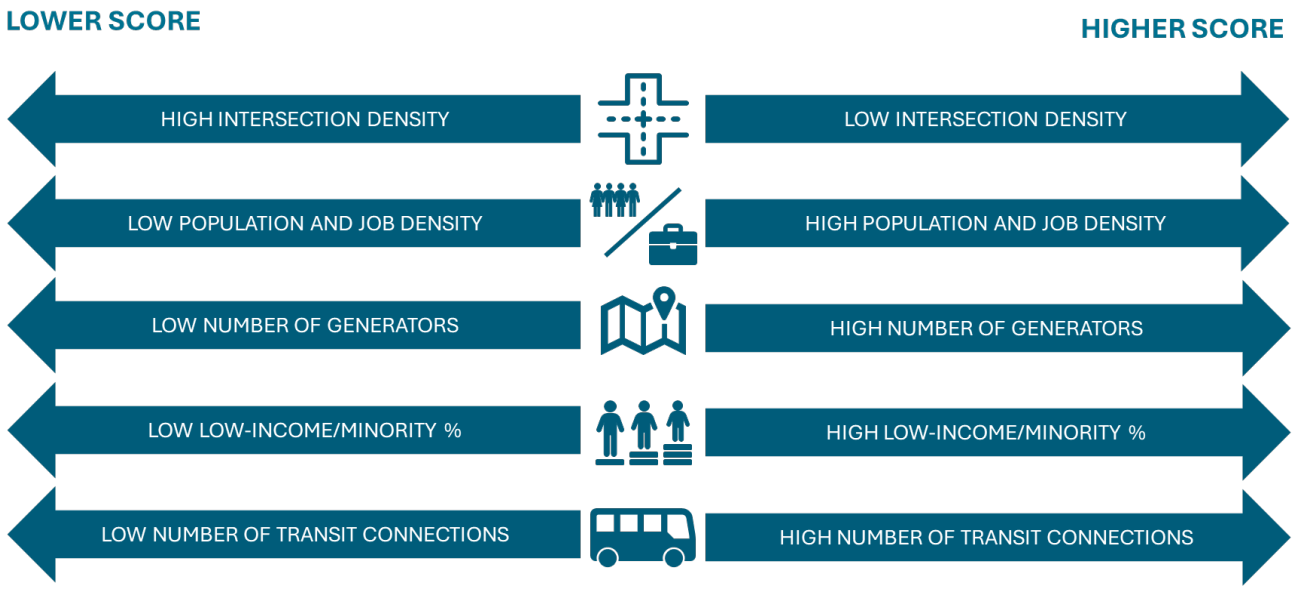
Table 7: Evaluation Metrics

METRICS	EVALUATION CRITERIA
Intersection Density	**Intersection density per square mile** *Areas with low intersection density prevent direct fixed-route transit routing. Unlike fixed-route services that follow a predetermined path regardless of passenger demand at each stop, curb-to-curb microtransit adapts to real-time requests. This adaptability not only reduces travel times for riders but also improves the overall efficiency of the transit service.*
Land Use	**Population and jobs density** *Areas with a greater total number of people and jobs per acre typically see higher usage of transit services. By integrating these two indicators, the analysis yields a composite metric of transit potential. Higher transit potential indicates that transit services could be more effectively deployed, based on the underlying demographic and economic landscape.*
Activity Generators	**Trip generators per square mile** *Trip generators refer to specific locations that are common starting points or destinations for trips, such as grocery stores, service providers, and more. The presence of a higher density of such trip generators within a zone naturally lends itself to a greater number of trips that are confined within that zone, making it an ideal scenario for microtransit services.*
Equity	**Minority and low-income population percentage** *Despite the absence of formal FTA guidance on integrating microtransit into Title VI frameworks, microtransit services are recommended to comply with Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, ensuring no disproportionate effects on protected groups. Given that low-income and minority populations are more likely to use transit, areas with larger total percentages of these groups are prime candidates for microtransit deployment.*

METRICS	EVALUATION CRITERIA
Transit Connections	**Number of existing transit stops** *Transit systems become significantly more user-friendly and effective when they facilitate seamless connections, particularly at the first and last mile of a journey. Microtransit services excel in providing these crucial links to broader existing transportation networks. Zones connecting to existing transit stops naturally present a conducive environment for microtransit operations*

Each zone is scored across the metrics relative to the other zones and higher scores are characterized as more ideal zones for microtransit suitability. **Figure 15** below provides a visual description of scoring.

Figure 15: Scoring for Zone Prioritization



SCORING

The scenario scoring emphasizes the evaluation of proposed zones for microtransit service by assigning customized weights to specific metrics based on three distinct use-case scenarios. This method acknowledges that not all criteria hold equal importance across different scenarios, allowing for a more tailored assessment. For instance, the connection to existing transit stops might be critical in scenarios where the goal is to enhance fist mile/last mile connection, whereas the number of activity generators could be more crucial in areas aiming to improve internal mobility.

During the evaluation process, each candidate zone is divided into a certain number of groups based on their scores. These groups are then organized in order, from highest and lowest or vice versa, according to **Figure 15**. Zones within the highest-ranking groups receive the maximum possible scores, determined by the customized weights, while the lowest-raking groups receive a score of 0. Customized weights are applied across four distinct use case scenarios as follows:

- **Internal Circulation Scenario**: in this scenario, greater emphasis is placed on land use patterns and the presence of activity generators within a zone to underscore the necessity for internal travel.
- **First Mile/Last Mile Scenario**: this scenario assigns more weights to the connections to transit stops and activity generators within a zone to highlight the importance of seamless integration with the existing fixed-route transit network and connecting people where they want to go.
- **Equity**: a higher weight is given to Title VI compliance metrics in this scenario to address the needs of transit-reliant populations.
- **Hard to Reach**: a greater emphasis is placed on intersection density and activity generators to bridge the accessibility gap in hard-to-reach zones.

By scoring each zone on a scale from 0 to 10 for each scenario, zones can be effectively differentiated based on their suitability to achieve specific microtransit objectives. This scoring system with scenario-specific weights as shown in **Table 8**, offers a detailed insight into the potential effectiveness of microtransit services across the region. It allows stakeholders to understand how different factors contribute to the prioritization process, ensuring that the deployment of microtransit services aligns with strategic goals and maximizes benefits to the community. This analytical approach helps in making informed decisions by highlighting how adjustments in the weighting of metrics can influence the selection and prioritization of zones for microtransit implementation.

Table 8: Prioritization Weighting

Scenario Scoring	Intersection Density	Land use	Activity Generators	Equity	Transit Connections
Internal Circulation	10%	30%	30%	10%	20%
First Mile/Last Mile	10%	10%	30%	20%	30%
Equity	10%	10%	10%	50%	20%
Hard to Reach	30%	10%	30%*	20%	10%

* In this scenario, the zones with lower number of activity generators will get a higher score

The analysis underscores the interconnected nature of the variables considered in evaluating the suitability of zones for microtransit services. While the results of each scenario show similarities, they were not identical, illustrating the complexity of factors influencing performance of microtransit. By aggregating scores from each scenario into a composite score, the study team was able to identify zones with the highest potential for microtransit success across different use cases. This composite scoring approach ensures a comprehensive assessment, highlighting zones that not only meet specific criteria, but also demonstrate overall robustness in serving various transit needs. Such an approach enables a comprehensive understanding of each zone's potential, facilitating strategic decision-making in the deployment of microtransit services to address the unique demand of different areas within Montgomery County. The scenario scoring results for each zone are shown in **Table 9.**

Table 9: Scenario Scoring Results for Each Zone

ZONES	INTERNAL CIRCULATION	FIRST MILE/ LAST MILE	EQUITY	HARD TO REACH	COMPOSITE
912 Silver Spring	9	9	9	4	31
915 Takoma Langley	7	8	9	5	29
906 Wheaton-Glenmont	7	8	8	5	28
904 Rockville	9	7	6	4	26
905 N. Bethesda-Garrett Park	8	7	6	5	26
Existing Wheaton**	7	7	8	4	26
902 Germantown	6	5	6	7	24
913 Wheaton	6	6	7	4	23
914 White Oak	5	6	6	6	23
903 Montgomery Village	5	5	6	6	22
909 Friendship Heights	7	7	5	3	22
911 Aspen Hill	4	5	5	8	22
Existing Rockville**	7	5	5	2	19
901 South Germantown	2	4	3	5	14
910 Kenwood-Glen Echo	3	3	2	4	12
916 Chevy Chase Kensington	4	4	2	2	12
907 Olney	1	1	2	5	9
918 South Olney*	1	1	1	6	9
976 Germantown-Poolesville*	1	1	1	6	9
917 Universities at Shady Grove	1	1	1	5	8
990 Damascus-Clarksburg-Milestone-Germantown TC*	1	1	1	5	8

* These zones are proposed as flex-fixed services, which allows certain deviations from fixed-route alignments.
** Existing zones are added for comparison to provide a baseline that allows to benchmark the performance and characteristics of proposed zones, to better understand the relative improvement of the proposed changes to the system

3. Outreach and Engagement

The following chapter details public engagement efforts conducted for the planning and expansion of Montgomery County's Ride On Flex service. To better understand public sentiment regarding microtransit, existing Flex service, and future expansion, the study team conducted outreach efforts with the public, current Flex users, and Flex operators.

As detailed in the **Review of Previous Studies**, the County conducted engagement efforts two and a half months after the initial rollout of Flex service. Because of the novelty of the service, many gaps regarding service, public understanding of Flex, and issues with the application were evident. However, despite initial challenges, over 50 percent of survey respondents indicated that they wanted to see Flex' service area expanded. Further along in the survey, many respondents indicated their support and excitement for the service.

Ride On Reimagined, the County's comprehensive plan for the improvement and modernization of public transit services, included recommendations for the development of 18[1] new zones throughout the county. To better inform the development of these new zones, in spring 2024, the study team began engagement efforts that were conducted via focus groups and a countywide public survey. Based on those efforts, this chapter details specific recommendations regarding quality of service and zone boundaries that will be crucial for the implementation of new Ride On Flex zones throughout the County.

Focus Groups

Prior to interacting with the general public, the study team conducted engagement efforts aimed at comprehending the strengths and weaknesses of the existing Ride On Flex service. This involved engaging with two key stakeholders: the existing user base, called external stakeholders in this document, and current Flex operators (Ride On bus operators that drive Flex vehicles as part of their assigned duties), who are called internal stakeholders in this document. Separate focus groups were held with each of these groups to delve deeper into the issues and opportunities surrounding the expansion of Flex service.

Both the internal and external focus groups were held on March 11th, 2024 virtually over Microsoft Teams. Participants were presented with questions regarding their experience with the service and were given the opportunity to comment on proposed zone boundaries and new service recommendations. Questions developed for the focus groups can be found in the Appendix of this document.

INTERNAL FOCUS GROUP

The study team conducted an Internal Focus Group on March 11th, 2024, which was focused on engaging with current Ride On Flex operators. The operator group gave important insights regarding what the service looks like on the ground, the customer service experience, the intricacies of operating microtransit

[1] The 18 original proposed zones include the Leisure World as a separate zone. Because surveys and focus groups were administered in March and April 2024, two zones were not included in this outreach effort: 918 South Olney and 917 Universities at Shady Grove.

service, and issues with the ride matching software. The following summarizes the findings from the Internal Focus Group

Service Recommendations

Two operators were engaged on questions regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the service, experiences with the microtransit software, and interactions with customers. Due to its on-demand nature, Flex service does not require constant and ongoing operations which can provide operators with more frequent breaks and greater flexibility. Both operators indicated that they have enjoyed working on Flex, citing benefits such as the building of relationships with recurrent riders and the ease of operating a Flex vehicle. Despite the many benefits of Flex service, operators can provide unique insights to improve the service as Montgomery County seeks to expand. The following is a summary of the discussion with Flex operators regarding service recommendations:

- **Operators often experience a variety of issues with the ridematching software that they believe have impacted the quality of the service. Operators want to see significant improvements to the software that can improve service for both drivers and users.** Issues with the software and application include the following:
  - Tablets freeze up and do not show rides immediately. Sometimes riders will call in to ask about rides they have been waiting for over twenty minutes; however, these rides sometimes do not show up on the operator's tablet.
  - Operators cited issues with the application's routing. Operators mentioned how sometimes pick-up locations do not match for riders and operators. They also noted that the routing software sometimes provides navigational guidance that can be hazardous; for instance, one driver noted that the software has made them cross many lanes in a short distance just to make a left turn.
  - Operators noted that sometimes pick-up and drop-off locations are on the opposite side of the street that was requested, which can cause conflicts or difficulties for passengers.
- **The customer service experience is mixed for operators.** While in some cases the personal interactions with riders can be positive, operators have noted some negative experiences.
  - Operators sometimes encounter issues with passengers who use the service for what they describe as "petty" trips. For example, one operator described how she took a passenger back and forth to a 7-Eleven to purchase a pack of cigarettes and later that day a bottle of soda. The operator noted that this passenger was disrespectful and rude to them.
  - Operators will encounter conflicts with passengers when the app is malfunctioning and will often have to deal with frustrated or angry passengers.
  - One of the operators noted that personal interactions with regular customers are very positive and that the relationship-building nature of the service can be an advantage.
- **Operators feel that they are currently short-staffed.**
  - One of the operators noted that they believe their zones are short-staffed and that this should be a consideration when planning for future Ride On Flex expansion.

- **Operators noted that there is often miscommunication between management, operators, and passengers regarding policies and procedures.**
  - Operators cited confusion regarding fare policies. One operator noted how there was confusion when cash became an option for fare payments. This wasn't communicated properly at the time.
  - Operators also noted that there is often miscommunication with passengers with disabilities since at times their status does not show on the ridematching software or they are unaware they have to register their disability.
  - Passengers sometimes struggle to understand the concept of "corner-to-corner" service. Operators will often have to confirm destinations with riders because their intended destination is not what they entered in the application.

Zone Recommendations

Following the service recommendations discussion, operators were then asked to provide recommendations regarding the existing zone boundaries and if they had any comments on proposed zone boundaries.

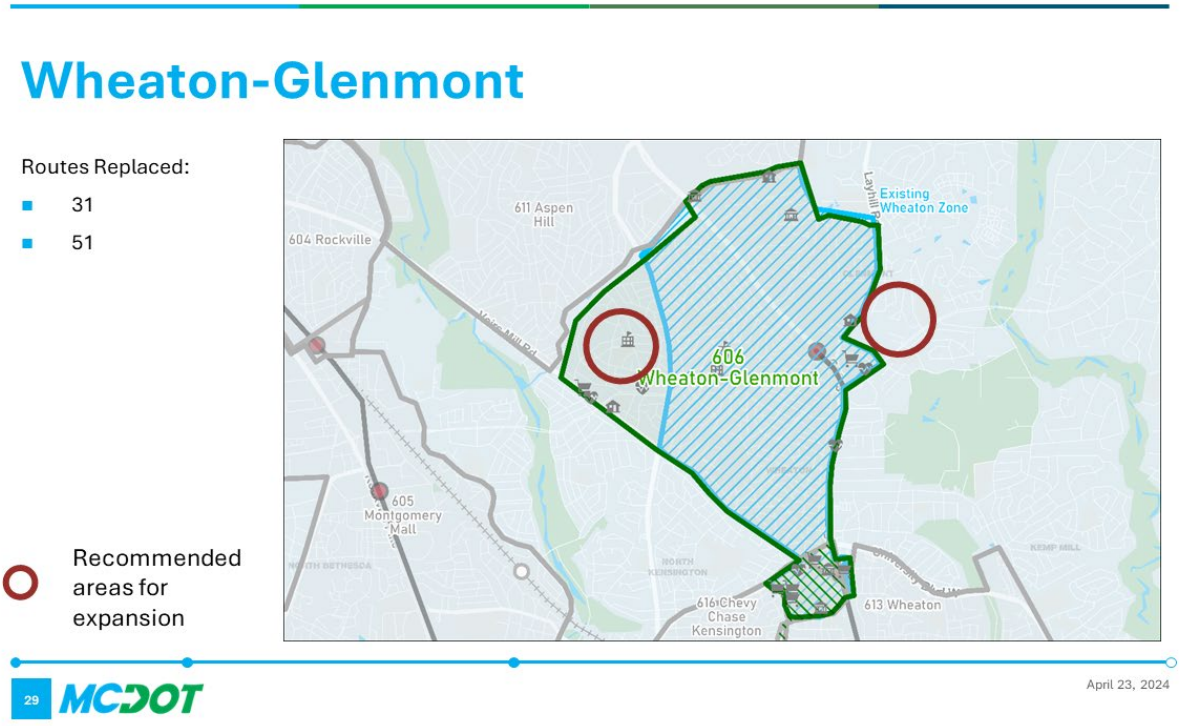
WHEATON-GLENMONT ZONE RECOMMENDATIONS

Operators were asked where they thought the Wheaton-Glenmont zone they should be expanded based on their experiences or on feedback they have received from passengers. They noted the following locations:

- The area west of Connecticut Avenue and east of Veirs Mill Road.
- The area north of Randolph Road and east of Layhill Road towards John F. Kennedy High School.

Figure 16 below details the locations participants picked on a map of the existing and proposed Wheaton-Glenmont Zone:

Figure 16: Internal Stakeholder Zone Recommendations - Wheaton-Glenmont



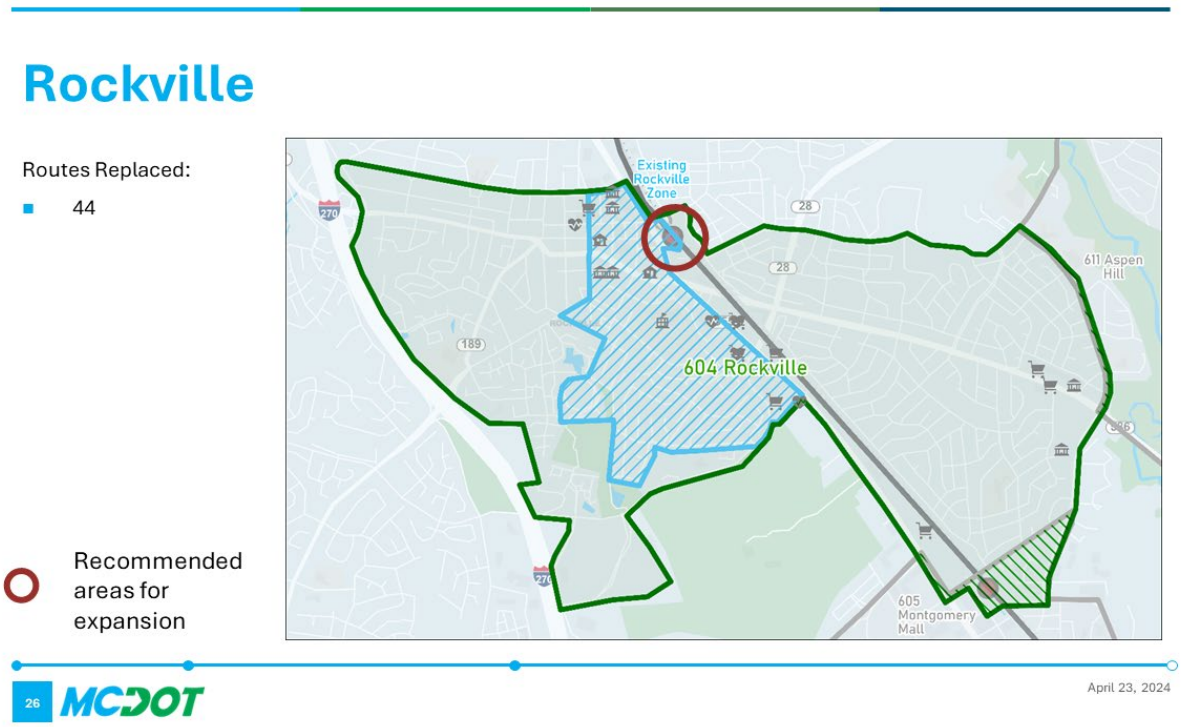
ROCKVILLE ZONE RECOMMENDATIONS

Operators were asked where they thought the Rockville zone should be expanded based on their experiences or on feedback they have received from passengers. They noted the following locations:

- The area north of the Rockville Metro station, where current Ride On Flex service does not operate.
- Customers have also requested a zone that serves Montgomery College north of the Metro station.

Figure 17 below details the locations participants picked on a map of the existing and proposed Rockville Zone:

Figure 17: Internal Stakeholder Zone Recommendations - Rockville



EXTERNAL FOCUS GROUP

The External Focus Group engaged the current Ride On Flex user base. A total of seven participants joined the call and gave valuable insights regarding their experience using the service, interactions with operators, experiences using the app, and specific recommendations for the improvement and expansion of the service. The following summarizes the findings from the External Focus Group.

Service Recommendations

Users were engaged on questions on their experiences using Ride On Flex, experiences with the application, and interactions with operators. The following is a summary of the discussion regarding service recommendations:

- **The majority of focus group participants use Flex service to connect with the regional transportation system.**
  - More than half of participants noted that they often request service to connect to a Metro station for their commute to work.
  - Users highlighted the comfort the service provides, especially when a walk may be too long or when the weather does not permit walking to a station.
  - Riders in the Glenmont-Wheaton area were more likely to use the service for commute trips while riders in the Rockville area use the service for non-commute trips.

- **When asked what would improve the service, riders cited reliability and a better app experience.**
  - Riders noted that wait times are not necessarily a problem, but that the app often displays inaccurate wait times.
  - They remarked that the app's navigational features will sometimes take drivers on routes that do not make sense and cause increased wait times.
  - Riders noted that they would like to be able to submit feedback and view their ride history through the app.
- **Riders noted that they would like the ability to add popular destinations as pick-up and drop-off points rather than intersections.**
  - When users request rides to destinations such as a grocery or retail store, the app will have them dropped off on corners that are unsafe for pedestrians. Riders noted that by adding popular and specific destinations, they can be dropped off at the front door rather than at dangerous intersections.
- **Riders feel like they do not receive sufficient notification about changes in the service.**
  - One rider noted that a cutback in hours from 7 pm to 6:30 pm was not adequately communicated and that there was no outlet to provide feedback regarding this service reduction.
- **Riders highlighted the utility and practicality the system provides.**
  - Participants noted that when Flex is on time and reliable, they find the service extremely useful to run errands, connect to other transit options, or even to connect residents without cars to places that are not accessible via fixed-route transit.

Zone Recommendations

Focus group participants were later asked to make recommendations on specific areas to which they would like to see Flex expanded. Although comments were relatively limited, the participants commented on the addition of the following areas for Flex service.

- Participants noted that this area could see direct benefits from the presence of more transit in the Aspen Hill area, particularly since it is unsafe for pedestrians.
- One passenger noted that current Flex service routing on Georgia Avenue creates additional travel time in its approach to the Glenmont station via Georgia and Randolph.

Survey Results

In April 2024, the study team engaged with the public via an online public survey in order to gather input from Montgomery County residents on their sentiments regarding microtransit, RideOn Flex service, and proposed zones for Ride On Reimagined.

The survey was administered in English and Spanish and was sent out by Montgomery County to the general public via email, the Flex application, and Ride On Trip Planner application. The survey received 603 responses from residents throughout the county (39 of which were from Spanish speakers) with a diverse set of experiences with microtransit and RideOn Flex service. Participants were engaged on topics such as their familiarity with the service, their reasons for using the service, and recommendations for improvement. It is important to note that this survey was administered before the development of zones 918 – South Olney and 917 – Universities at Shady Grove. Participants were provided with detailed maps of the proposed zones and provided space to comment on zone boundaries. The following is a summary of their responses; see **Appendix: Public Outreach Results** for more details.

PARTICIPANT DESCRIPTION

Survey participants varied regarding their familiarity with microtransit and with Ride On Flex, as can be seen in **Figure 18** and **Figure 23**. Participants were asked about their familiarity with microtransit as a concept and with Ride On Flex as a service. Survey participants were more familiar with microtransit than they were with Ride On Flex service; 25 percent of respondents responded “Not at all familiar” to the concept of microtransit service while 26 percent responded “Not at all familiar” regarding Flex service. Considering that Flex service has only operated two small areas of the county so far, this could account for less familiarity with Flex than the concept of microtransit.

On the other hand, 23 percent of respondents indicated that they are “very familiar” with the concept of microtransit, while only 21 percent indicated the same response regarding Ride On Flex. **Although these discrepancies are minor and could be attributed to human error, it may be worth exploring additional opportunities to communicate Ride On Flex service to Montgomery County residents**. As Flex has been a limited pilot program disrupted by the pandemic, Flex expansion could be an opportunity to increase public awareness of this service, though more than half of residents are at least “somewhat familiar” with microtransit (57 percent) and Ride On Flex service (53 percent).

Figure 18: Familiarity with Microtransit

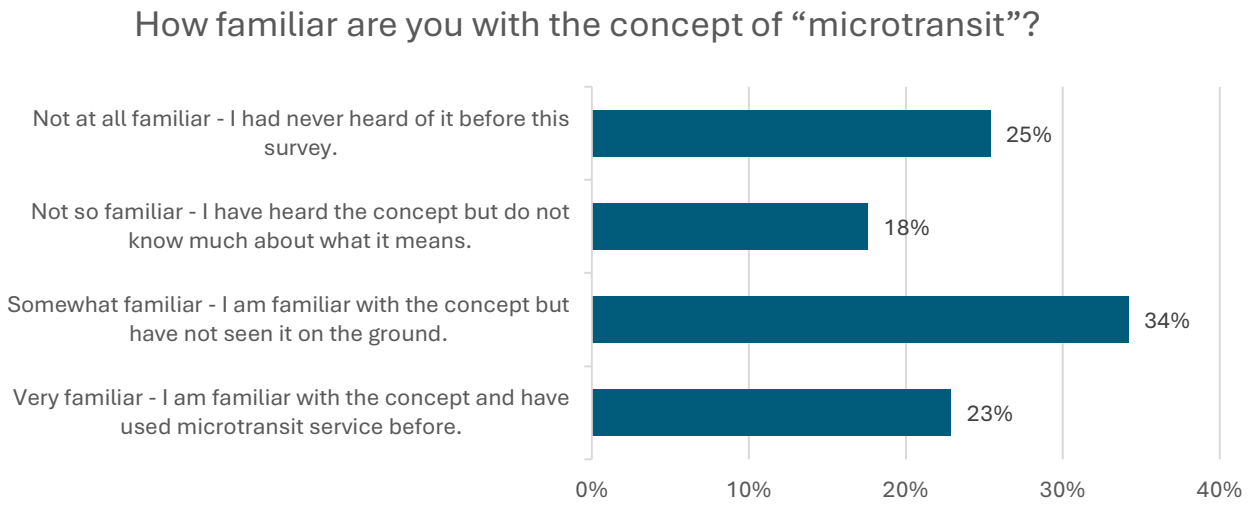
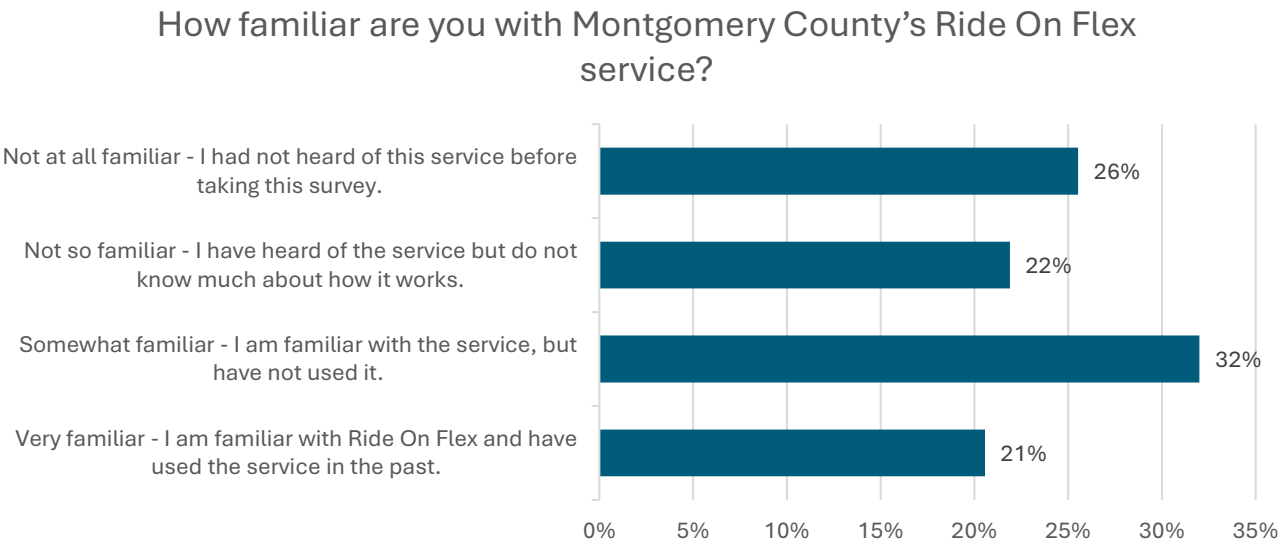
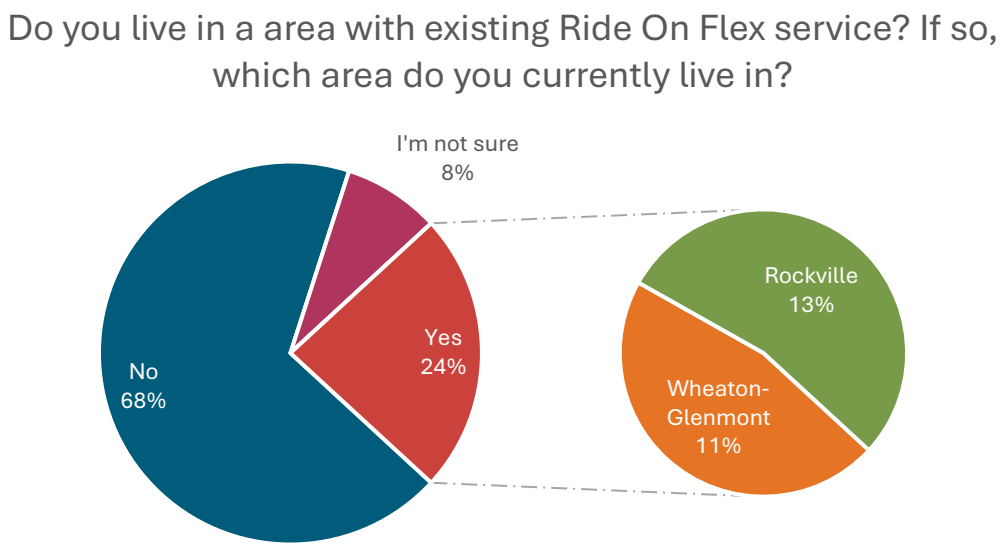


Figure 19: Familiarity with Ride On Flex



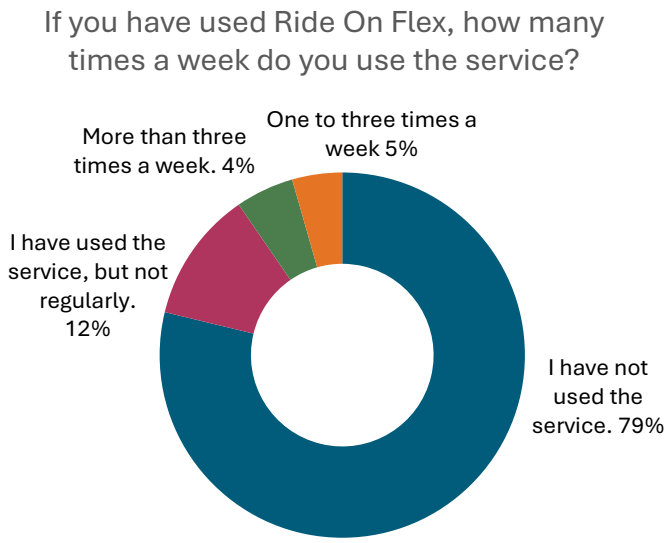
Following questions regarding familiarity with the service, participants were provided with maps of the existing Rockville and Wheaton-Glenmont zones and asked to determine whether they live in the current Ride On Flex service area. As seen in **Figure 20**, **68 percent of respondents indicated that they did not live in the service area, 24 percent indicated that they did live in the service area, and 8 percent indicated that they were not sure.** This is likely why respondents were more familiar with the concept of microtransit than Flex service.

Figure 20: Residence of Respondents



Of the participants that answered that they did live in the service area, 11 percent of the total respondents indicated that they lived within the Wheaton-Glenmont zone and 13 percent indicated that they lived in the Rockville zone. These results highlight the diversity of where survey respondents live, which is extremely valuable considering the County's plan to expand Flex beyond the Wheaton, Glenmont, and Rockville areas.

Figure 21: Frequency of Service Usage



Participants were then asked how often they have used the service as seen in **Figure 21**. **79 percent of respondents indicated that they had not used the service before**. This number is not surprising considering a majority (68 percent) of respondents reside outside the current service area.

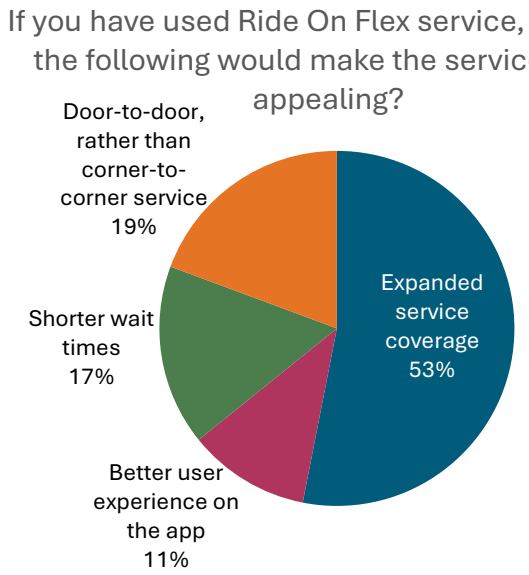
Of the participants that have used the service before, 12 percent indicated that they use the service but not with regularity, while about nine percent of respondents indicated that they use the service at least once a week.

The results of this portion of the survey demonstrated that respondents represent a wide range of Montgomery County residents, many of whom do not reside in the current Ride On Flex service area. However, at least 75 percent of respondents are at least somewhat familiar with the service. While respondents who live in the zones, are very familiar with the service, and use the service regularly are a minority, their feedback will also be crucial for the expansion of current zones and the improvement of service.

SERVICE RECOMMENDATIONS

Participants were then engaged on topics such as their reasons for using the service as well as changes to the service that would bring improvements. **Figure 22** provides a breakdown in response to the question of what would make the service more appealing.

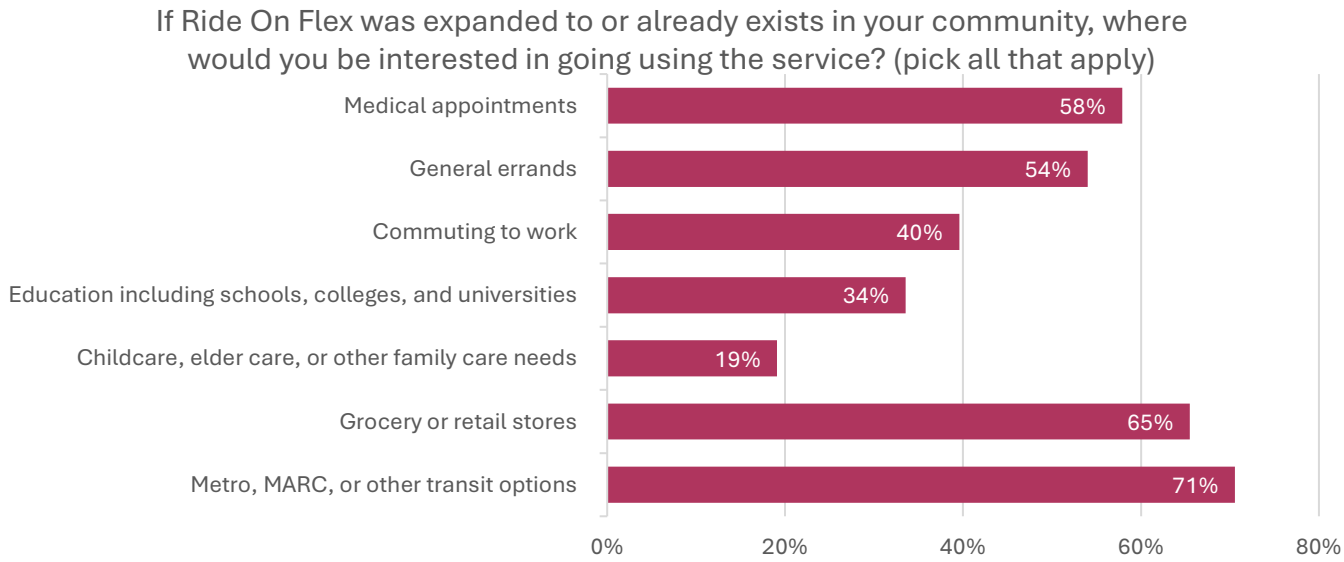
Figure 22: Recommended Service Enhancements



The majority of respondents (53 percent) indicated that they would like to see expanded service coverage; this may largely be due to the fact that most of the respondents do not live in the current service area and would like to see Ride On Flex service expanded into their neighborhood. It is important to note, however, that corner-to-corner, rather than door-to-door service received support from almost a fifth of respondents. This may be due in part to the confusion around pick-up and drop-off locations cited in both internal and external focus groups. Shorter wait times received support from 17 percent of respondents while 11 percent of respondents preferred a better user experience on the application.

Participants were also engaged regarding their reasons for using the service, as seen in **Figure 23**. This information will help inform Montgomery County about what destinations their users would prioritize when using the service. Participants were allowed to pick more than one destination.

Figure 23: Destinations of Interest



The most popular destinations amongst respondents were connections to transit. **71 percent of respondents indicated that they would use Ride On Flex to connect to Metro, MARC, or other transit options**. Following transit, 65 percent of respondents indicated that they would use Ride On Flex to connect to grocery or retail stores. Medical appointments and general errands both received support from over 50 percent of respondents. Destinations that scored the lowest included commuting to work, education, and family care. However, it seems likely that there is crossover between connecting to transit and commuting to work or educational activities. **The results of this question highlight the importance of Ride On Flex as a first/last mile connection to transit as well as an important connector to grocery and retails stores.**

ZONE RECOMMENDATIONS

Participants were then presented with a map of 17[2] proposed zones for Montgomery County's Ride On Reimagined. Participants were prompted to choose the zone closest to their residence and were redirected to a detailed map of their respective zone. After being presented with the map, participants were asked to provide any recommendations regarding the zone boundaries, any important destinations that would not be covered by the zone. **Table 10** below provides a summary of areas of interest, key destinations, and general sentiment from the survey responses.

Table 10: Zone Recommendations

ZONE	NUMBER OF COMMENTS	GENERAL SENTIMENTS	KEY DESTINATIONS MISSED
901 South Germantown	**5**	■ General support for boundaries. ■ One comment regarding integration of Zone 901 and 902 to ease travel in the area.	■ Access to Gaithersburg ■ Seneca Creek State Park ■ Benjamin Gaither Center ■ Kentlands Shopping area ■ Quince Orchard Library
902 Germantown	**18**	■ General support for Ride On Flex expansion and zone boundaries. ■ Some comments requesting service in Gaithersburg and Clarksburg. ■ Concerns regarding connection to the Germantown MARC station.	■ Seneca Creek State Park ■ Clarksburg ■ Germantown MARC station ■ Shopping areas east of 270 ■ Montgomery College Holy Cross Medical Complex ■ Black Hill Park
903 Montgomery Village	**8**	■ General comments regarding expansion to new areas, connections to other zones, and transit.	■ Apartments south of 355 ■ Shady Grove Metro station ■ Library ■ MARC service
904 Rockville	**29**	■ Many comments regarding service area expansion. ■ Repeated comments regarding extension of hours. ■ General support for the expansion of the existing Rockville zone	■ Twinbrook Station ■ Shady Grove Metro station ■ West of I-270 ■ Post Office ■ Montgomery College ■ Woodley Gardens

[2] Although there are a total of 19 planned zones, zone 917 Universities at Shady Grove and 918 South Olney were developed after the survey was administered. These zones did not receive public input.

ZONE	NUMBER OF COMMENTS	GENERAL SENTIMENTS	KEY DESTINATIONS MISSED
905 Montgomery Mall-North Bethesda-Garrett Park	**15**	■ General support with some comments regarding expansion to new areas.	■ Loehmann's Plaza ■ Randolph Hills ■ Cabin John Regional Park ■ Cabin John Shopping Center ■ Park Potomac shopping area ■ Tuckerman Ln area ■ East of the Pike ■ South of the Beltway
906 Wheaton-Glenmont	**24**	■ Comments supporting the expansion of the existing zone. ■ General comments regarding further expansion to areas of interest. ■ Comments on expansion of hours. ■ Requesting designated pick-up zones on high-speed corridors for passenger safety.	■ Holy Cross Hospital ■ Apartments at Georgia and Randolph Rd/Glenallan Ave ■ Brookside Nature Center ■ More designated stops at shops around Wheaton Plaza ■ Wheaton Regional Park
907 Olney	**3**	■ General support for new zone. ■ Some comments seeking expansion.	■ Sandy Spring ■ Derwood
909 Friendship Heights	**6**	■ General support for new zone. Some comments seeking expansion.	■ Chevy Chase Lake (Purple Line) ■ Kaiser in Gaithersburg
910 Kenwood-Glen Echo	**3**	■ Some criticism of Flex service. ■ Comments regarding expansion to new areas.	■ Cabin John ■ Westbard Redevelopment Project
911 Aspen Hill (Includes Leisure World)	**13**	■ General support for new zone. Some comments seeking expansion. ■ Some comments regarding connections to transit and expanded hours. ■ Support for Leisure World service (from two specific responses).	■ North Bethesda ■ Layhill Road area ■ Manor Lake ■ Flower Valley ■ Metro station coverage
912 Silver Spring	**13**	■ Comments generally pointing out areas for expansion. ■ Some concerns regarding taking away funding from fixed route service. ■ Extension of hours of service.	■ Woodside Forest ■ Montgomery Hills ■ South to Chicago Ave ■ Montgomery College Takoma Park / Silver Spring Campus ■ Blair and Northwood High Schools
913 Wheaton	**10**	■ General support for new zone. Some comments seeking expansion.	■ Kemp Mill area (specifically, Gilsan, Claybrook, and Fairoak) ■ Montgomery Hills
914 White Oak	**4**	■ General support. Comments regarding connections to transit.	■ Riderwood community ■ Connection to FLASH bus
915 Takoma-Langley Park	**5**	■ Comments regarding greater access to transit using Flex.	■ Extension to MD 410 ■ Connection to Metro service

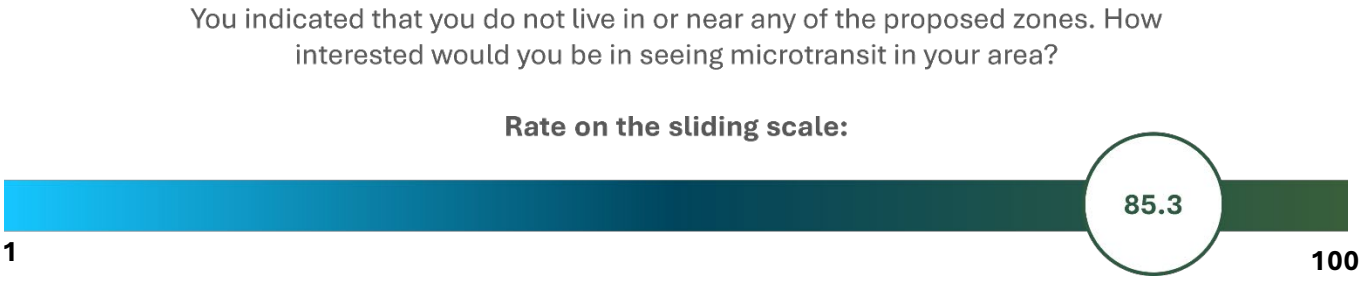
ZONE	NUMBER OF COMMENTS	GENERAL SENTIMENTS	KEY DESTINATIONS MISSED
916 Chevy Chase-Kensington	**6**	■ General support. ■ Some comments point out the zone is missing key populations including low-income and minority populations in North Kensington, Newport Mills, and near Einstein High School.	■ Lexington Street ■ Einstein High School ■ Newport Mill Middle School
***917 Universities at Shady Grove**	**N/A**	■ N/A	■ N/A
***918 South Olney**	**N/A**	■ N/A	■ N/A
976 Germantown-Poolesville	**8**	■ General criticism regarding the area the zone covers. ■ Participants indicated that the zone does not connect to enough transit lines. ■ Participants indicated that the service does not serve rural communities enough.	■ Barnseville ■ Dickerson ■ Beallsville ■ Boyds ■ Medical offices along Shady Grove Road
990 Damascus-Clarksburg-Milestone-Germantown	**9**	■ General criticism regarding the reach of the zone.	■ St. Annes and Victory House Senior apartment complexes ■ Laytonsville ■ Milestone Shopping Center ■ MC Germantown ■ Holy Cross ■ East of 124 ■ West of 27

*No public input was collected for zones 917 and 918 as they were developed after the public survey was launched.

General sentiments regarding expanded Ride On Flex service are mostly positive. Most comments that were critical of the zones noted that they could be expanded to reach new destinations. Some participants noted that they were concerned about the potential loss of funding to Ride On's fixed route service.

Participants who do not live in or near any of the proposed zones were redirected to another page where they were asked to rate how much they would like to see Flex service in their community on a scale from one to 100. **Figure 24** presents the results of the sliding scale. **The average response among 43 respondents was 85.3 indicating a high interest in Flex service from residents throughout the County.**

Figure 24: Sentiment on Expansion to New Areas



Other Feedback

In addition to the survey and focus groups, Ride On Marketing collected the following comments from Flex users:

- Expand the Rockville zone north at least up to the Giant Food store for shoppers and east to First Street for access to Churches.
- Expand the Glenmont/Wheaton zone north up to Aspen Hill Road shopping center at Georgia and Connecticut Avenues and east to JFK High School and Brookside Gardens.
- Expand all zones perimeters beyond the middle of streets like 355 and Georgia Avenue because rides cannot be booked on the side of the street outside the zone, e.g. couldn't book a ride to the Wheaton Library/Rec Center although the bus goes past it on Georgia Avenue.

Conclusion

Engagement with the public and operators provided important insights that will be crucial for the implementation of new Flex zones Montgomery County has developed for Ride On Reimagined. Service enhancements based on user feedback can ensure that Flex service is safe, comfortable, and easy to use while zone enhancements ensure that users can go where they need to go.

Although these recommendations are important to take into consideration for implementation, the survey also demonstrated that there is still uncertainty about how Flex service works. Montgomery County must engage with residents to further communicate the costs and benefits of the service and continue to seek feedback for improvements. The following is a summary of trends seen throughout the engagement process.

SERVICE RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Technical issues with the Ride On Flex application are hindering service for both operators and users.** Both internal and external stakeholders cited many issues with the microtransit software. Operators noted that the application's navigational features do not provide adequate routing and can even put them at risk when recommending dangerous turns. Users also cited issues with navigational features and noted that the application does not accurately represent wait times.
- **Both riders and operators indicated that they are often unaware of changes in the service.** Operators noted that they did not receive sufficient communication regarding changes in the fare policy and hours of service. Riders indicated that service changes are not communicated adequately through the application.
- **Opinions are mixed regarding corner-to-corner service.** Although most of the riders who were interviewed for the focus group indicated that they did not have an issue with being picked up or dropped off at a corner, they indicated that some enhancements could improve the user experience. Some users noted that they would like to see popular destinations integrated in the app so that they do not have to be dropped off at busy and sometimes dangerous intersections in high traffic areas. Grocery and retail stores, hospitals, and malls were cited as areas that could be added as destinations where passengers can be dropped off at a door rather than a busy intersection or parking lot. While Flex serves corner-to-corner for operational purposes, as Flex expands, there may be an opportunity to educate riders on how the service works and why the service operates this way.

ZONE RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Service expansion is a priority for most stakeholders.** The survey demonstrated that many people throughout the county are eager to see flex service in their communities. Although some participants indicated that they were concerned about funding Flex service rather than fixed route service, many participants indicated that they want new zones and zones that cover larger areas.
- **Montgomery County stakeholders want to see more integration of Flex with other countywide transit options.** Many of the comments regarding zone expansion requested more connections to MARC and Metro stations. Commenters living in rural areas wanted to see more connections to bus lines as well. Participants also indicated that they would like to see more connections between zones. This could be an opportunity to market integrated transit and multimodal options as Flex begins operations in new zones.
- **Popular destinations for expansion include shopping areas, medical care, and schools.** Many participants indicated that some zones left out important destinations such as grocery stores, hospitals and clinics, and colleges and high schools. Although zones lose efficiency when expanded too much, they must be assessed to ensure that important destinations nearby are not left out.

4. Implementation Planning

Introduction

This chapter serves as a comprehensive outline of the proposed implementation plan, drawn from analyses and strategic considerations detailed in previous chapters. The focus is on selecting the optimal service model, estimating associated costs under each model, and offering strategic recommendations to ensure the effective development, launch, and management of microtransit services across the County.

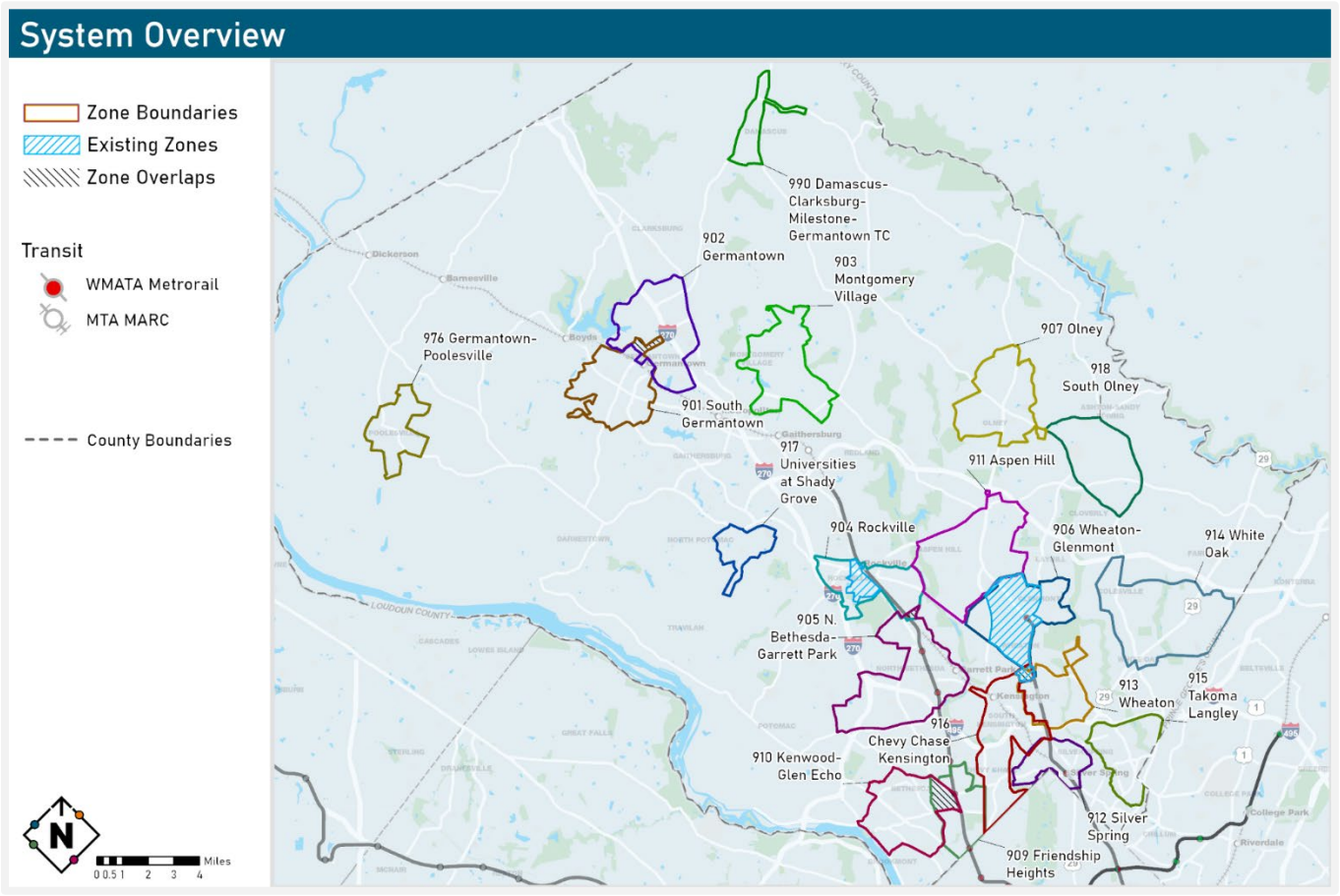
This assessment involves a comprehensive evaluation of 17 new zones and two existing zones, Wheaton/Glenmont and Rockville, with potential modifications. The analysis seeks to refine the microtransit services provided by MCDOT, potentially modifying existing Ride On Flex zones in Wheaton/Glenmont and Rockville. This chapter addresses crucial aspects such as vehicle requirements, operational constraints, and tailoring service hours to meet the unique demands of each zone.

The following sections delve into service models, comparing different service model options, outlining the staffing needs, operational advantages, and cost implications of each. This analysis aims to provide a clear direction for MCDOT to navigate the complexities of expanding microtransit services, ensuring informed decision by a balance of efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and community needs. Additionally, the chapter addresses critical components of the implementation plan, including phased deployment of recommendations, cost evaluation, and vehicle and ridership calculations.

Proposed Zone Operating Parameters

There are 19 zones proposed in total based on the analysis performed in the **Re-examination of Expansion Opportunities,** including two refined zones replacing the existing Ride On Flex Zones in the Wheaton/Glenmont and Rockville. The proposed zones are presented in **Figure 25.**

Figure 25: Proposed Microtransit Zones



Operating hours and vehicle estimations for microtransit zones are a critical step in the planning and implementation process, affecting both budgeting and operational decisions. These estimates are derived from several key factors including the hours of service and number of vehicles required.

The cost to operate a microtransit services is closely tied to the demand for travel and the quality of service offered. The number of vehicles needed for the Montgomery County microtransit zone is driven by a target wait time and based on other factors such as zone size, average vehicle speed, and average trip distance. The values for these metrics are determined based on Federal Transit Administration (FTA) guidelines and MCDOT's protocol, such as a target maximum wait time of 15 minutes. These are documented in **Table 11.**

Table 11: System Wide Metrics for Vehicle Calculations

METRICS	SOURCE	VALUE
Target wait time	Montgomery County Department of Transportation	15 minutes
Hours of service	Montgomery County Department of Transportation	Monday-Friday 6:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.
Percent of trips that are shared	Calculated from Ride On Flex data from January to December 2019	15%
Spare Ratio	FTA Guidelines[3]	1.2
Transit speed factor	MWCOG Congestion Report	0.85

[3] https://www.transit.dot.gov/funding/procurement/third-party-procurement/spare-ratio

Zone-based metrics are determined by the unique characteristics of each service zone. Replica's[4] Fall 2022 Places dataset for weekday trips was used to estimate potential microtransit passengers per hour, average vehicle speed, and average trip distance for each hour throughout a typical day. Based on these estimates service hours for each zone were proposed (**Table 13**), this allows for a more customized approach to scheduling based on actual travel patterns and demands. This methodology aims to enhance the efficiency and responsiveness of microtransit services to meet the diverse needs of different zones. Metrics essential for calculating vehicle requirements and cost impacts are detailed in **Table 12**. The vehicles needed to operate each zone, and estimated vehicle revenue hours per year are listed in **Table 13**. Revenue hours are proposed based on an assessment of the vehicles needed to operate a given service over the course of an average service day, multiplied by the hours of service.

Table 12: Zone-Based Metrics for Vehicle Calculations

METRICS	CALCULATION
Zone size (square miles)	Total square miles of the zone
Estimated passengers per hour	Passenger trips per hour derived from Replica data applied to each zone
Average vehicle speed (miles per hour)	Average vehicle speed for trips with origins and destinations within the on-demand zone retrieved from Replica, scaled by a transit speed factor[5]
Average trip distance (miles)	Average trip distance for trips with origins and destinations within the on-demand zone retrieved from Replica

Table 13: Vehicle Need and Revenue Hours for Proposed Montgomery County Microtransit Service

ZONE NAME	SPAN	MAX. VEHICLE NEEDS	DAILY VEHICLE HOURS	ANNUAL VEHICLE-HOURS (261 DAYS PER YEAR)
901 South Germantown	Monday – Friday 7:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.	7	52	13,572
902 Germantown	Monday – Friday 7:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m.	8	82	21,402
903 Montgomery Village	Monday – Friday 7:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.	7	52	13,572
904 Rockville	Monday – Friday 7:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.	5	43	11,223
905 N. Bethesda-Garrett Park	Monday – Friday 7:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m.	15	141	36,801
906 Wheaton-Glenmont	Monday – Friday 7:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.	6	53	13,833
907 Olney	Monday – Friday 7:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m.	5	42	10,962
909 Friendship Heights	Monday – Friday 7:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.	6	54	14,094
910 Kenwood-Glen Echo	Monday – Friday 7:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.	6	43	11,223
911 Aspen Hill	Monday – Friday 7:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.	10	77	20,097
912 Silver Spring	Monday – Friday 7:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.	4	31	8,091

[4] Replica, a travel flow data analysis platform, utilizes location-based services and other datasets to analyze and model trips for an average weekday and weekend day.

[5] A transit speed factor was applied to account for slower overall speeds of transit versus general traffic.

ZONE NAME	SPAN	MAX. VEHICLE NEEDS	DAILY VEHICLE HOURS	ANNUAL VEHICLE-HOURS (261 DAYS PER YEAR)
913 Wheaton	Monday – Friday 7:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.	3	27	7,047
914 White Oak	Monday – Friday 7:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.	10	65	16,965
915 Takoma Langley	Monday – Friday 7:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.	7	43	11,223
916 Chevy Chase Kensington	Monday – Friday 7:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.	5	42	10,962
917 Universities at Shady Grove	Monday – Friday 7:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m., 2:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.	1	10	2,610
918 South Olney	Monday – Friday 7:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m., 2:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.	1	11	2,871
976 Germantown-Poolesville	Monday – Friday 7:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m., 1:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.	2	11	2,871
990 Damascus-Clarksburg-Milestone-Germantown TC	Monday – Friday 7:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m.	1	14	3,654
System	**Monday – Friday 7:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m.**	**109**	**893**	**233,073**

ELECTRIC VEHICLE UTILIZATION

MCDOT plans to incorporate electric vehicles in the expansion of the Ride On Flex service. Electric vehicles (EV) present several advantages, including reducing greenhouse gas emissions and lowering operating costs compared to gasoline buses. Usage of EVs has impacts on both operational models, but as the EV technology is quickly evolving and changing, the impacts detailed here should be expected to change over time.

However,, there are also special considerations for vehicle needs estimations when considering electric vehicles:

- The proximity of vehicles to charging facilities should be accurately reflected in the vehicle estimation process. At present, the operation of electric buses heavily relies on the availability of charging infrastructure. This includes the placement of charging stations at bus depots and potentially at locations within the service zones themselves.
- Electric buses have a limited range compared to gasoline buses, which can restrict their use on longer routes without frequent recharging. This requires additional spare vehicles for the zones that cover extensive geographic areas. Battery capacity is limited and degrades over time as the battery ages.
- Deadhead mileage can significantly impact vehicle need. Zone distance relative to a vehicle's home depot can consume a substantial amount of charge before the vehicle goes into service for the day and require coordination of charging time or require a relief vehicle. For example, if a vehicle has an effective range of 100 miles and must travel 15 miles each way to serve the zone, it can only operate 70 miles without charging.
- Recharging electric buses can take several hours, depending on the type of battery and charging equipment. This may impact pickup times and reliability, particularly during peak operational periods. It is crucial that the vehicle estimation process accounts for charging times and their impact on vehicle availability.

- Electric bus performance can be affected by weather conditions and terrain, which can reduce battery efficiency and operational range.

COST IMPACTS OF ELECTRIC VEHICLES

The cost impact of electric vehicles is dependent on several factors and are likely to change over time as EV adoption increases, charging stations becomes more prolific, and EV battery capacity improves. Some key factors drive the cost impact of using electric vehicles:

- Electricity is typically cheaper than gasoline for use in vehicle propulsion systems, which can help reduce operational costs.
- Charging infrastructure must be either built out or coordinated with third parties, which can increase costs.
- Electric vehicles have fewer moving mechanical parts, which can save on maintenance costs.
- Electric vehicles have different maintenance requirements, which may require additional training for mechanics or time to develop expertise, which can increase maintenance costs, especially during initial vehicle deployment.
- Battery capacity degrades over time, which may lead to more frequent charging.

VEHICLE NEED IMPACT

The estimated total mileage, vehicles operated in maximum service (VOMS), and average mileage per vehicle needed to operate the zone are presented below in **Table 14.** This table can help identify zones where additional vehicles or charging opportunities may be needed to support battery capacity limitations. Battery capacity should be assessed conservatively, with reductions in operational range from climate, terrain, battery age, and safety reserves.

Assumptions and Background

For analysis purposes, each microtransit zone is assumed to be operating a Ford E Transit Van, which has an approximate range of 100 miles when new[6]. These vans would be able to fit a farebox and several seats, compared to a sedan or other vehicle. While marketed vehicle range is approximately 100 miles, this analysis assumes a more limited operational capacity. This results in an estimated maximum per-charge operational range of 72 miles. The assumption of 72-mile range is based on two assumptions:

- To provide an operational buffer and to preserve battery life, vehicle battery should not fall below 20 percent.
- Conservative estimates should not be based off a new battery, but rather one that has deteriorated over time[7].

This conservative estimate also helps to mitigate core operational concerns when using EVs. EV capacity can be substantially limited by terrain and climate, with reduced efficiency in hilly terrain and on very hot or cold days. EVs expend additional energy to go up hills, and climate control requires additional energy to maintain a comfortable interior.

Mileage and Operational Limits by Zone

This mileage estimate helps to determine the energy required and approximate mileage, represented as average daily mileage per vehicle, derived as an average daily mile utilization across all vehicles used in a

[6] Figure per marketing materials at https://www.ford.com/commercial-trucks/e-transit/ and similar van usage in King County Metro - Access Electric Vehicles - Zero Emission Fleet - Innovation & Technology - Programs & Projects - King County, Washington

[7] Over the course of its life (six years), it is estimated batters will deteriorate to about 80 percent of its available charge.

zone. This assumes that vehicles are dedicated to each zone, with the VOMS based on the number of vehicles needed to meet estimated trip demand rather than the number needed due to EV constraints.

This analysis assumes that utilization is evenly spread across vehicles used in a zone and that there is minimal deadhead mileage required for a vehicle to begin daily operations. In actual operational conditions, vehicles may be used unevenly throughout the service day. Some vehicles may be used the entire day, with some only needed in peak periods, leading to differing charging needs on a per-vehicle basis.

Zones are then flagged for those in which the total mileage utilization per vehicle exceeds 72 miles per vehicle per day. This is based on an estimated capacity detailed in the Assumptions section. Zones that exceed this 72-mile-per-vehicle average may be still operated by EVs with charging stations and planning for recharge time, or with additional vehicles. Charging time may limit vehicle utilization and result in longer trip wait times, though this may be mitigated by coordinating charging time during periods of lower demand. Monitoring charge per vehicle throughout the service day is critical to effectively managing vehicle charging needs.

Table 14: Vehicle Need Impact from EV Scenario

ZONE NAME	ESTIMATED TOTAL DAILY MILES FOR ZONE (WEEKDAY)[8]	MAX VEHICLES IN SERVICE (VOMS)	AVERAGE DAILY MILEAGE PER VEHICLE (AVERAGE TOTAL MILEAGE / VOMS)	MILEAGE EXCEEDS ESTIMATED CAPACITY (72 MILES)	NUMBER OF ADDITIONAL VEHICLES TO REACH TARGET
901 South Germantown	518.7	7	74.1	YES	1
902 Germantown	791.2	8	98.9	YES	3
903 Montgomery Village	467.3	7	66.8	NO	--
904 Rockville	318.5	5	63.7	NO	--
905 N. Bethesda-Garrett Park	1238.7	15	82.6	YES	3
906 Wheaton-Glenmont	426.3	6	71.0	NO	--
907 Olney	340.3	5	68.1	NO	--
909 Friendship Heights	344.3	6	57.4	NO	--
910 Kenwood-Glen Echo	322.2	6	53.7	NO	--
911 Aspen Hill	619.0	10	61.9	NO	--
912 Silver Spring	166.4	4	41.6	NO	--
913 Wheaton	150.9	3	50.3	NO	--
914 White Oak	675.1	10	67.5	NO	--
915 Takoma Langley	261.5	7	37.4	NO	--
916 Chevy Chase Kensington	304.2	5	60.8	NO	--
917 Universities at Shady Grove	39.4	1	39.4	NO	--
918 South Olney	20.1	1	20.1	NO	--
976 Germantown-Poolesville	45.7	2	22.9	NO	--
990 Damascus-Clarksburg-Milestone-Germantown TC	80.2	1	80.2	YES	1

[8] Replica's Fall 2022 Places dataset for weekday trips was used to estimate potential microtransit utilization based on trips that are fully contained within each proposed zone. These trips were then modeled and aggregated into revenue miles, revenue hours, and vehicle need to meet estimated demand.

Service Models Overview

As detailed in the Review of Previous and Concurrent Studies, three microtransit service models will be considered for comparison: Transportation-as-a-Service (TaaS) or Turnkey model, Software-as-a-Service (SaaS), and hybrid. This section will explore the impact of TaaS and SaaS operating models, as hybrid would involve using different operating models for specific operational areas. MCDOT currently utilizes the SaaS model for its existing Flex service and does not utilize TaaS for any microtransit. Microtransit service costs differ if operated directly by MCDOT or through a third-party contractor. Direct operation by MCDOT involves both capital and operational expenditures, whereas third-party contractors' pricing models are usually predicated on service duration, encompassing all related costs within their hourly rates.

The SaaS model involves the County procuring a technology platform for trip booking via mobile app or call center, with Ride On operators driving agency vehicles for service within specific zones. This model provides MCDOT with operational control and flexibility, while requiring significant upfront investment, an increase in internal capacity, and potential updates to collective bargaining agreements.

The TaaS model entails contracting with a vendor to supply all necessary components of the microtransit service, including technology, vehicles, and operators. Depending on the vendor chosen, this could also include depot space and charging infrastructure. MCDOT would oversee the service and vendor performance, setting service parameters and standards. This model tends to have lower operational costs, minimal staff effort for ongoing management, and quick deployment capabilities. However, it may necessitate additional training for independent contractors and requires contract management to ensure the service quality and adherence to service standards.

TAAS MODEL

Under the TaaS model, the primary cost to MCDOT is the contracted service rate estimated at $60[9] which consolidates operational and capital costs. This approach minimizes the agency's upfront investment, focusing instead on contract value and oversight through a Microtransit Manager role. This role facilitates coordination between the vendor, various MCDOT departments, and external parties. While MCDOT's existing customer service team may assist with service inquiries, most customer-related functions are managed by the contracted vendor. Marketing efforts may similarly be shared, though primarily handled by the vendor, negating the need for further hires.

Cost estimates and are based on an analysis of vehicles needed for each zone. The vehicle revenue hours required are the main cost driver for both operational models. TaaS may have a competitive operating cost, however it comes with some caveats:

- Limited agency operational control, as well as the potential for limited transparency of operations or performance data
- May require potential staffing redundancy, such as providing customer service to facilitate passenger experience, and to direct customers to TaaS vendor customer service or escalate disputes
- Some costs can be absorbed by the agency under TaaS, such as if there is a need to procure vehicles, hardware, and staff to open the TaaS contract to more competitive bidding. This would only need consideration if the first RFP does not attract sufficiently competitive bids.

[9] Quoted by a leading vendor in 2022 at $56, adjusted for inflation in 2024 dollars.

- There is a possibility that some vendors may have contractual minimum costs such as initial deployment fees, fixed-fees and service charges, or contractual guarantees such as a minimum number of monthly trips

SAAS MODEL

For the SaaS model that requires services operated directly by MCDOT, significant capital and operating costs are involved. The operating cost for each proposed Montgomery County microtransit zone is a function of the number of vehicles in service and the number of hours that each vehicle operates. Additional costs for this model include: vehicle purchase or lease, maintenance, staffing including drivers, mechanics, customer service personnel, and software licensing. Additionally, there are costs for marketing the service and training staff, as well as setting up the necessary IT infrastructure.

A significant portion of the operational costs for microtransit services under the SaaS model is attributed to staff compensation. Essential roles include:

MICROTRANSIT MANAGER

- Oversees operations, coordinates staff, tracks performance, and acts as the lead for the microtransit service, including overseeing reporting, analysis, and planning.
- Post-launch, the Microtransit Manager will mainly concentrate on monitoring the service.

OPERATIONAL STAFF

Operational staff includes operators, mechanics, vehicle cleaners, and dispatchers. The number of each role needed typically scales with vehicle count and service hours.

- Microtransit operation does not require a Commercial Driver License (CDL), potentially lowering operator costs compared to fixed-route bus operations. Flex currently uses Ride On bus operators with CDLs.
- In addition to operators, the team requires mechanics, estimated at one per every ten vehicles in operation.
- Possibly one or more vehicle cleaners, depending on the existing capacity and the time needed for cleaning. Microtransit vehicles, being smaller, can be cleaned faster than buses but must adhere to a regular cleaning schedule.
- A dispatcher can manage multiple zones in a shift, though a backup dispatcher may be necessary to cover for breaks, lunches, or an increase in service zones.

SUPPORT STAFF

Support staff encompass several roles. Additional hiring may be necessary for roles like customer service personnel and parts coordinators or clerk due to increased operational demands.

- Customer service personnel are essential for managing trip bookings and addressing complaints, praises, or inquiries about trip details. While current customer service teams might absorb some of the demand for microtransit services, additional hiring could be necessary to maintain acceptable call wait times. Training on zone specifics, trip booking, and issue resolution will be crucial for both new and existing customer service employees.
- To ensure mechanics' access to parts and supplies for vehicle maintenance, integrating microtransit parts management into the current system is possible, yet the increased workload might justify the addition of a new role, such as a parts coordinator or clerk.

ADDITIONAL COST CONSIDERATIONS

There are important factors that apply to microtransit service operations and management, regardless of operational model. This section will detail the importance of these factors and other considerations when developing or deploying zones.

Integrating microtransit vehicles into the SaaS or TaaS platform is crucial for efficient operations. Depending on agency preference, it may be important to own all microtransit vehicles, even if operation is performed by a contracted service provider.

Marketing Efforts

Effective marketing is essential for the ongoing operation of the microtransit service throughout the program's duration. This could involve various strategies such as hosting outreach events, leveraging media advertising, conducting rider education sessions, and orchestrating public relations efforts to highlight connections with other transit services in the region. The budget for marketing will cover both the staff involved and external expenses, including but not limited to the costs for printing materials and advertising space.

Software and Hardware Integration

Integrating microtransit technology typically requires software licensing and other fees. Licensing or software fees can require purchasing in-vehicle hardware. In-vehicle technologies include items such as Mobile Data Terminals, GPS antennas or systems, cellular data modems, and cellular data plans. The cost of a cellular data plan will vary based on the volume of data consumed by each vehicle and the mobile data provider. Data usage, primarily for transmitting trip status, GPS updates, or facilitating communication between the operator and dispatch, will depend on the software's requirements and update frequency. In areas with insufficient cellular coverage, particularly rural zones, alternative data transmission methods, such as radio data, may be essential to ensure effective dispatching. Equipping microtransit vehicles with the necessary software and hardware is essential and typically involves a modest fee.

Beyond vehicle integration, the operational support for microtransit zones might necessitate additional software and hardware. This includes systems for fare collection, whether through vending machines, fareboxes, or digital platforms like apps or websites. Updates to IT and telephony infrastructure, such as desktop computers, office software licenses, database enhancements, VoIP phones, or modifications to the phone system, might also be required. These updates could require more IT staff or contractor involvement to manage the implementation and maintenance of these systems.

Vehicle Procurement, Charging and Storage

The SaaS model requires MCDOT to handle the procurement, storage, and upkeep of microtransit vehicles and associated equipment. The price range for electric microtransit vehicles falls between $90,000 and $200,000, depending on the vehicle's size and type. In addition to the primary fleet of revenue-generating vehicles, more non-revenue vehicles may be needed to facilitate the handover of shifts directly in the field, rather than at the depot. Strategies to minimize the number of non-revenue vehicles needed include scheduling overlapping shifts, arranging for carpooling among operators, or utilizing any available surplus of non-revenue vehicles. The cost for such non-revenue vehicles typically varies from $30,000 to $80,000, based on their specifications.

Electric vehicles require installing sufficient charging infrastructure. This may include strategically placing charging stations at depots or key hubs, as well as any electrical system upgrades to support additional demand. The development of EV charging infrastructure requires substantial up-front investment but may be necessary to facilitate the shift to an electric fleet and achieve long-term sustainability and cost savings. Minimizing deadhead travel can reduce overall energy usage. If feasible, placing depots closer to operational zones can lower operational costs by reducing deadhead mileage.

Fare Collection

Fare collection methods, whether through app-based systems or traditional physical fareboxes, involve a range of associated costs and considerations that transit agencies must manage effectively.

FARE COLLECTION AND RECONCILIATION

Collecting fares for microtransit services can be executed through two primary methods: an in-vehicle farebox or an online payment portal accessible via app or website. Each method has benefits and drawbacks.

- **In-Vehicle Farebox:** This traditional method allows riders to pay their fares directly when boarding the vehicle, using cash or card payments. It is straightforward and familiar to many users, especially those accustomed to traditional public transit services. However, it can slow down boarding process and requires physical maintenance and cash collection, transportation, and reconciliation processes, which can increase operational costs and complexities.
- **App or Web-Based Payment Portal:** Digital payment solutions, enabling riders to pay their fares through a mobile app or a website, offers convenience, faster boarding process, and simplified fare reconciliation processes. It can also provide insights into usage patterns and customer preferences. The main challenges are ensuring accessibility for all users, including those without smartphones or internet access; and addressing privacy and data security concerns. App and web-based payment may have processing, licensing, or other fees that can impact revenue collection. [10]

The revenue tracking and reconciliation process is pivotal for the financial sustainability of microtransit services. The method for tracking revenue will depend on the chosen fare collection method. Regardless of the method, accounting personnel must be proficient in:

- **Accessing and interpreting reports:** Staff should know how to retrieve financial reports from the microtransit software, understand the breakdown of revenues by fare types, and analyze relationships between ridership and revenue.
- **Reconciling and auditing data:** It is vital to regularly reconcile collected fares with recorded trips to ensure financial integrity. This involves verifying that the revenue from each trip is accurately recorded and reflected in financial reports.
- **Continuous monitoring:** As outlined in the service monitoring and adjustments guidelines, revenues from each trip should be reported to MCDOT on a weekly basis. These reports should always be readily accessible through the microtransit software, allowing for real-time financial oversight.

By establishing a robust fare collection and reconciliation framework, MCDOT can effectively manage microtransit revenues, enhance operational transparency, and ensure the financial viability of the service. This framework not only supports the immediate needs of the existing microtransit program, but also lays the groundwork for the future proposed microtransit services.

[10] Credit-card transaction fees are often a fixed percent of the transaction plus a static fee, such as 2.9% + 30 cents.

App-based fare collection requires licensing fees for the software, ongoing maintenance costs, and transaction fees for each payment processed. These systems often require regular updates to ensure compatibility with new mobile operating systems and security protocols, which adds to the operational expenses. Physical fareboxes, while perhaps simpler technologically, entail costs for installation, routine maintenance, and occasional upgrades to handle new types of payments or to enhance security features. Additionally, customer service components need to be robust to address issues, provide refunds or adjustments, and assist passengers with the transition to new fare collection technologies.

Implementation Steps and Schedule

This section outlines the deployment process and steps for microtransit service, including when deploying new zones into existing service. It concludes by recommending an operational model based on Montgomery County's existing service characteristics.

PROCUREMENT

Under the TaaS model, MCDOT is not required to procure vehicles for microtransit operations, as the contracted vendor will provide all necessary vehicles. Under the SaaS model, MCDOT may need to initiate the vehicle procurement process, especially if not repurposing existing vehicles to cover the new vehicle needs. This process, influenced by vehicle specifications, fundings, and planning, may extend beyond a year.

Microtransit vehicles, accommodating four to 14 passengers with variations for wheelchair access, support an average passenger load of 2.4 to 4.7 passengers per hour. Smaller vehicles could meet this demand, enhancing operational efficiency compared to traditional fixed-route services.

Selecting vehicles for microtransit services involves a detailed analysis of several critical factors, including anticipated demand, zone size, cost considerations, and accessibility. While larger buses can transport more passengers at one time, smaller vehicles boast greater maneuverability, allowing them to access narrower or more congested neighborhoods, thus possibly delivering more efficient and personalized services. Moreover, the procurement of smaller vehicles over larger ones can lead to cost savings in both acquisition and operation, given their better energy efficiency and lower maintenance costs.

Software Setup for Microtransit

The deployment of microtransit services requires extensive software setup, including staff training and system testing. Preparing for service includes specific requirements for software readiness in the Request for Proposal (RFP).

ENHANCING USER EXPERIENCE WITH APP INTERFACE

The customer booking app must have a user-friendly interface, with features such as pre-selected field entries. MCDOT will need to provide user guides and training materials to ensure the app's widespread accessibility and ease of use. These resources are instrumental in equipping staff with the knowledge to address user inquiries effectively.

CONFIGURING SERVICE PARAMETERS

Setting up microtransit service parameters involves backend configuration. This includes determining zone boundaries, zone hours of service, and key destinations.

Zone boundaries are essential to test and verify. For example, if a roadway denotes a zone boundary, adjusting the boundary to include adjacent buildings on both sides may be necessary.

Having a list of common destinations improves the booking process, especially if call-in booking is provided. A predefined list of destinations enables users to choose from options rather than inputting an exact address. Testing may be required to ensure that trip generators are accurately captured within the service area.

Lastly, service hours and days of service may require refining and testing. For instance, if a service zone operates from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., it is important to determine whether the booking policy allows drop-offs at the start of service and pickups until service concludes.

TRAINING

The microtransit software vendor should initially provide training and necessary documentation on the use of the platform, available reports, and other fundamental features. MCDOT must assess the training requirements for specific staff members. **A train-the-trainer approach, where a select group of MCDOT staff receives comprehensive training from the vendor and subsequently trains other colleagues, will ensure quality education for the MCDOT team while minimizing long-term reliance on the vendor.** This method enables on-demand training for new staff and supports ongoing educational efforts.

Operators

Given the app-centric approach of microtransit, it is crucial for operators to become proficient with the use of tablets installed in the vehicles. Training should begin with an overview of microtransit and its significance in the public transit system, including:

- **Defining Microtransit:** Sessions should clarify what microtransit is, how it differs from traditional fixed-route and paratransit services, and the rationale behind its selection for the Montgomery County. This is also an opportunity to gather operator feedback to enhance the work environment.
- **App Usage:** Comprehensive guidance on using the app is essential. This includes making reservations, updating trip details, and communicating with dispatch and customers as necessary.
- **Vehicle operation:** Training must cover navigating through residential areas, parking lots, shopping centers, and narrower streets, as well as accommodating passengers with wheelchairs. Emphasis should be placed on stopping at customer-preferred locations to enhance the user experience.

Call Center Staff

To facilitate reservations for those without app access, MCDOT will employ call center staff, who will enter rider information into the app over the phone. Training for these staff members should include:

- **Defining Microtransit:** Similar to operators, call center staff need a solid understanding of microtransit, its purpose, and the target demographics to ensure exceptional service delivery.
- **App Usage:** Staff must become proficient at using the application to efficiently manage bookings, address any issues, and navigate payment alternatives for passengers, especially those without bank accounts.

Planner and Internal Stakeholders

As microtransit gains traction nationwide, planners and internal stakeholders may need additional training to become familiar with its operational nuances. Training should encompass:

- **Defining Microtransit:** Staff need to grasp the full scope of what microtransit service implementation involves, including performance monitoring and the ability to adapt services based on ongoing evaluations.

This structured training framework ensures that all MCDOT personnel are well-equipped to support and optimize the microtransit service, thereby enhancing its effectiveness and the overall user experience.

Overall implementation for each model

This section details high-level steps when deploying individual zones. Both TaaS and SaaS have several implementation steps in common. Each step is broken down into why it is important, and each model lists the steps that are relevant. **Table 15** provides a list of deployment steps and the operational model(s) to which they apply, while **Figure 26** depicts a high-level timeline for deploying new microtransit services, including model-specific considerations.

Zone evaluation and planning – Zones may require ongoing planning and analysis to ensure that they are being effectively served.

A. Zone demographics and needs change over time, and land uses or transportation patterns may have changed since the zone was last planned. This may reveal a need to modify the zone boundaries.
B. This step should also include analysis of potential costs associated with service changes.
C. Public engagement should be conducted during this step to better target the zone to customer needs.

Procurement – Purchase of required supporting technologies, vehicle and staff hardware, IT, telephony, vehicles, fueling or charging infrastructure, and potentially additional depot space or layover locations
Staffing/hiring – Additional staff may be needed, including call center staff, operators, or supervisory positions.
Staff Training – Training for staff on how to operate the service. This may include dispatching, customer support, zone operations, and complaint investigation.
Zone setup and configuration – Configuration of the zone in the software platform.
This may include hours of service, zone boundaries, and configuring high-demand locations for keyword-specific search. Minor exceptions to published zone boundaries may be needed to ensure that locations just outside the boundaries are served.
Testing – Testing the zone boundaries to ensure trips can be booked as expected, and that popular locations are within the zone.
Marketing – May include development and distribution of promotional materials, vehicle wraps, events at local organizations, and partnerships or promotions.

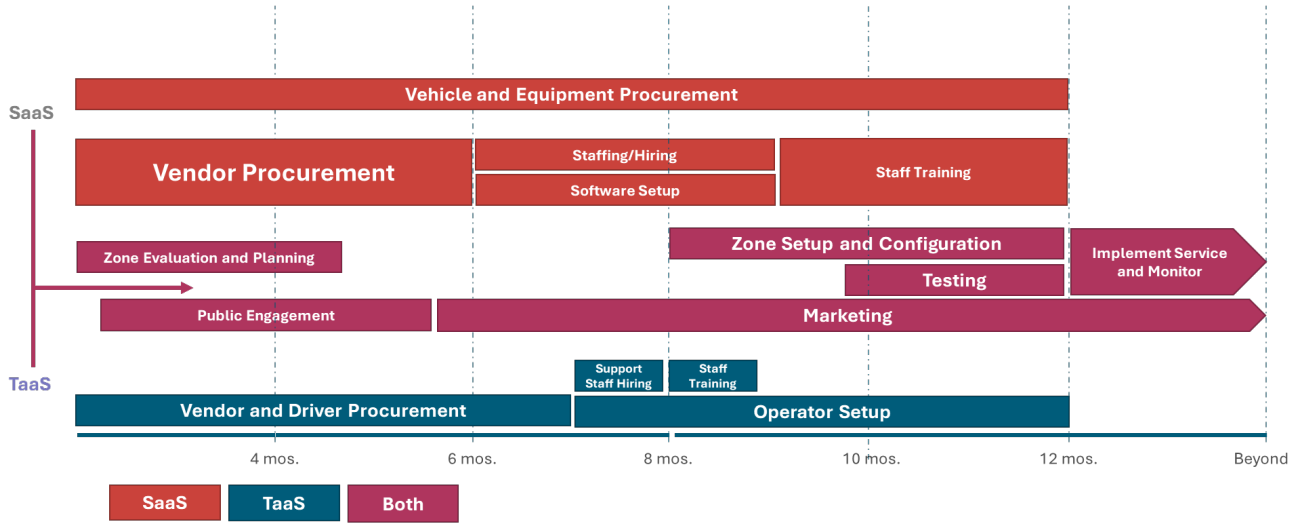
Zone by zone implementation may involve some or all of these, depending on the order of implementation. **Table 15** lists common steps and highlights differences between the SaaS and TaaS service model implementation; this list can be further refined based on the County's needs.

Table 15: Zone Implementation Checklist

STEP	OBJECT	SAAS	TAAS
Zone evaluation and planning	Review suitability	Yes	Yes
Zone evaluation and planning	Conduct public engagement	Yes	Yes

STEP	OBJECT	SAAS	TAAS
Zone evaluation and planning	Determine zone parameters	Yes	Yes
Procurement	Select vendor	Yes	Yes
Procurement	Procure vehicles and equipment	Yes	No
Procurement	Procure IT, telephony	Yes	Depending on staffing needs
Procurement	Procure Software	Yes	No
Procurement	Procure fueling infrastructure, garage space, parts, tools	Yes	No
Staffing/Hiring	Hire Operations staff	Yes	No
Staffing/Hiring	Hire Maintenance staff	Yes	No
Staffing/Hiring	Hire Micromobility support staff	Yes	Yes
Staffing/Hiring	Hire Customer service staff	Yes	Yes (though less compared to SaaS)
Software Setup	Set up and test software	Yes	No
Staff Training	Train impacted staff	Yes	Less compared to SaaS
Operator Setup	Vendor hires operators	No	Yes
Zone setup and configuration	Determine service span	Yes	Yes
Zone setup and configuration	Configure zone boundaries	Yes	Yes
Zone setup and configuration	Enter common destinations	Yes	Yes
Testing	Test to ensure trips can be booked as expected	Yes	Yes
Marketing	Develop promotional materials, partnerships, engagement	Yes	Yes, in coordination with vendor
Implement Service and Monitor	Implement service	Yes	Yes
Implement Service and Monitor	Monitor service	Yes	Yes

Figure 26: Potential Service and Zone Deployment Timeline



OPERATIONAL MODEL RECOMMENDATION

Selecting a microtransit operational model involves evaluating numerous factors to determine the most suitable approach for Montgomery County. These include MCDOT's readiness level for staffing and fleet availability and procurement needs for dispatching or other microtransit equipment.

The SaaS model is most appropriate for future expansions of Ride On as it builds on MCDOT's prior experiences and current resources, including:

- **Staff and fleet:** MCDOT already possesses a fleet of vehicles and trained operators, which can help the agency avoid the substantial costs associated with acquiring new vehicles and hiring additional staff.
- **Technology**: As MCDOT plans to expand into new zones, it can do so by extending the current software license to cover additional areas and vehicles without increasing complexity or foundational expense.
- **Implementation efforts**: Since MCDOT is currently operating a SaaS-based microtransit services, there is an established framework and familiarity with this model, which will avoid the learning curve and adaptation transition associated with implementing a new operational model.
- **Prior experience**: The insights and lessons learned from the current operation under the SaaS model provide valuable data that can be used to refine and optimize future service expansions, including understanding user demographics, preference patterns, and operational challenges.
- **Deployment of electric vehicles (EVs)**: MCDOT staff have expressed a desire and plan to utilize EVs for Ride On Flex service. Mandating EVs for a TaaS provider may not be feasible without providing fleet capacity and infrastructure directly.

5. Appendix: Zone Profiles

The zone profiles provide a comprehensive overview of the characteristics of zone overview and evaluation of each existing and proposed microtransit zones from Ride On Reimagined. It compiles a list of data to offer a detailed analysis of the zone prioritization. Zone profiles are presented in order by their propriety rankings, which are based on composite scores from Table 8. The following is a breakdown of the components included in each zone's profile:

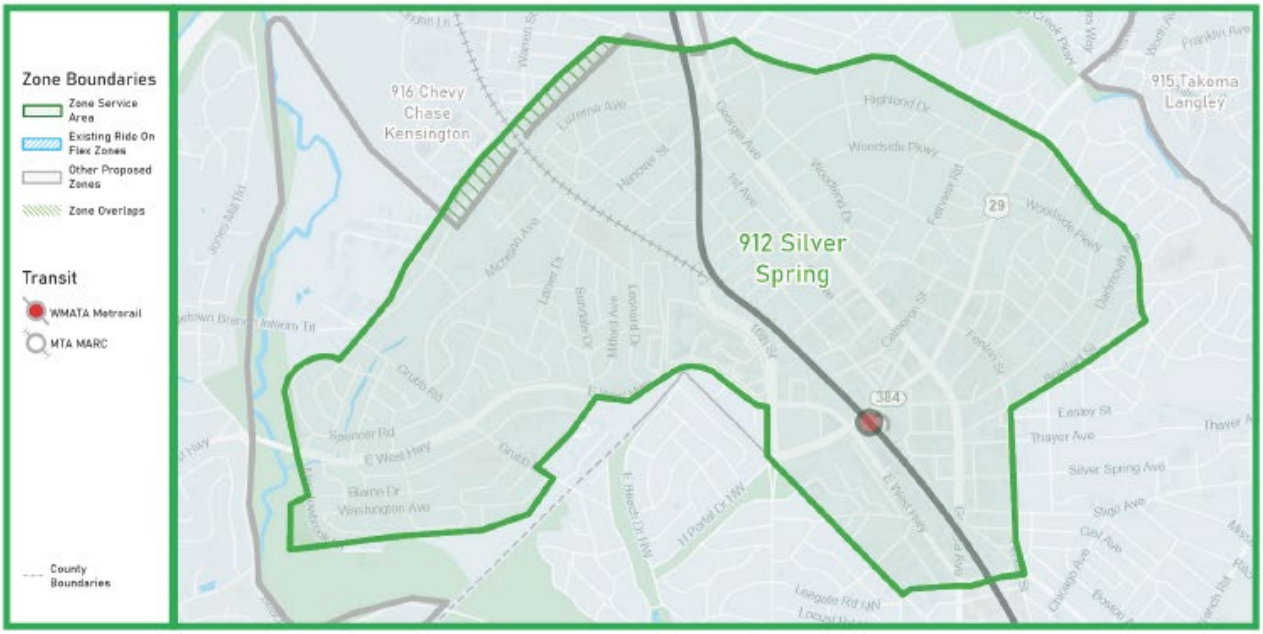
- **Suitable for:** represents the highest scoring scenario (Internal Circulation, First / Last Mile, Equity, Hard to Reach) for each zone based on their respective scores.
- **Zone characteristics:** provides geographic and demographic details of each zone, and attractions and transit connections within each zone.
  - Zone area
  - Population and job density
  - Minority/low-income population density
  - Major activity generators
  - Transit connections
- **Zone map:** illustrates the zone boundary with trip attractions and rail transit network.
- **Zone score:** presents prioritization scores assessing each zone under different use case scenarios.
  - Internal circulation
  - First / Last Mile
  - Equity
  - Hard to Reach
- **Composite Score:** presents the sum of scores across all use cases to provide a composite score for priority ranking.
- **Prioritization Rank:** orders zones based on their composite score from highest priority (1) to lowest (21).

MCDOT

912 Silver Spring

Zone Area (sq. mi.)	Population and Job Density (Jobs + Population per Acre)	Minority / Low-Income Population Density (Population per Acre)	Transit Connections
2.23	36.58	15.69	MTA: 305, 315, 325; Metrorail; Metrobus: 70, 79, F4, J1, J2, Q2, Q4, S2, S9, Y2, Y7, Y8, Z2, Z6, Z7, Z8; Ride On: 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 28, Flash

PROPOSED ZONE



SCORES

Internal Circulation	First / Last Mile
9/10	9/10
Equity	**Hard to Reach**
9/10	4/10
Composite	**Prioritization Rank**
31/40	1/21

Internal Circulation
Prioritize population and job density and activity generators to address intra-zone travel needs.

First / Last Mile
Focus on enhancing connectivity to transit stops, ensuring integration with the existing system.

Equity
Emphasize minority and low-income population density and intersection density to serve transit-reliant populations in less accessible areas.

Hard to Reach
Highlight the intersection denstity along with number of activity generators to better serve hard to reach communities.

Composite
Sum of all scores across Internal Circulation, First / Last Mile, Equity and Hard to Reach.

Prioritization Rank
An assessment to order zones based on their composite score, with lower rank indicating a higher priority level.

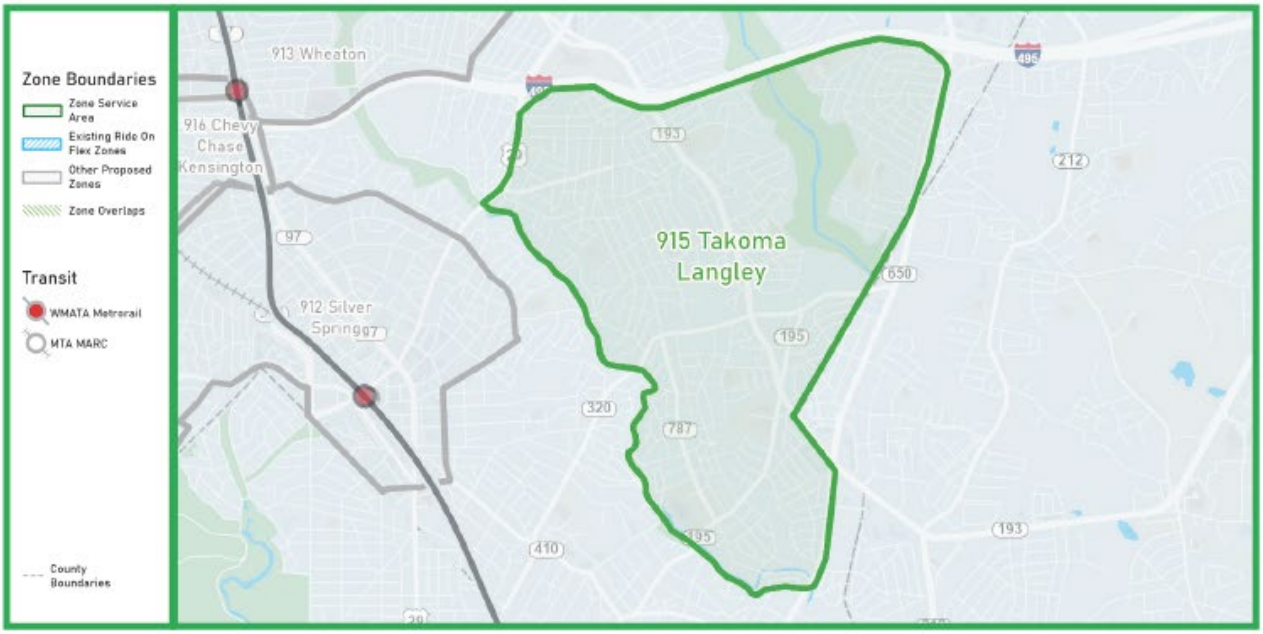
Best Use Case(s): Internal Circulation, First/Last Mile, Equity

MCDOT

915 Takoma Langley

Zone Area (sq. mi.)	Population and Job Density (Jobs + Population per Acre)	Minority / Low-Income Population Density (Population per Acre)	Transit Connections
3.67	18.5	17.18	Metrobus: C2, C4, C8, F8, K6, K9, R1, Z2, Z6, Z7, Z8; Ride On: 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, Flash

PROPOSED ZONE



SCORES

Internal Circulation	First / Last Mile
7/10	8/10
Equity	**Hard to Reach**
9/10	5/10
Composite	**Prioritization Rank**
29/40	2/21

Internal Circulation
Prioritize population and job density and activity generators to address intra-zone travel needs.

First / Last Mile
Focus on enhancing connectivity to transit stops, ensuring integration with the existing system.

Equity
Emphasize minority and low-income population density and intersection density to serve transit-reliant populations in less accessible areas.

Hard to Reach
Highlight the intersection denstity along with number of activity generators to better serve hard to reach communities.

Composite
Sum of all scores across Internal Circulation, First / Last Mile, Equity and Hard to Reach.

Prioritization Rank
An assessment to order zones based on their composite score, with lower rank indicating a higher priority level.

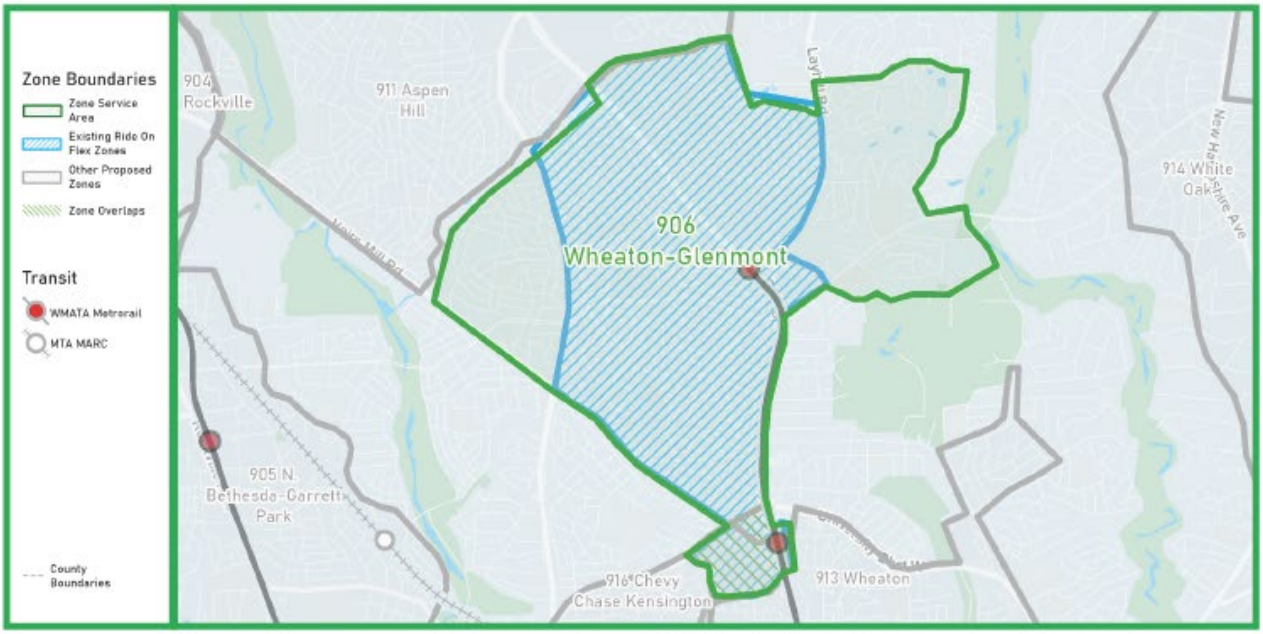
Best Use Case(s): Equity

MCDOT

906 Wheaton-Glenmont

Zone Area (sq. mi.)	Population and Job Density (Jobs + Population per Acre)	Minority / Low-Income Population Density (Population per Acre)	Transit Connections
5.2	13.15	10.73	Metrorail; Metrobus: C2, C4, C8, L8, Q2, Q4, Q6, Y2, Y7, Y8; Ride On: 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 26, 31, 33, 34, 37, 38, 39, 41, 48, 49, 51, 53

PROPOSED ZONE



SCORES

Internal Circulation	First / Last Mile
7/10	8/10
Equity	**Hard to Reach**
8/10	5/10
Composite	**Prioritization Rank**
28/40	3/21

Internal Circulation
Prioritize population and job density and activity generators to address intra-zone travel needs.

First / Last Mile
Focus on enhancing connectivity to transit stops, ensuring integration with the existing system.

Equity
Emphasize minority and low-income population density and intersection density to serve transit-reliant populations in less accessible areas.

Hard to Reach
Highlight the intersection denstity along with number of activity generators to better serve hard to reach communities.

Composite
Sum of all scores across Internal Circulation, First / Last Mile, Equity and Hard to Reach.

Prioritization Rank
An assessment to order zones based on their composite score, with lower rank indicating a higher priority level.

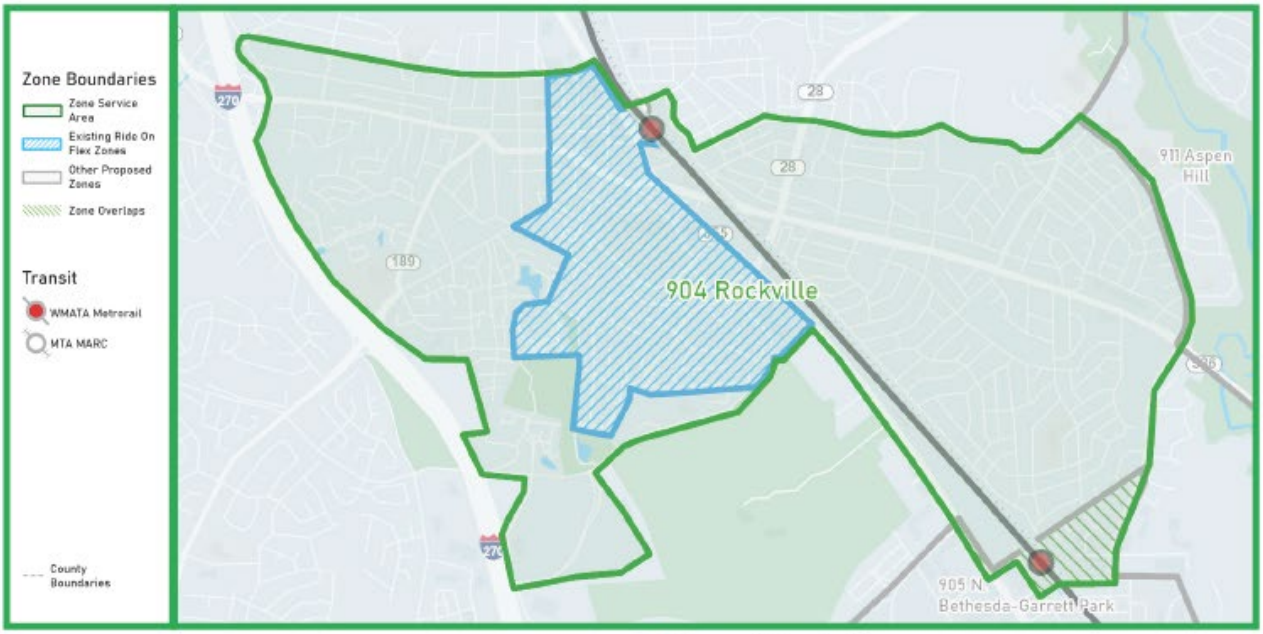
Best Use Case(s): First/Last Mile

MCDOT

904 Rockville

Zone Area (sq. mi.)	Population and Job Density (Jobs + Population per Acre)	Minority / Low-Income Population Density (Population per Acre)	Transit Connections
3.71	20.66	7.54	Metrorail; Metrobus: Q2, Q4, Q6, C2, C4, T2; Ride On: 5, 10, 26, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 52, 54, 55, 56, 59, 63, 81, 101, 301

PROPOSED ZONE



SCORES

Internal Circulation	First / Last Mile
9/10	7/10
Equity	**Hard to Reach**
6/10	4/10
Composite	**Prioritization Rank**
26/40	4/21

Internal Circulation
Prioritize population and job density and activity generators to address intra-zone travel needs.

First / Last Mile
Focus on enhancing connectivity to transit stops, ensuring integration with the existing system.

Equity
Emphasize minority and low-income population density and intersection density to serve transit-reliant populations in less accessible areas.

Hard to Reach
Highlight the intersection denstity along with number of activity generators to better serve hard to reach communities.

Composite
Sum of all scores across Internal Circulation, First / Last Mile, Equity and Hard to Reach.

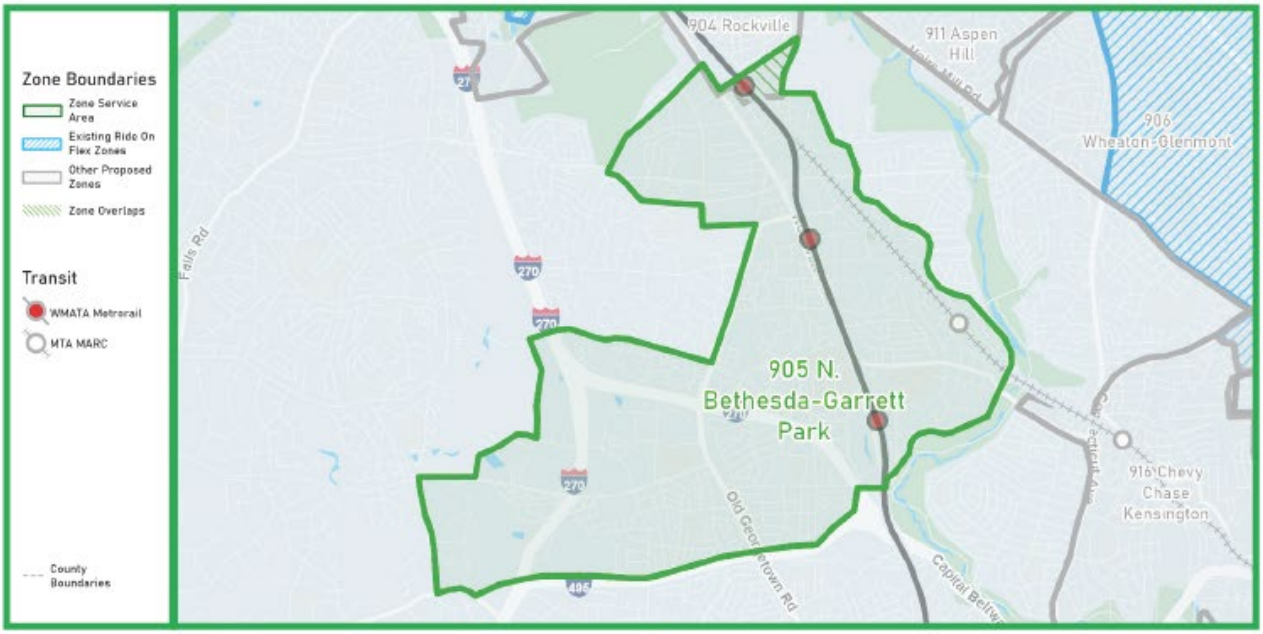
Prioritization Rank
An assessment to order zones based on their composite score, with lower rank indicating a higher priority level.

Best Use Case(s): Internal Circulation

905 N. Bethesda-Garrett Park

Zone Area (sq. mi.)	Population and Job Density (Jobs + Population per Acre)	Minority / Low-Income Population Density (Population per Acre)	Transit Connections
7.28	20.95	5.28	MARC; MTA: 505, 515; Metrorail; Metrobus: C2, C4, C8, J1, J2; Ride On: 5, 6, 10, 26, 36, 37, 38, 42, 44, 45, 46, 47, 70, 81, 96, 101

PROPOSED ZONE



SCORES

Internal Circulation	First / Last Mile
8/10	7/10
Equity	**Hard to Reach**
6/10	5/10
Composite	**Prioritization Rank**
26/40	5/21

Internal Circulation
Prioritize population and job density and activity generators to address intra-zone travel needs.

First / Last Mile
Focus on enhancing connectivity to transit stops, ensuring integration with the existing system.

Equity
Emphasize minority and low-income population density and intersection density to serve transit-reliant populations in less accessible areas.

Hard to Reach
Highlight the intersection denstity along with number of activity generators to better serve hard to reach communities.

Composite
Sum of all scores across Internal Circulation, First / Last Mile, Equity and Hard to Reach.

Prioritization Rank
An assessment to order zones based on their composite score, with lower rank indicating a higher priority level.

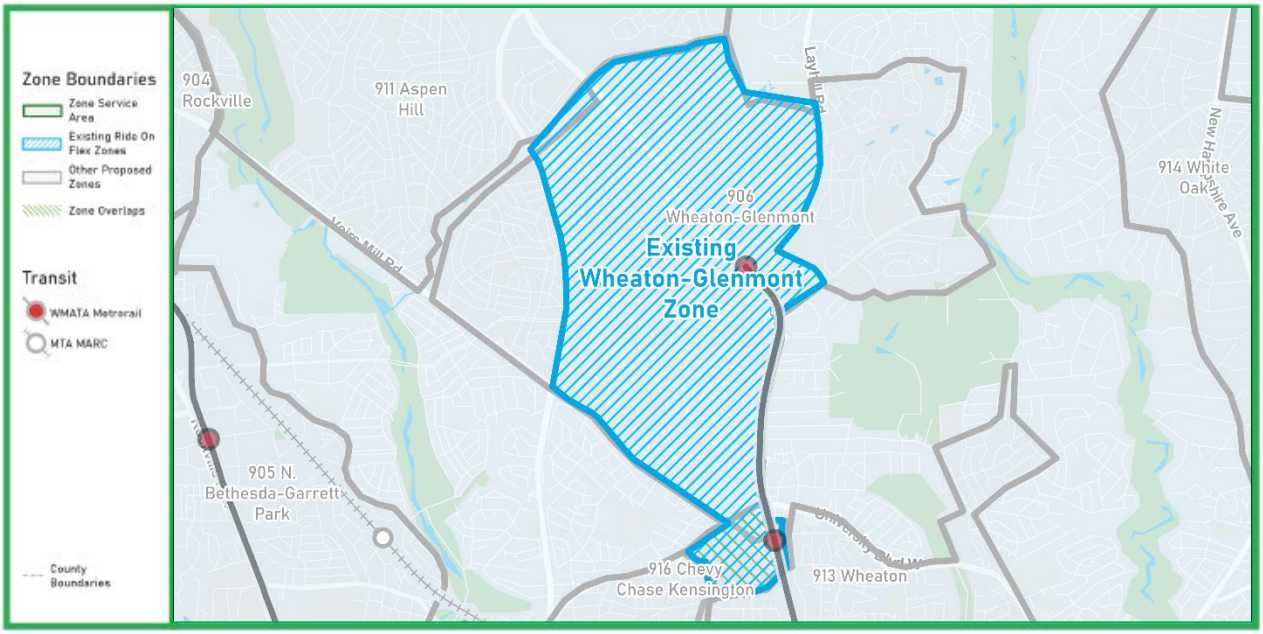
Best Use Case(s): Internal Circulation

MCDOT

Existing Wheaton-Glenmont

Zone Area (sq. mi.)	Population and Job Density (Jobs + Population per Acre)	Minority / Low-Income Population Density (Population per Acre)	Transit Connections
3.43	14.25	11.59	Metrorail; Metrobus: C2, C4, C8, L8, Q2, Q4, Q6, Y2, Y7, Y8; Ride On: 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 26, 31, 33, 34, 37, 38, 39, 41, 48, 49, 51, 53

PROPOSED ZONE



SCORES

Internal Circulation	First / Last Mile
7/10	7/10
Equity	**Hard to Reach**
8/10	4/10
Composite	**Prioritization Rank**
26/40	6/21

Internal Circulation
Prioritize population and job density and activity generators to address intra-zone travel needs.

First / Last Mile
Focus on enhancing connectivity to transit stops, ensuring integration with the existing system.

Equity
Emphasize minority and low-income population density and intersection density to serve transit-reliant populations in less accessible areas.

Hard to Reach
Highlight the intersection denstity along with number of activity generators to better serve hard to reach communities.

Composite
Sum of all scores across Internal Circulation, First / Last Mile, Equity and Hard to Reach.

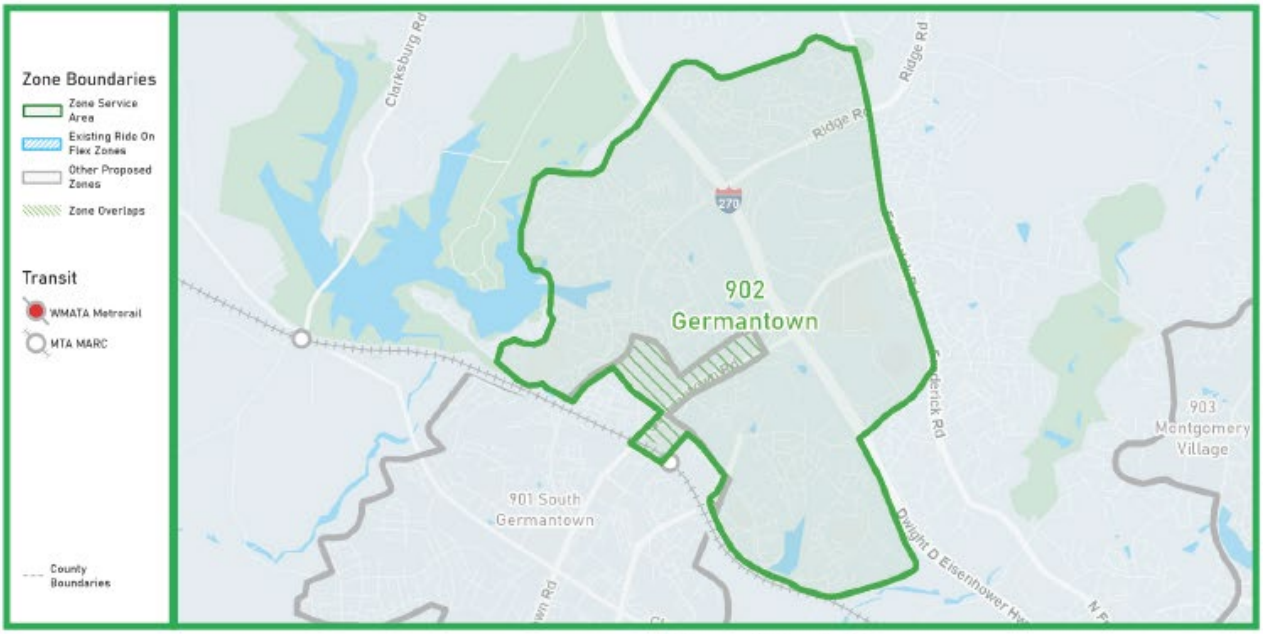
Prioritization Rank
An assessment to order zones based on their composite score, with lower rank indicating a higher priority level.

Best Use Case(s): Equity

902 Germantown

Zone Area (sq. mi.)	Population and Job Density (Jobs + Population per Acre)	Minority / Low-Income Population Density (Population per Acre)	Transit Connections
5.78	13.83	8.18	Ride On: 55, 61, 70, 73, 74, 75, 79, 83, 90, 97, 98, 100

PROPOSED ZONE



SCORES

Internal Circulation	First / Last Mile
6/10	5/10
Equity	**Hard to Reach**
6/10	7/10
Composite	**Prioritization Rank**
24/40	7/21

Internal Circulation
Prioritize population and job density and activity generators to address intra-zone travel needs.

First / Last Mile
Focus on enhancing connectivity to transit stops, ensuring integration with the existing system.

Equity
Emphasize minority and low-income population density and intersection density to serve transit-reliant populations in less accessible areas.

Hard to Reach
Highlight the intersection denstity along with number of activity generators to better serve hard to reach communities.

Composite
Sum of all scores across Internal Circulation, First / Last Mile, Equity and Hard to Reach.

Prioritization Rank
An assessment to order zones based on their composite score, with lower rank indicating a higher priority level.

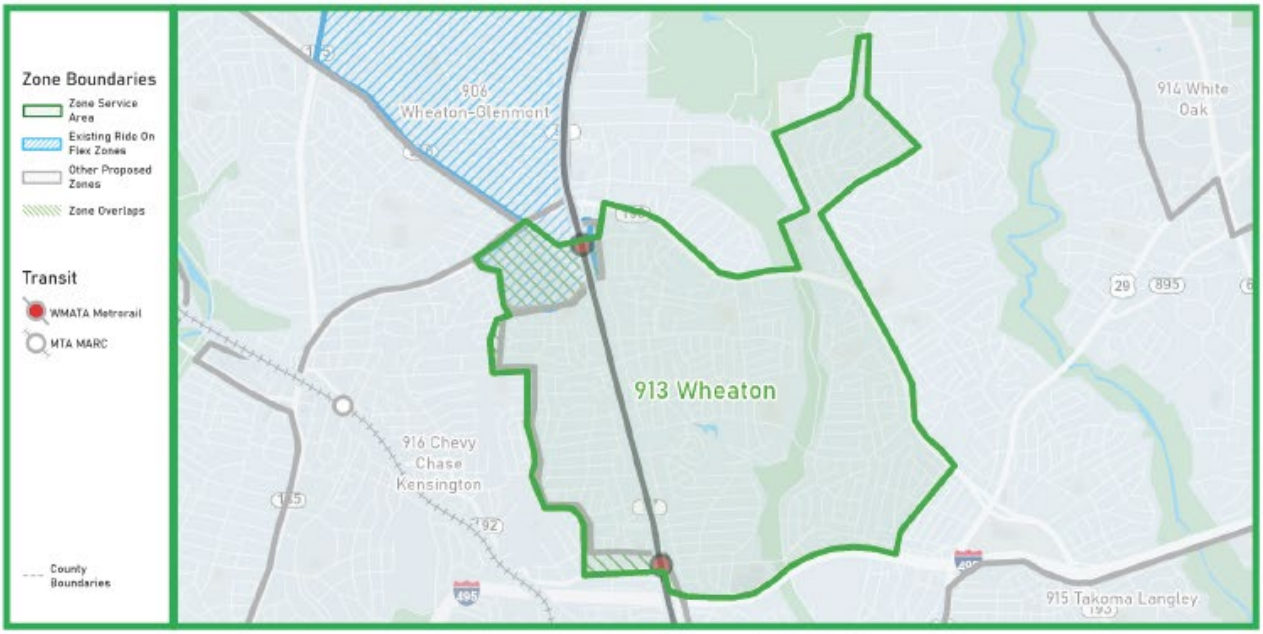
Best Use Case(s): Hard to Reach

MCDOT

913 Wheaton

Zone Area (sq. mi.)	Population and Job Density (Jobs + Population per Acre)	Minority / Low-Income Population Density (Population per Acre)	Transit Connections
3.25	17.07	9.03	Metrorail, Metrobus: C2, C4, Q2, Q4, Q6, Y2, Y7, Y8; Ride On:4, 7, 8, 9, 19, 31, 34, 37, 38, 48

PROPOSED ZONE



SCORES

Internal Circulation	First / Last Mile
6/10	6/10
Equity	**Hard to Reach**
7/10	4/10
Composite	**Prioritization Rank**
23/40	8/21

Internal Circulation
Prioritize population and job density and activity generators to address intra-zone travel needs.

First / Last Mile
Focus on enhancing connectivity to transit stops, ensuring integration with the existing system.

Equity
Emphasize minority and low-income population density and intersection density to serve transit-reliant populations in less accessible areas.

Hard to Reach
Highlight the intersection denstity along with number of activity generators to better serve hard to reach communities.

Composite
Sum of all scores across Internal Circulation, First / Last Mile, Equity and Hard to Reach.

Prioritization Rank
An assessment to order zones based on their composite score, with lower rank indicating a higher priority level.

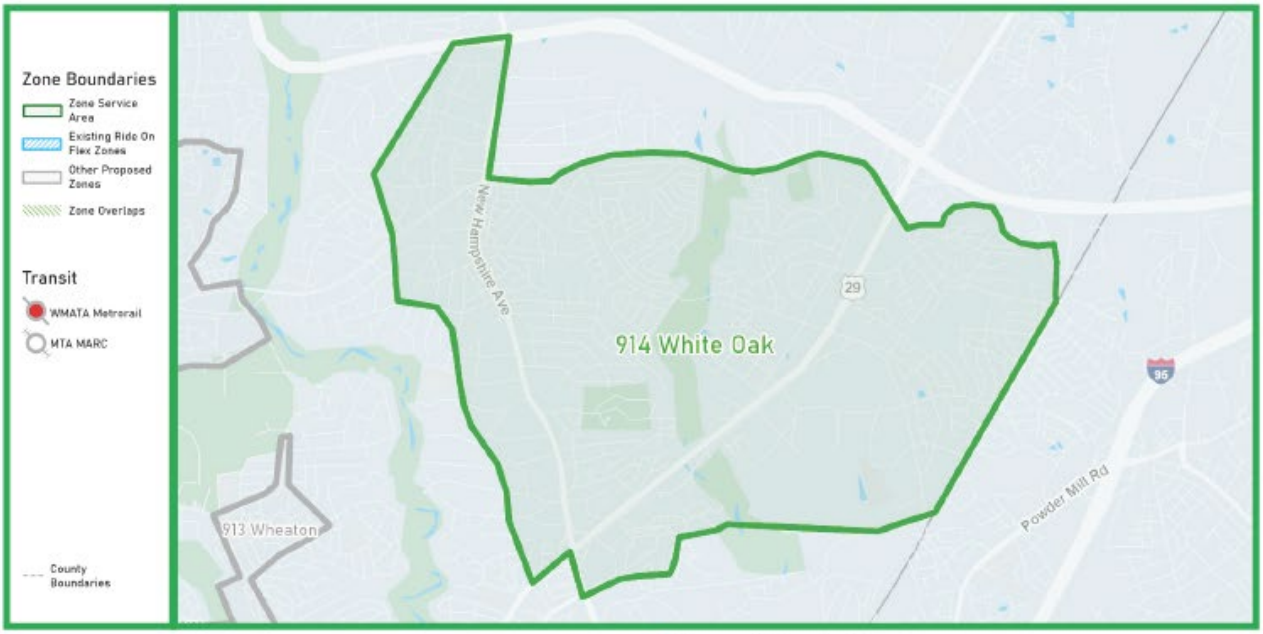
Best Use Case(s): Equity

MCDOT

914 White Oak

Zone Area (sq. mi.)	Population and Job Density (Jobs + Population per Acre)	Minority / Low-Income Population Density (Population per Acre)	Transit Connections
8.03	8.6	6.38	Metrobus: C8, K6, R2, Z2, Z6, Z7, Z8; Ride On: 10, 21, 22, 27, Flash

PROPOSED ZONE



SCORES

Internal Circulation	First / Last Mile
5/10	6/10
Equity	**Hard to Reach**
6/10	6/10
Composite	**Prioritization Rank**
23/40	8/21

Internal Circulation
Prioritize population and job density and activity generators to address intra-zone travel needs.

First / Last Mile
Focus on enhancing connectivity to transit stops, ensuring integration with the existing system.

Equity
Emphasize minority and low-income population density and intersection density to serve transit-reliant populations in less accessible areas.

Hard to Reach
Highlight the intersection denstity along with number of activity generators to better serve hard to reach communities.

Composite
Sum of all scores across Internal Circulation, First / Last Mile, Equity and Hard to Reach.

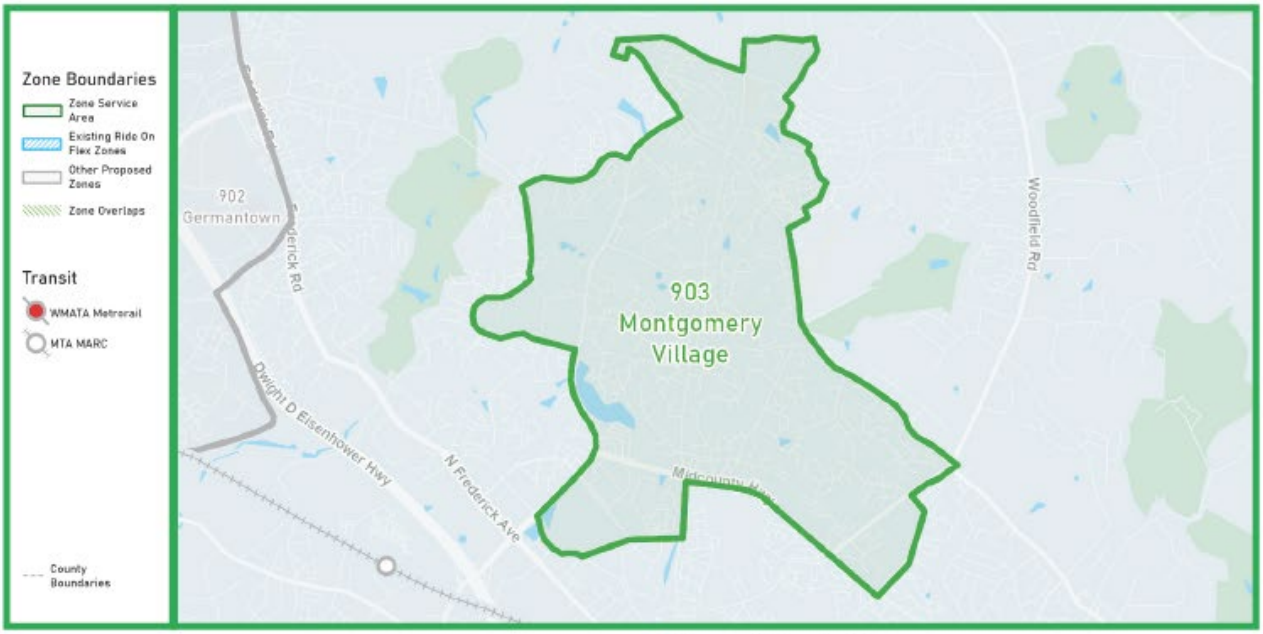
Prioritization Rank
An assessment to order zones based on their composite score, with lower rank indicating a higher priority level.

Best Use Case(s): Hard to Reach

903 Montgomery Village

Zone Area (sq. mi.)	Population and Job Density (Jobs + Population per Acre)	Minority / Low-Income Population Density (Population per Acre)	Transit Connections
5.27	12.51	10.83	Ride On: 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 64, 65, 90, 101

PROPOSED ZONE



SCORES

Internal Circulation	First / Last Mile
5/10	5/10
Equity	**Hard to Reach**
6/10	6/10
Composite	**Prioritization Rank**
22/40	10/21

Internal Circulation
Prioritize population and job density and activity generators to address intra-zone travel needs.

First / Last Mile
Focus on enhancing connectivity to transit stops, ensuring integration with the existing system.

Equity
Emphasize minority and low-income population density and intersection density to serve transit-reliant populations in less accessible areas.

Hard to Reach
Highlight the intersection denstity along with number of activity generators to better serve hard to reach communities.

Composite
Sum of all scores across Internal Circulation, First / Last Mile, Equity and Hard to Reach.

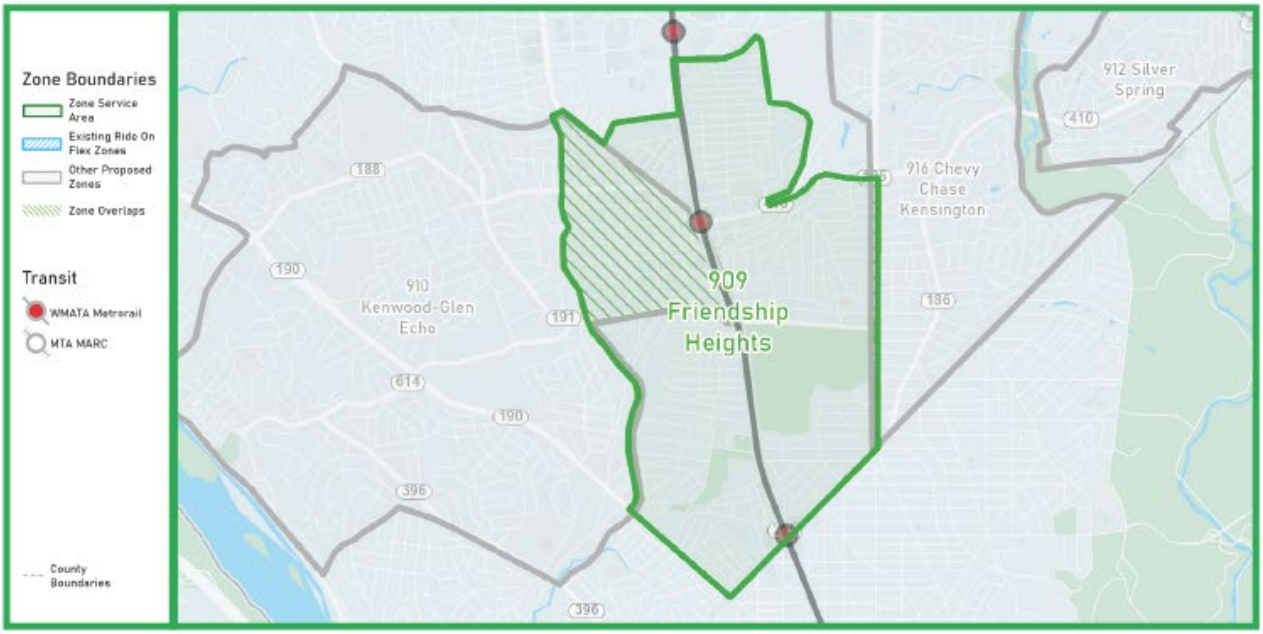
Prioritization Rank
An assessment to order zones based on their composite score, with lower rank indicating a higher priority level.

Best Use Case(s): Hard to Reach

909 Friendship Heights

Zone Area (sq. mi.)	Population and Job Density (Jobs + Population per Acre)	Minority / Low-Income Population Density (Population per Acre)	Transit Connections
3.24	37.96	5.57	Metrorail; Metrobus: 31, 33, E4, J1, J2, L8, N2, N4, N6, T2; Ride On: 1, 11, 23, 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, 36, 47, 70

PROPOSED ZONE



SCORES

Internal Circulation	First / Last Mile
7/10	7/10
Equity	**Hard to Reach**
5/10	3/10
Composite	**Prioritization Rank**
22/40	10/21

Internal Circulation
Prioritize population and job density and activity generators to address intra-zone travel needs.

First / Last Mile
Focus on enhancing connectivity to transit stops, ensuring integration with the existing system.

Equity
Emphasize minority and low-income population density and intersection density to serve transit-reliant populations in less accessible areas.

Hard to Reach
Highlight the intersection denstity along with number of activity generators to better serve hard to reach communities.

Composite
Sum of all scores across Internal Circulation, First / Last Mile, Equity and Hard to Reach.

Prioritization Rank
An assessment to order zones based on their composite score, with lower rank indicating a higher priority level.

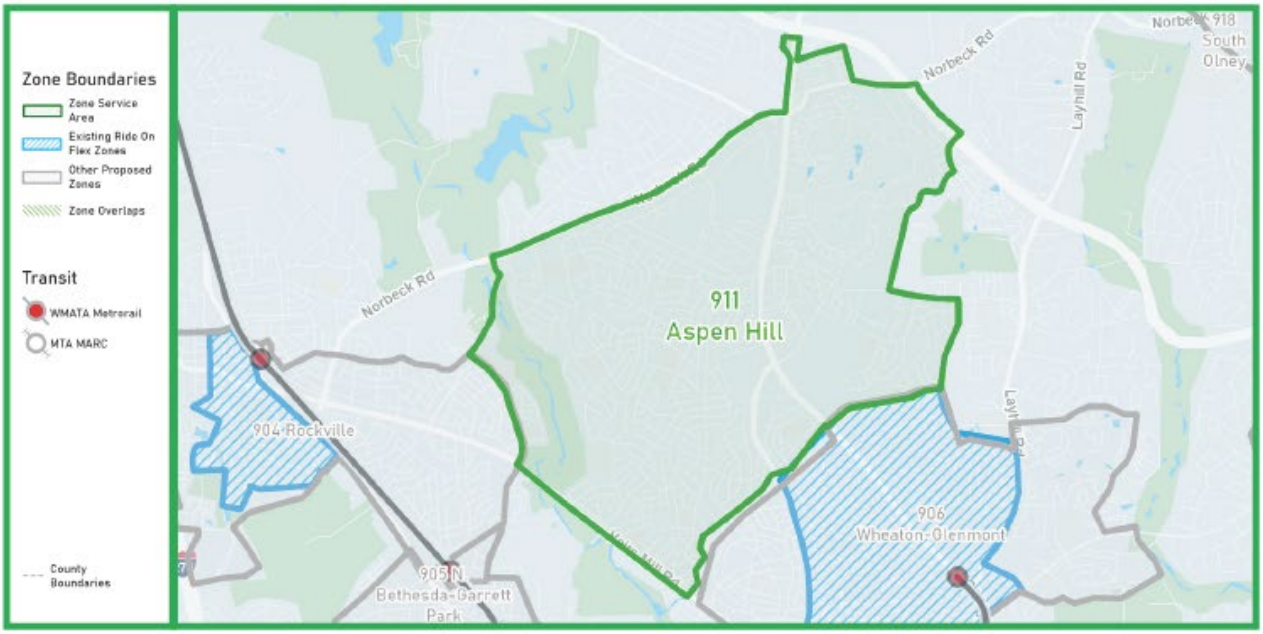
Best Use Case(s): Internal Circulation, First/Last Mile

MCDOT

911 Aspen Hill

Zone Area (sq. mi.)	Population and Job Density (Jobs + Population per Acre)	Minority / Low-Income Population Density (Population per Acre)	Transit Connections
7.42	12.19	8.84	MTA: 201; Metrobus: L8, Q2, Q4, Q6, Y2, Y7, Y8; Ride On: 26, 34, 41, 45, 48, 49, 51, 52, 53

PROPOSED ZONE



SCORES

Internal Circulation	First / Last Mile
4/10	5/10
Equity	**Hard to Reach**
5/10	8/10
Composite	**Prioritization Rank**
22/40	10/21

Internal Circulation
Prioritize population and job density and activity generators to address intra-zone travel needs.

First / Last Mile
Focus on enhancing connectivity to transit stops, ensuring integration with the existing system.

Equity
Emphasize minority and low-income population density and intersection density to serve transit-reliant populations in less accessible areas.

Hard to Reach
Highlight the intersection denstity along with number of activity generators to better serve hard to reach communities.

Composite
Sum of all scores across Internal Circulation, First / Last Mile, Equity and Hard to Reach.

Prioritization Rank
An assessment to order zones based on their composite score, with lower rank indicating a higher priority level.

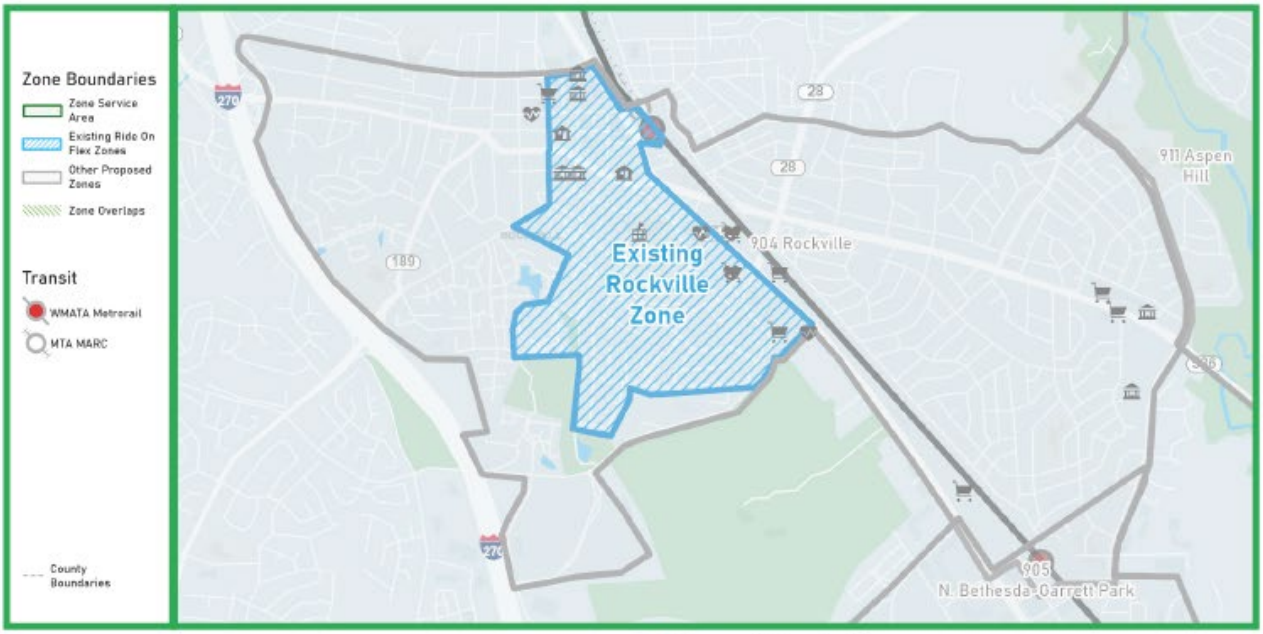
Best Use Case(s): Hard to Reach

MCDOT

Existing Rockville

Zone Area (sq. mi.)	Population and Job Density (Jobs + Population per Acre)	Minority / Low-Income Population Density (Population per Acre)	Transit Connections
0.66	47.61	8.84	Metrorail; Metrobus: Q2, Q4, Q6, T2; Ride On: 44, 45, 46, 47, 54, 55, 56, 63, 81, 101, 301

PROPOSED ZONE



SCORES

Internal Circulation	First / Last Mile
7/10	5/10
Equity	**Hard to Reach**
5/10	2/10
Composite	**Prioritization Rank**
19/40	13/21

Internal Circulation
Prioritize population and job density and activity generators to address intra-zone travel needs.

First / Last Mile
Focus on enhancing connectivity to transit stops, ensuring integration with the existing system.

Equity
Emphasize minority and low-income population density and intersection density to serve transit-reliant populations in less accessible areas.

Hard to Reach
Highlight the intersection denstity along with number of activity generators to better serve hard to reach communities.

Composite
Sum of all scores across Internal Circulation, First / Last Mile, Equity and Hard to Reach.

Prioritization Rank
An assessment to order zones based on their composite score, with lower rank indicating a higher priority level.

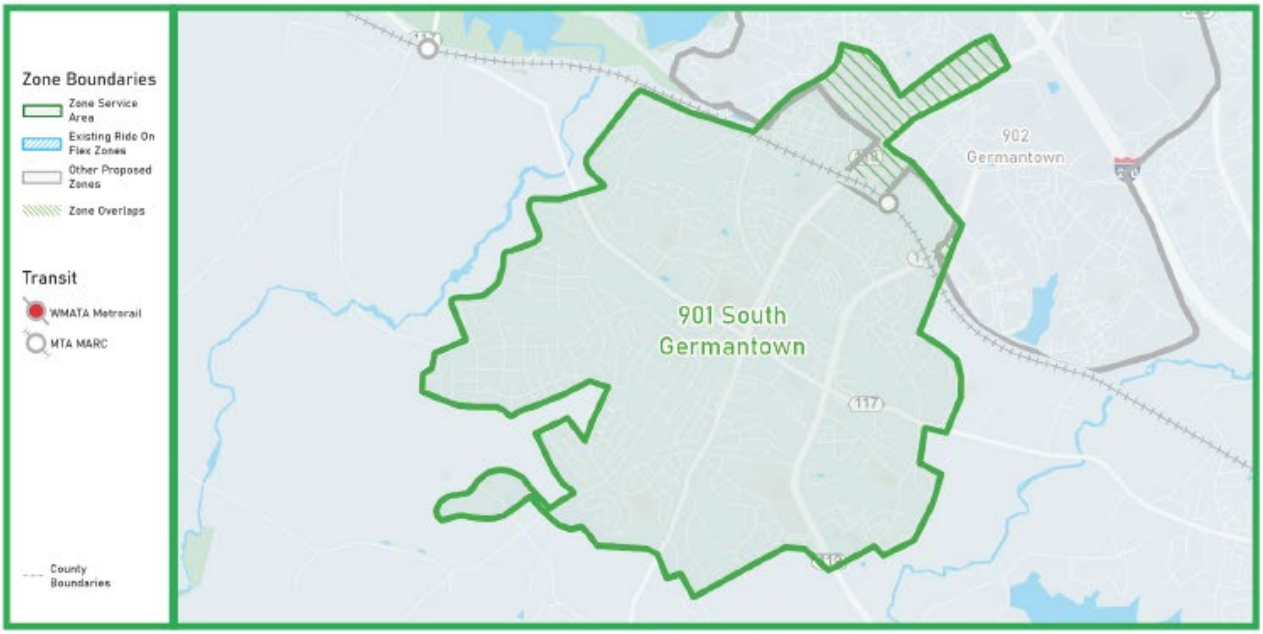
Best Use Case(s): Internal Circulation

MCDOT

901 South Germantown

Zone Area (sq. mi.)	Population and Job Density (Jobs + Population per Acre)	Minority / Low-Income Population Density (Population per Acre)	Transit Connections
4.9	9.76	7.01	MARC; Ride On: 55, 61, 71, 74, 75, 78, 83, 97, 98, 100

PROPOSED ZONE



SCORES

Internal Circulation	First / Last Mile
2/10	4/10
Equity	**Hard to Reach**
3/10	5/10
Composite	**Prioritization Rank**
14/40	14/21

Internal Circulation
Prioritize population and job density and activity generators to address intra-zone travel needs.

First / Last Mile
Focus on enhancing connectivity to transit stops, ensuring integration with the existing system.

Equity
Emphasize minority and low-income population density and intersection density to serve transit-reliant populations in less accessible areas.

Hard to Reach
Highlight the intersection denstity along with number of activity generators to better serve hard to reach communities.

Composite
Sum of all scores across Internal Circulation, First / Last Mile, Equity and Hard to Reach.

Prioritization Rank
An assessment to order zones based on their composite score, with lower rank indicating a higher priority level.

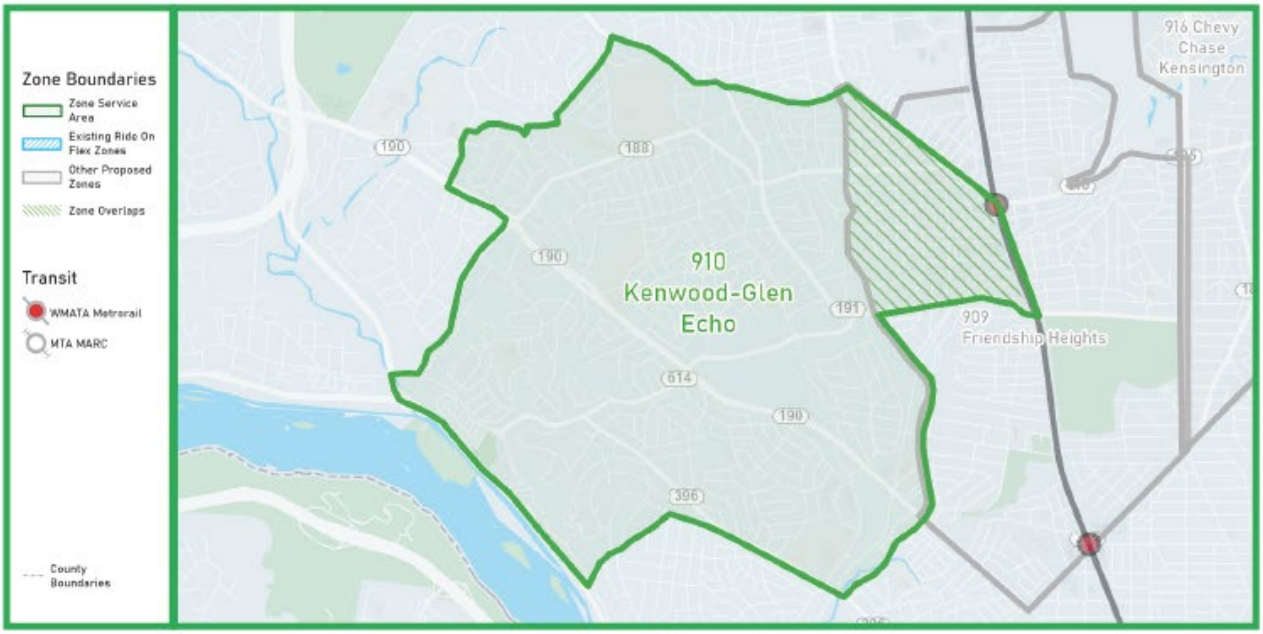
Best Use Case(s): Hard to Reach

MCDOT

910 Kenwood-Glen Echo

Zone Area (sq. mi.)	Population and Job Density (Jobs + Population per Acre)	Minority / Low-Income Population Density (Population per Acre)	Transit Connections
5.13	13.08	2.63	Metrorail; Metrobus: J1, J2, T2; Ride On: 23, 29, 30, 32, 34, 36, 47, 70

PROPOSED ZONE



SCORES

Internal Circulation	First / Last Mile
3/10	3/10
Equity	**Hard to Reach**
2/10	4/10
Composite	**Prioritization Rank**
12/40	15/21

Internal Circulation
Prioritize population and job density and activity generators to address intra-zone travel needs.

First / Last Mile
Focus on enhancing connectivity to transit stops, ensuring integration with the existing system.

Equity
Emphasize minority and low-income population density and intersection density to serve transit-reliant populations in less accessible areas.

Hard to Reach
Highlight the intersection denstity along with number of activity generators to better serve hard to reach communities.

Composite
Sum of all scores across Internal Circulation, First / Last Mile, Equity and Hard to Reach.

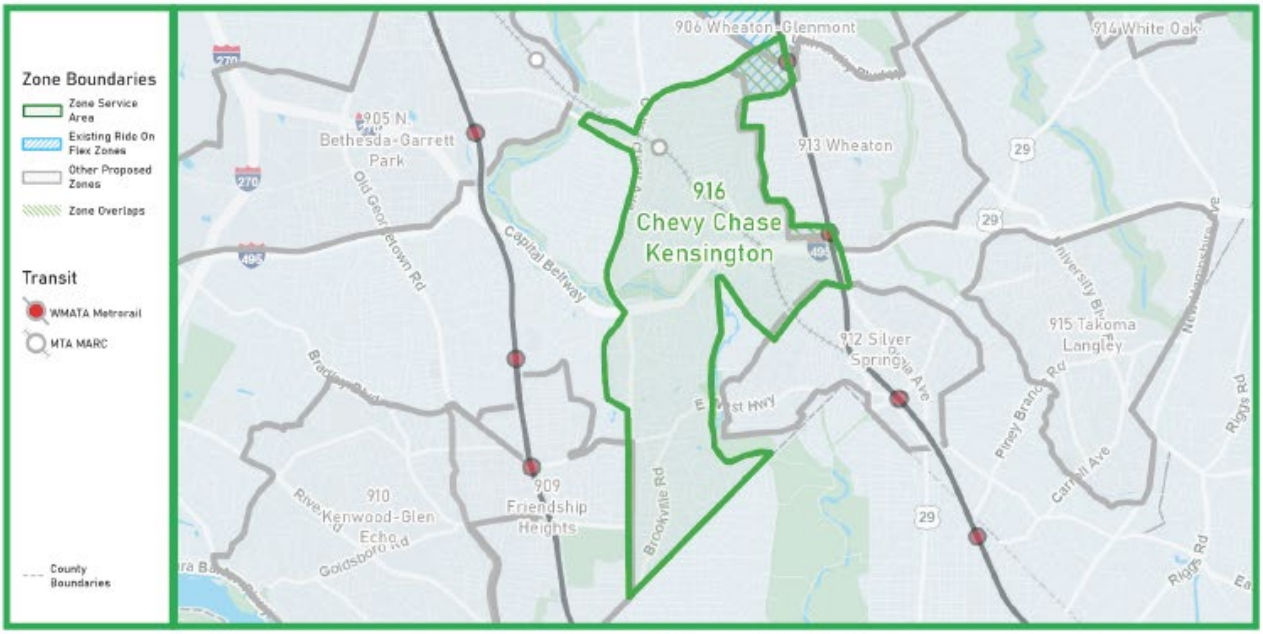
Prioritization Rank
An assessment to order zones based on their composite score, with lower rank indicating a higher priority level.

Best Use Case(s): Hard to Reach

916 Chevy Chase Kensington

Zone Area (sq. mi.)	Population and Job Density (Jobs + Population per Acre)	Minority / Low-Income Population Density (Population per Acre)	Transit Connections
5.44	9.95	2.6	MARC; Metrorail; Metrobus: C2, C4, J1, J2, L8, Q2, Q4, Q6, Y2, Y7, Y8; Ride On: 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 31, 33, 34, 37, 38, 48

PROPOSED ZONE



SCORES

Internal Circulation	First / Last Mile
4/10	4/10
Equity	**Hard to Reach**
2/10	2/10
Composite	**Prioritization Rank**
12/40	15/21

Internal Circulation
Prioritize population and job density and activity generators to address intra-zone travel needs.

First / Last Mile
Focus on enhancing connectivity to transit stops, ensuring integration with the existing system.

Equity
Emphasize minority and low-income population density and intersection density to serve transit-reliant populations in less accessible areas.

Hard to Reach
Highlight the intersection denstity along with number of activity generators to better serve hard to reach communities.

Composite
Sum of all scores across Internal Circulation, First / Last Mile, Equity and Hard to Reach.

Prioritization Rank
An assessment to order zones based on their composite score, with lower rank indicating a higher priority level.

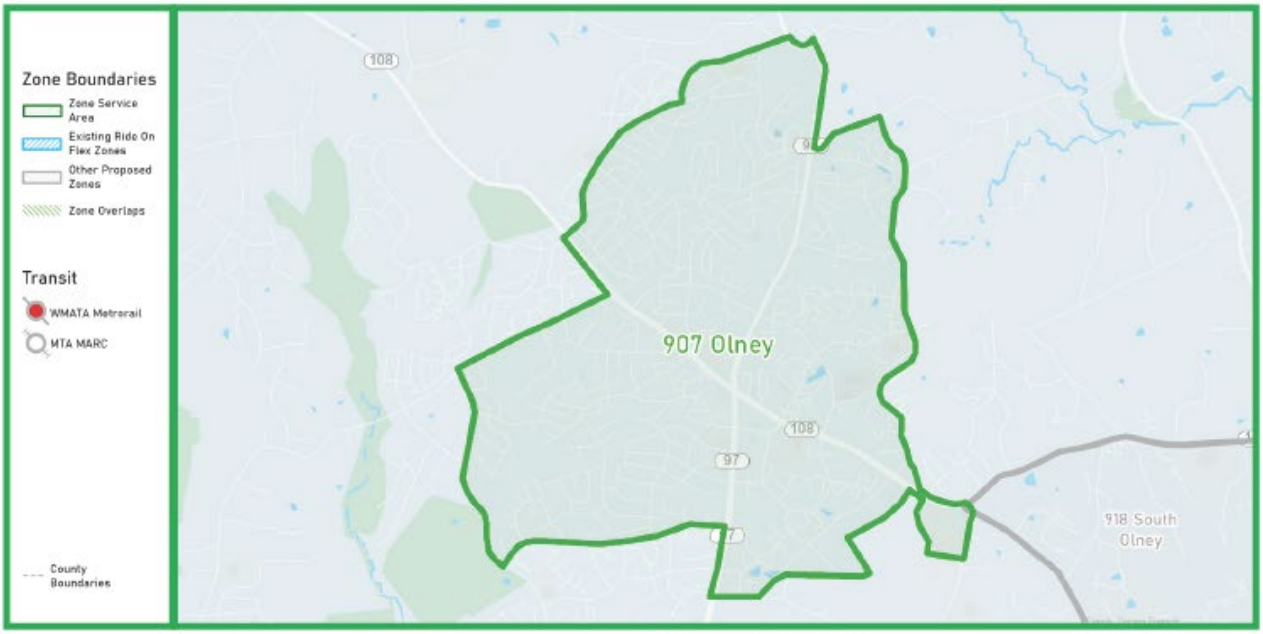
Best Use Case(s): Internal Circulation

MCDOT

907 Olney

Zone Area (sq. mi.)	Population and Job Density (Jobs + Population per Acre)	Minority / Low-Income Population Density (Population per Acre)	Transit Connections
5.12	7.5	3.01	Metrobus: Y2, Y8, Z2; Ride On: 52, 53

PROPOSED ZONE



SCORES

Internal Circulation	First / Last Mile
1/10	1/10
Equity	**Hard to Reach**
2/10	5/10
Composite	**Prioritization Rank**
9/40	17/21

Internal Circulation
Prioritize population and job density and activity generators to address intra-zone travel needs.

First / Last Mile
Focus on enhancing connectivity to transit stops, ensuring integration with the existing system.

Equity
Emphasize minority and low-income population density and intersection density to serve transit-reliant populations in less accessible areas.

Hard to Reach
Highlight the intersection denstity along with number of activity generators to better serve hard to reach communities.

Composite
Sum of all scores across Internal Circulation, First / Last Mile, Equity and Hard to Reach.

Prioritization Rank
An assessment to order zones based on their composite score, with lower rank indicating a higher priority level.

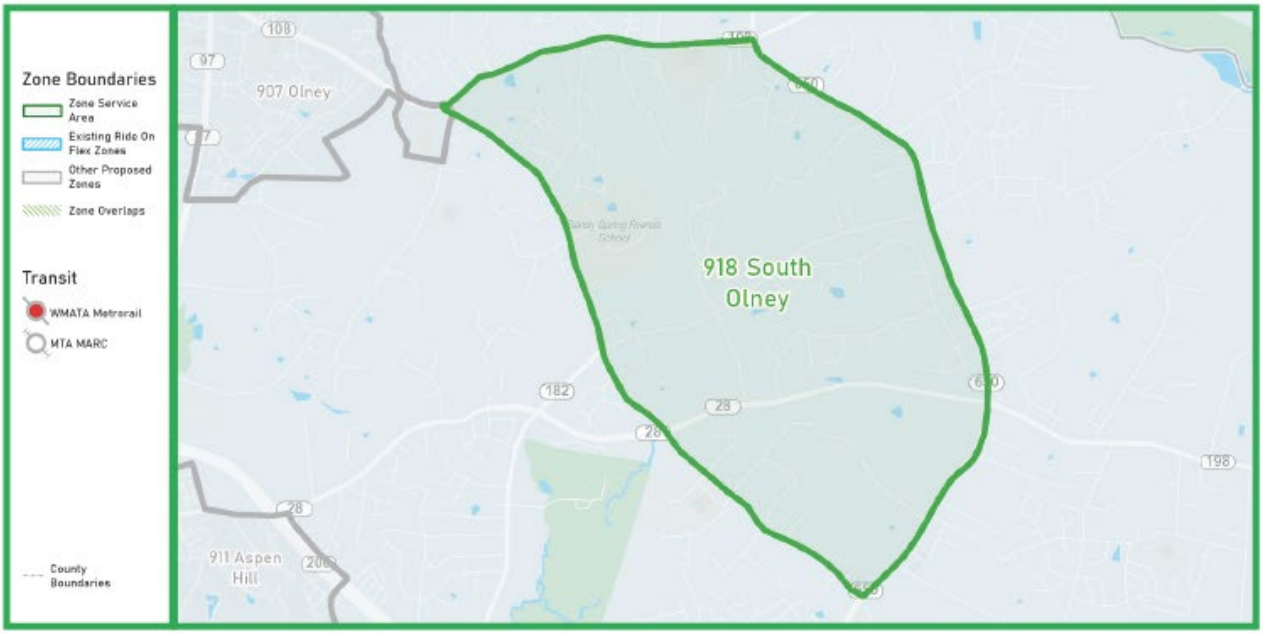
Best Use Case(s): Hard to Reach

MCDOT

918 South Olney

Zone Area (sq. mi.)	Population and Job Density (Jobs + Population per Acre)	Minority / Low-Income Population Density (Population per Acre)	Transit Connections
4.88	1.58	0.76	Metrobus: Z2

PROPOSED ZONE



SCORES

Internal Circulation	First / Last Mile
1/10	1/10
Equity	**Hard to Reach**
1/10	6/10
Composite	**Prioritization Rank**
9/40	17/21

Internal Circulation
Prioritize population and job density and activity generators to address intra-zone travel needs.

First / Last Mile
Focus on enhancing connectivity to transit stops, ensuring integration with the existing system.

Equity
Emphasize minority and low-income population density and intersection density to serve transit-reliant populations in less accessible areas.

Hard to Reach
Highlight the intersection denstity along with number of activity generators to better serve hard to reach communities.

Composite
Sum of all scores across Internal Circulation, First / Last Mile, Equity and Hard to Reach.

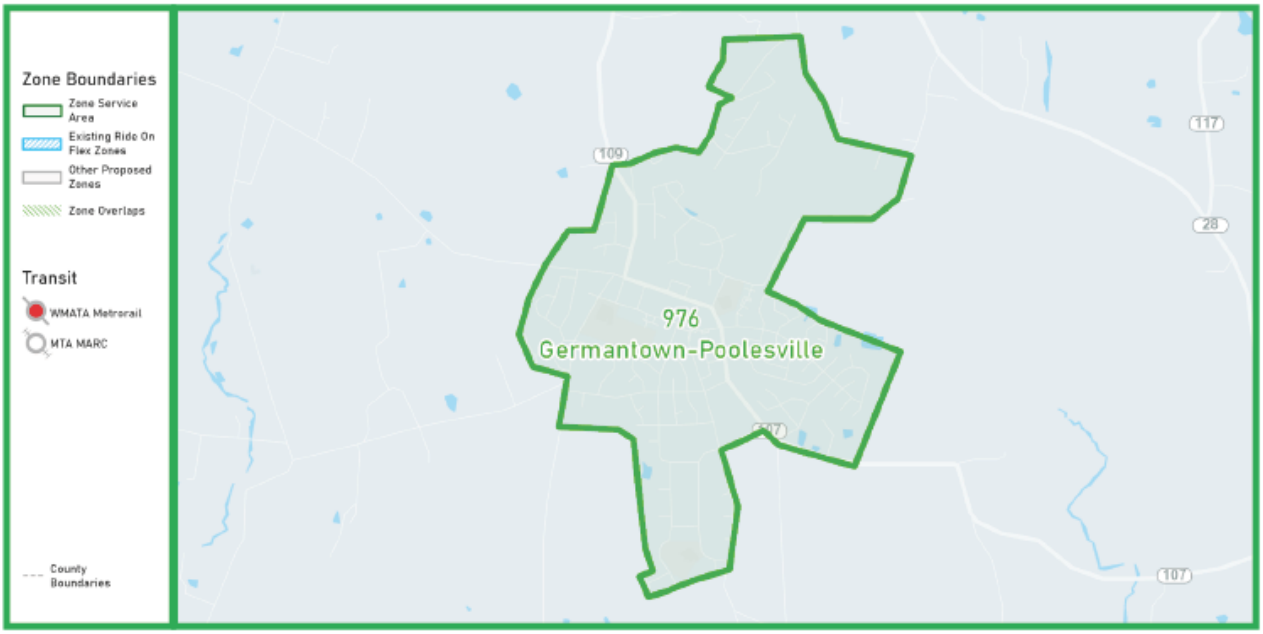
Prioritization Rank
An assessment to order zones based on their composite score, with lower rank indicating a higher priority level.

Best Use Case(s): Hard to Reach

976 Germantown-Poolesville

Zone Area (sq. mi.)	Population and Job Density (Jobs + Population per Acre)	Minority / Low-Income Population Density (Population per Acre)	Transit Connections
2.79	0.51	0.17	Ride On: 76

PROPOSED ZONE



SCORES

Internal Circulation	First / Last Mile
1/10	1/10
Equity	**Hard to Reach**
1/10	6/10
Composite	**Prioritization Rank**
9/40	17/21

Internal Circulation
Prioritize population and job density and activity generators to address intra-zone travel needs.

First / Last Mile
Focus on enhancing connectivity to transit stops, ensuring integration with the existing system.

Equity
Emphasize minority and low-income population density and intersection density to serve transit-reliant populations in less accessible areas.

Hard to Reach
Highlight the intersection denstity along with number of activity generators to better serve hard to reach communities.

Composite
Sum of all scores across Internal Circulation, First / Last Mile, Equity and Hard to Reach.

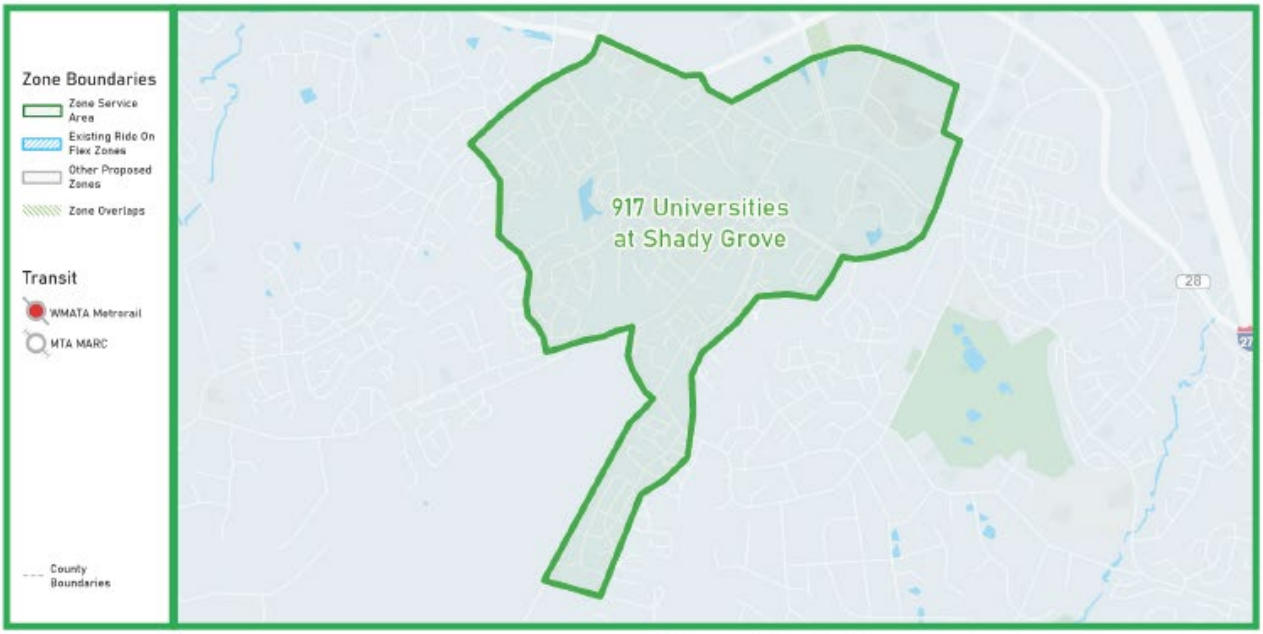
Prioritization Rank
An assessment to order zones based on their composite score, with lower rank indicating a higher priority level.

Best Use Case(s): Hard to Reach

917 Universities at Shady Grove

Zone Area (sq. mi.)	Population and Job Density (Jobs + Population per Acre)	Minority / Low-Income Population Density (Population per Acre)	Transit Connections
1.79	12.35	5.46	Ride On: 43, 45, 56, 66, 67, 301, extRa Pink & Lime

PROPOSED ZONE



SCORES

Internal Circulation	First / Last Mile
1/10	1/10
Equity	**Hard to Reach**
1/10	5/10
Composite	**Prioritization Rank**
8/40	20/21

Internal Circulation
Prioritize population and job density and activity generators to address intra-zone travel needs.

First / Last Mile
Focus on enhancing connectivity to transit stops, ensuring integration with the existing system.

Equity
Emphasize minority and low-income population density and intersection density to serve transit-reliant populations in less accessible areas.

Hard to Reach
Highlight the intersection denstity along with number of activity generators to better serve hard to reach communities.

Composite
Sum of all scores across Internal Circulation, First / Last Mile, Equity and Hard to Reach.

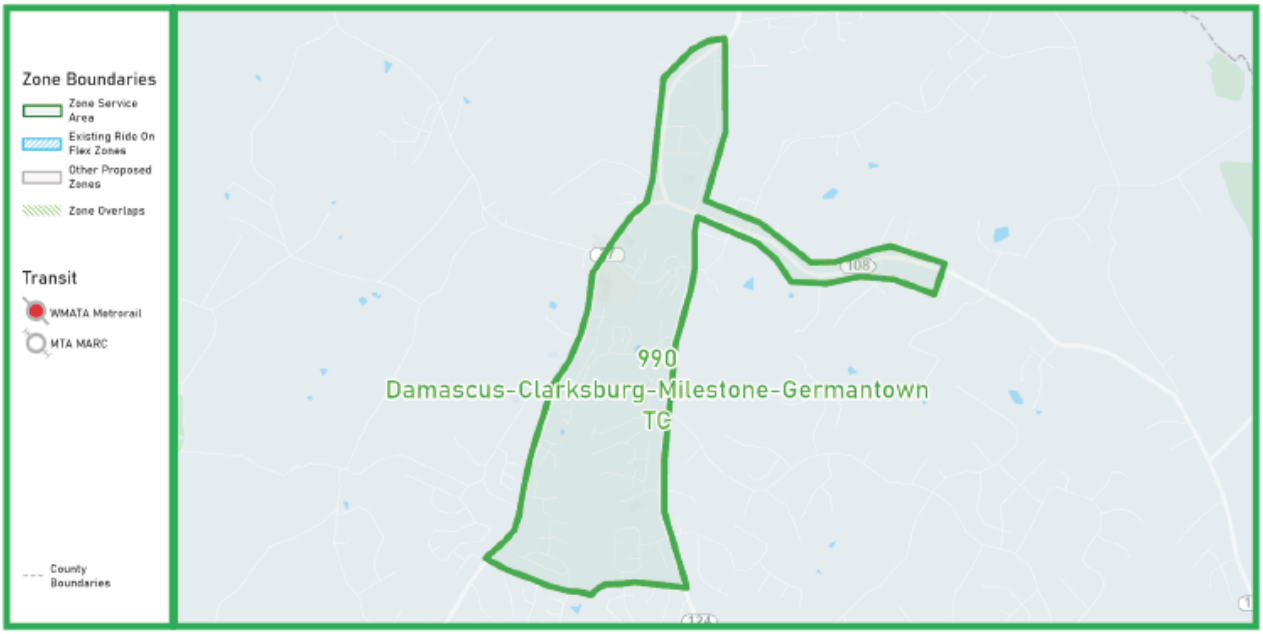
Prioritization Rank
An assessment to order zones based on their composite score, with lower rank indicating a higher priority level.

Best Use Case(s): Hard to Reach

990 Damascus-Clarksburg-Milestone-Germantown TC

Zone Area (sq. mi.)	Population and Job Density (Jobs + Population per Acre)	Minority / Low-Income Population Density (Population per Acre)	Transit Connections
1.63	4.27	2.62	Ride On: 90

PROPOSED ZONE



SCORES

Internal Circulation	First / Last Mile
1/10	1/10
Equity	**Hard to Reach**
1/10	5/10
Composite	**Prioritization Rank**
8/40	21/21

Internal Circulation
Prioritize population and job density and activity generators to address intra-zone travel needs.

First / Last Mile
Focus on enhancing connectivity to transit stops, ensuring integration with the existing system.

Equity
Emphasize minority and low-income population density and intersection density to serve transit-reliant populations in less accessible areas.

Hard to Reach
Highlight the intersection denstity along with number of activity generators to better serve hard to reach communities.

Composite
Sum of all scores across Internal Circulation, First / Last Mile, Equity and Hard to Reach.

Prioritization Rank
An assessment to order zones based on their composite score, with lower rank indicating a higher priority level.

Best Use Case(s): Hard to Reach

6. Appendix: Public Outreach Results

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Internal Focus Group

- What challenges have you faced operating a Ride On Flex vehicle?
- What benefits have you seen in operating a Ride On Flex vehicle as opposed to fixed-route transit?
- How have customer interactions differed from fixed-route transit?
- What are you hearing from the riders and where they want to go?
- Do you believe there are enough operators for the service that is currently being provided?
- Have you experienced any issues with the ride matching software?
- What improvements would you like to see in the ride matching software?
- What does Ride On need to consider for the expansion of Flex service throughout the county?

External Focus Group

- How often do you use Ride On Flex?
- What types of trips do you use the service for?
- Which of the following would make Ride On Flex a more appealing service?
  - Expanded service coverage area
  - Better user experience on the app
  - Shorter wait times
  - Door-to-door, rather than corner-to-corner service
- What challenges have you faced using Ride On Flex?
- What benefits have you seen using Flex service opposed to fixed-route transit?
- What improvements would you like to see in the Flex app?
- What is your initial reaction to the proposed zones from Ride On Reimagined?
- Where are you interested in going? Are there areas of the county where you would like to see service?
- What does Ride On need to consider for the expansion of Flex service throughout the county?

SURVEY

Introduction

- Purpose of survey
- Description of microtransit
- Description of Ride On Flex existing service
- Brief overview of potential expansion

Background

- How familiar are you with the concept of "microtransit"?
  - ☐ Very familiar - I am familiar with the concept and have used microtransit service before.
  - ☐ Somewhat familiar - I am familiar with the concept but have not seen it on the ground.
  - ☐ Not so familiar - I have heard the concept but do not know much about what it means.
  - ☐ Not at all familiar - I had never heard of it before this survey.
- How familiar are you with Montgomery County's **Ride On Flex** service?
  - ☐ Very familiar - I am familiar with Ride On Flex and have used the service in the past.
  - ☐ Somewhat familiar - I am familiar with the service, but have not used it.
  - ☐ Not so familiar - I have heard of the service but do not know much about how it works.
  - ☐ Not at all familiar - I had not heard of this service before taking this survey.
- Do you currently live in an area with Ride On Flex service? (provide map of existing service).
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
  - ☐ I'm not sure
- If yes, please indicate which zone:
  - ☐ Rockville
  - ☐ Wheaton-Glenmont
  - ☐ I'm not sure

Service Recommendations

- If you have used Ride On Flex, how many times a week do you use the service?
  - ☐ I have not used the service.
  - ☐ I have used the service, but not regularly.
  - ☐ One to three times a week
  - ☐ More than three times a week.
- If you have used Ride On Flex service, which of the following would make the service more appealing?
  - ☐ Expanded service coverage
  - ☐ Better user experience on the app
  - ☐ Shorter wait times
  - ☐ Door-to-door, rather than corner-to-corner service
- If Ride On Flex was expanded to your community, where would you be interested in going using the service? (pick all that apply)
  - ☐ Metro, MARC, or other transit options
  - ☐ Grocery or retail stores
  - ☐ Childcare, elder care, or other family care needs
  - ☐ Education including schools, colleges, and universities
  - ☐ Commuting to work

- General errands
- Medical appointments

Zone Recommendations

For participants who have used Ride On Flex service

Display map of potential zones

- Indicate which zone you live within or near:
  - South Germantown
  - Germantown
  - Montgomery Village
  - Rockville
  - Montgomery Mall-North Bethesda-Garrett Park
  - Wheaton-Glenmont
  - Olney
  - Friendship Heights
  - Kenwood-Glen Echo
  - Aspen Hill (Includes Leisure World)
  - Silver Spring
  - Wheaton
  - White Oak
  - Takoma-Langley Park
  - Chevy Chase-Kensington
  - Germantown-Poolesville
  - Damascus-Clarksburg
  - I don't live in or near any of the zones
- Please share any comments or concerns you may have about the boundaries of this zone. Let us know if you believe this is missing any important sites or destinations. Please follow this link if you would like to see the interactive map in another tab, but make sure to return to this survey: Ride On Reimagined
  - Open answer
- You indicated that you do not live in or near any of the proposed zones. How interested would you be in seeing microtransit in your area? Rate on the sliding scale:
  - Scale of 1-100
  - Feel free to indicate your neighborhood or zipcode. This is not required.
- If you have any more general comments on Ride On Flex, please enter them below.
  - Open answer

SURVEY RESPONSES

Table 16: How familiar are you with the concept of "microtransit"?

ANSWER CHOICES	TOTAL RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE
Very familiar - I am familiar with the concept and have used microtransit service before.	138	23%
Somewhat familiar - I am familiar with the concept but have not seen it on the ground.	206	34%
Not so familiar - I have heard the concept but do not know much about what it means.	106	18%
Not at all familiar - I had never heard of it before this survey.	153	25%

Table 17: How familiar are you with Montgomery County's Ride On Flex service?

ANSWER CHOICES	TOTAL RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE
Very familiar - I am familiar with Ride On Flex and have used the service in the past.	124	21%
Somewhat familiar - I am familiar with the service but have not used it.	193	32%
Not so familiar - I have heard of the service but do not know much about how it works.	132	22%
Not at all familiar - I had not heard of this service before taking this survey.	154	26%

Table 18: Do you live in a area with existing Ride On Flex service (within the blue shaded area)?

ANSWER CHOICES	TOTAL RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE
Yes	134	24%
No	391	68%
I'm not sure.	47	8%

32 respondents skipped.

Table 19: If you answered yes, which zone do you live in?

ANSWER CHOICES	TOTAL RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE
Wheaton-Glenmont	66	39%
Rockville	73	43%
I'm not sure.	31	8%

433 respondents either skipped or indicated that they did not live in the service area.

Table 20: If you have used Ride On Flex, how many times a week do you use the service?

ANSWER CHOICES	TOTAL RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE
I have not used the service.	427	79%
I have used the service, but not regularly.	63	12%
One to three times a week	28	5%
More than three times a week.	24	4%

61 respondents skipped.

Table 21: If you have used Ride On Flex service, which of the following would make the service more appealing?

ANSWER CHOICES	TOTAL RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE
Expanded service coverage	258	80%
Better user experience on the app	54	17%
Shorter wait times	80	25%
Door-to-door, rather than corner-to-corner service	94	29%

279 respondents skipped.

Table 22: If Ride On Flex was expanded to or already exists in your community, where would you be interested in going using the service? (pick all that apply)

ANSWER CHOICES	TOTAL RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE
Poolesville	10	2%
Damascus-Germantown	16	4%
South Germantown	10	2%
Germantown	51	11%
Montgomery Village	19	4%
Rockville	76	17%
Montgomery Mall	33	7%
Wheaton-Glenmont	45	10%
Olney	5	1%
Friendship Heights	15	3%
Kenwood-Glen Echo	7	2%
Aspen Hill	29	6%
Leisure World	4	1%
Silver Spring	36	8%
Wheaton	13	3%
White Oak	16	4%
Takoma-Langley Park	17	4%
Chevy Chase-Kensington	12	3%
I don't live in or near any of the zones.	43	9%

146 respondents skipped.

Table 23: Sentiment towards RideOn Flex in areas where zones are not proposed.

QUESTION	TOTAL NUMBER	TOTAL RESPONSES	AVERAGE NUMBER
You indicated that you do not live in or near any of the proposed zones. How interested would you be in seeing microtransit in your area? Rate on the sliding scale:	3,584	42	85.3333

Table 24: Feel free to indicate your neighborhood or zipcode. This is not required.

QUESTION	RESPONSES
Feel free to indicate your neighborhood or zipcode. This is not required.	■ 20905 ■ 20866 Burtonsville ■ "The Upper Montgomery County area because now we have NO TRANSPORTATION FOR ELDERLY PEOPLE WHO NEED TO BUY GROCERIES AND GO TO MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS. ■ Also, the same is true for people who need to go to grocery stores, doctor apts., etc. The Damascus area is also the last to receive any help from the down county government." ■ Parkhill Bethesda off of Cedar Lane ■ North Bethesda ■ 20904 very important connected to Adventist Hospital, Tech Road New MC College campus , food distrubtion, free medical clinic especially on week end ■ 20854 ■ Stonegate, 20905 ■ 20850 king farm ■ 20878 ■ Downtown Crown Gaithersburg ■ Derwood, ~20 min walk east of Shady Grove metro ■ Randolph Hills ■ 98034 ■ 20814 ■ 20855 ■ 20855 ■ Clarksburg (20871) ■ 20871 Clarksburg (Arora Hills) ■ 20877 ■ 20878 ■ 20879 ■ 20740 ■ Northern Edge of Rockville/Gaithersburg area ■ Rock Creek Woods, 20902 ■ 20871 ■ 20854 ■ 20895 ■ 20878 ■ 20852 - Westside at shady grove in derwood ■ 20017 ■ 20815 ■ 20878; 20850; 20877 ■ Park Hills (Wayne Ave & Sligo Creek Parkway) ■ 20906 ■ 20895

Table 25: Please share any comments or concerns you may have about the boundaries of this zone. Let us know if you believe this is missing any important sites or destinations.

ZONE	RESPONSES
Poolesville	■ I have no concerns ■ This is helpful but need to make sure that it connects to another zone or to major transit lines. ■ The flex zone proposed for Poolesville does almost no good. Our area consists of 93,000 acres of rural space and the flex zone really needs to expand out to include nearby communities that cannot get bus service, including Barnesville, Dickerson, and Beallsville as well as parts of Boyds. The reality is that in the down county areas flex zones are easier because there are concentrated areas of population with nearby stores and doctors, but we don't have that luxury in our area. That does not mean that we should not have a flex zone for our area. We also need changes in the routes for our bus, which I've also submitted comments about numerous times. That includes having buses going along route 118 and along Shady Grove Road where most of the doctors and specialist have offices. In a way what I am proposing is a sort of specialized flex zone for only our rural area. Instead of having people taken around inside their flex zone to stores and doctors within their community, which is highly populated in most cases, I am proposing that the bus would go around the flex zone of the western county and pick up people to take back to Poolesville who could then get on the bus and go down county to the areas where doctors and grocery stores are. Thank you. ■ It looks fine ■ I am the Executive Director of WUMCO Help which serves low income families in zip codes 20837, 20838, 20839, 20841 and 20842. The flex zone proposed for Poolesville does almost no good for the rural residents of the county who have 0 access to public transportation. Our area consists of 93,000 acres of rural space and the flex zone really needs to expand out to include nearby communities that cannot get bus service, including Barnesville, Dickerson, and Beallsville as well as parts of Boyds. A flex zone in the rural agricultural reserve of the county needs to look differently than the densely populated areas. A rural resident needs to have a flex zone that would bring them to a bus in Poolesville that would then connect them to the downcounty. We also need changes in the times available and routes for the Poolesville bus. That includes having buses available at more times of the day, going along route 118 and along Shady Grove Road where most of the doctors and specialist have offices. Instead of having people taken around inside their flex zone to stores and doctors within their community, which is highly populated in most cases, the flex service bus would go around the flex zone of the western county and pick up people to take back to Poolesville who could then get on the bus and go down county to the areas where doctors and grocery stores are. Thank you. ■ The Poolesville proposed zone map is a bit too small to provide useful comments. I cannot really see any details in the 476b route. ■ I have participated in the Ride on Reimagined program for the last year and offered comments numerous times. The flex zone proposed for Poolesville does almost no good. Our area consists of 93,000 acres of rural space and the flex zone really needs to expand out to include nearby communities that cannot get bus service, including Barnesville, Dickerson, and Beallsville as well as parts of Boyds. The reality is that in the down county areas flex zones are easier because there are concentrated areas of population with nearby stores and doctors, but we don't have that luxury in our area. That does not mean that we should not have a flex zone for our area. We also need changes in the routes for our bus, which I've also submitted comments about numerous times. That includes having buses going along route 118 and along Shady Grove Road where most of the doctors and specialist have offices. In a way what I am proposing is a sort of specialized flex zone for only our rule area. Instead of having people taken around inside their flex zone to stores and doctors within their community, which is highly populated in most cases, I am proposing that the bus would go around the flex zone of the western county and pick up people to take back to Poolesville who could then get on the bus and go down county to the areas where doctors and grocery stores are. Thank you. ■ Need a ride to a stop for any bus route other than 76 during non rush hours. For mid day trips to retail and medical in germantown.

ZONE	RESPONSES
Damascus-Germantown	■ Both senior apt complexes should be included (St Anne's and Victory House). Medical offices at 108 & 124. Damascus HS wind Baker MS and Damascus Rec Ctr. ■ Rural areas of Damascus would so benefit with this expansion. ■ Service is also needed in the Laytonsville area ■ Damascus has more rural areas where elderly people need rides to medical appointments that doesn't seem to be covered in the 490a proposed boundaries. ■ We live half way between the Damascus-Germantown (490a) and the Germantown zone and not close to either of the zones. ■ Think the route should extend to Milestone Shopping center. ■ It does not seem to serve all of Damascus-Germantown which would be beneficial. ■ expand to MC Germantown and Holy Cross ■ Would be nice if it extended east of 124 and west of 27.
South Germantown	■ Is Gaithersburg in a zone? I would love to go from Bennington to Seneca Creek State Park, Benjamin Gaither Center, Kentlands shopping area and Quince Orchard Library; also Casey Barns farmer's market. ■ None ■ boundaries are good ■ 602 ■ I would mainly use the service to travel between zones 901 and 902. If the service were confined to zone 901 only, then I would never use it. Why don't you combine these 2 into a single zone?

ZONE	RESPONSES
Germantown	■ It will be great if you can include Clarksburg in Germantown 602 boundaries. Clarksburg population has grown exponentially but still we travel to Germantown on a daily basis either for sports program, library, shopping or worship places. ■ You should include Seneca Creek State Park in this zone. You should also extend the portion of the zone east of 270 so that is further down (south) 355. There a few shopping centers with grocery stores, businesses, and a new senior (62+) apartment complex (https://senecacreekseniors.com) between Middlebrook Road and Game Preserve Road along 355 that could benefit from this service. The senior apartment complex specifically is designed to be a "no car" apartment complex, so those folks would really benefit from this service. ■ I am glad there are overlap zones. However, my main concern is that 602 does not overlap with 601 far enough to cover the Germantown MARC station. Please expand the overlap zone to cover the MARC station. ■ There is a small peninsula with neighborhoods near the train tracks that should be included in these boundaries, those houses use all the nearby public services ■ Expanding ride on flex as much as possible is a great idea. Also the regular ride on needs to have shorter wait times ■ What about a trolley? ■ It would be helpful to have the bus schedule linked with the Marc train stop times. The bus currently does not stop at the station before the train leaves. I have to pay for Uber to get to the train on time. ■ One potential important destination for me is just over the edge in the next zone (the Germantown MARC station). ■ This zone looks great. I love that it extends to Montgomery College and the Holy Cross medical complex. It would be good to include the MARC station, which is currently just outside the zone. ■ If possible I would like to have Ride on flex service extended to Germantown, Bethesda, Silver Spring, Clarksburg. ■ I would like to go towards darnestown area, like RIO in gaithersburg. Towards Rockville ■ I believe it would cover important areas within that area of Germantown ■ No concerns. Would be good to have it near Marc and bus depot to encourage further use of those services ■ Excited to hear about this ■ Black Hill Park's visitor center would be nice to see included. ■ N/A ■ I think the Germantown zone as currently laid out is very good. I can't wait for the service! It will be great! thank you for all the hard work and putting this together ■ Area 602 should expand to Clarksburg and Gaithersburg
Montgomery Village	■ I wish this connected to 355 or a little further south. Lots of apartments and businesses south of 355 ■ It would be nice if this expanded to cover the shady grove metro station. ■ I would like the Montgomery Village zone to be able to connect to Germantown & Gaithersburg Zones & even Olney more easily ■ I'm not quite inside of the Montgomery Village border but on the other side of 355/270 in Gaithersburg. There's a ton of housing where I am and would love if the service expanded over to capture all the neighborhoods off of Muddy Branch because public transport over here's not great to get to the metro. ■ Expand the boundaries to include the library and Marc station ■ I live near airpark rd and Woodfield rd area which is not in the expansion plan ■ Muy bien excelente servicio ■ In between the area designated, as a Schools and Swimming Pools Please!

ZONE	RESPONSES
Rockville	■ None ■ I am unable to provide feedback because the Ride On Reimagined site was completely unusable...nothing worked and I couldn't zoom in to see what the boundaries are vs. the proposed boundaries. ■ Would have love to be able to go to Twinbrook station or Shady grove from Rockville ■ Would like to see the Rockville zone expanded to the West of I-270 to cover the intersection of Montrose Rd and Falls Rd ■ The Flex Ride should be extended till after the evening rush hours to make it useful. ■ when i took buses before, it never came on time. if buses could come on time, it will reduce traffic and more people will use it. ■ Please insure windows can be opened and there is proper ventilation and filtration. COVID, RSV, bird flu are risks. ■ Longer hours and user testing the app are important! Learning how to transfer between zones too ■ Please expand the services. ■ Run a real bus service. Stop wasting time and money on tech fads. https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-12-19/the-inflexible-problem-with-flexible-microtransit ■ Should service more open areas ■ Wish it would expand further Rockville ■ Overall this expanded map is a huge improvement over the existing Rockville zone. But it's missing the Post Office, Montgomery College, the pool, and the Woolley Gardens area. Maybe these areas are already well served enough by buses (especially the college). But expanding north a few blocks above Beall up to Nelson/Martins would help to capture the Post Office, the pool, and Woodley Gardens, and it's not that many blocks north of the proposed boundary. ■ A better ping system ■ None ■ Should go to universities at shady grove, fallsgrove, and wootton ■ This is too small of a zone I live near Congregational plaza but the Rockville section only covers a small area of Rockville ■ The proposed zone finally covers my neighborhood. I knew about flex but it only covers other area of Rockville before so unable to use. Basically it would be good to as long as silver spring , Wheaton, Rockville and Bethesda are all reachable through service as clinic , malls and metro are spreading across and need to be connected. ■ I love this transporte, and I hope stay here yet to see this expansion. ■ Would love to have more boundaries!!!! Love this bus!!!! Wait time needs to get better!!!! ■ It would be great if this zone reached south Gaithersburg (near Rio and NIST) ■ I lived a cross the street from congressional plaza near twinbrook ■ Makes sense to me! ■ I would love to see the Rockville zone expanded north to at least Montgomery College, as of now the current zone is right where I live and where I need in Rockville is north of me. ■ I believe it's missing the giant or great wall super market north of the proposed zone. ■ The Rockville ride zone should extend up one mile into Montgomery College. So many students complain how they have to take a bus to ROCKVILLE town Square, to enjoy, studying, and meeting up with friends for lunch and dinner. ■ I like it ■ I would appreciate if the times of operation were extended ■ This would be great !!!

ZONE	RESPONSES
Montgomery Mall	■ I'd really appreciate it if it covered the Loehmann's Plaza area too. ■ This zone would cover many more people and trips by expanding the boundaries just slightly to cover the high-density residents at Pooks Hill (who do not currently have high-quality transit options) and could also cover Cabin John Regional Park with minimal expansion. ■ Please include all of the Randolph Hills neighborhood. It would not increase the service area too much. ■ "I would use this zone A LOT! I live within it and frequently drive to the Nicholson Rd area but WISH there was a bus option on my route. There is so much traffic & I'd rather ride. ■ My one improvement is to extend it to Cedar Lane so I could go to my church on the same bus. But as it is I could ride it to Grosvenor Ln & 355 and walk the last mile." ■ It should go to Cedar Lane and Boiling Brook parkway in the east. Randolph Hills Shopping Center! I live in the western part and frequently drive to these two places and would take this instead. ■ This looks great to start. Eventually, I'd love to see the enlarged or overlapped with a zone that would include Cabin John Village (formerly one as Cabin John Shopping Center) in Tuckerman and the shopping area at Park Potomac. That would greatly help in the running or errands without needing a car! ■ include Cabin John Mall ■ make sure you have Tuckerman Ln area in there ■ "This looks very useful, but would be significantly better still if it connects to the existing Rockville one and/or Garrett Park (ideally both), so you could get from anywhere in one to anywhere in another without a transfer. Transfers are a major hassle and accessibility barrier for many disabled people, myself included. This would be a huge help! ■ (Note: metro access seems to have major problems with accessibility by often leaving people stranded for a long time when an employee or the system messes up. We need something more immediate and reliable, and this could be it!)" ■ I moved to the North BEthesda area when I came from California in the hopes that I would be able to use public transportation for the bulk of my travel. I would say with luck - I get about half way there. I live near Grovsner Metro. But if it takes more than one change - it isn't worth my time to NOT take the car - unless it is going into Bethesda or DC because it takes too long. The buses don't always arrive on schedule, and there aren't enough of them. SO I might be standing waiting in the rain or the heat for 30 minutes when a bus is late. Having a pick up that can get me nearer to the station then would allow me to walk a little less far. This is a great idea - given I am retired now- and anticipate driving less and less as time goes on. ■ None ■ It should be expanded south of the beltway. ■ "I would love if 605 and 616 were connected. ■ This does not extend far enough east of the Pike. It ignores a large swath of residences in that area. Parkside, Kensington, Garrett Park, etc. ■ everything ok , but we need a more location like , hospital or some park include is best for user. We wats ride all time day 6am to 6 pm . This is very good timetapbe .

ZONE	RESPONSES
Wheaton-Glenmont	■ Wish it would extend to at least doctor's offices on Dennis Ave or to Holy Cross Hospital ■ This are should include the apartments at Georgia and Randolph, Georgia and Glenallan, along Glenallan between Randolph and Layhill, and along Glenallan down to Brookside Nature Center. ■ Nothing ■ Uber is more cost effective for riders and taxpayers ■ I live just across Veirs Mill Road from this zone, at an uncontrolled intersection which frequently sees accidents. Although the service map indicates that the west side of Veirs Mill is included in the zone, the designated pickup and dropoff corners nearest my home are on the east side of Veirs Mill, requiring that I dodge 50mph traffic at the top of a hill both ways (meaning vehicles often don't see pedestrians until it's too late for them to stop). It would be helpful if the designated pickup and dropoff locations could be expanded so that riders near the zone don't have to run across a state highway. I'm mobile with a cane, but one block outside the zone, so using any public transit going north or south requires that I cross Veirs Mill at least once for a return trip, and as traffic has gotten more dangerous, I've used it less often, relying on driving to work or asking my husband to drop me at the metro. ■ Works really well, would love it to be merged with Wheaton and Aspen Hill zones ■ Looks good - as long as Strathmore bel pre area stays tied to Glenmont metro ■ I would like to see all of the Wheaton Mall area accessible with Flex. ■ I had to stop taking RideOn Flex because it was impossible to catch the bus in rush hour: 30-minute + wait timed or no availability. ■ You should increase the area limit ■ The Glenmont-Wheaton Flex does not stop at Wheaton Plaza stores, Macy's, Target, Giant, Costco, and Starbucks. The AMC theater should also be included and Best Buy. The Wheaton library, H Mart, Dollar Tree store, and Popeyes. This Glenmont CVS, Staples, McDonald's, and the Lidl grocery store. The Wheaton Post Office should also be included. ■ I live just east of the zone nearest me. I live in 1111 University Blvd. West, one side of the building faces Arcola, just west of the intersection with University, and the other side faces University, between the intersection of University and Arcola and Sligo Creek Parkway. You need to extend the zone so that it covers everything on Arcola and north into Kemp Mill (which has no bus service) and all of University from Arcola to the intersection west to Amherst or GA or even Veirs Mill. ■ The Wheaton-Glenmont zone does not extend far enough East to incorporate the Tivoli and Poplar Run neighborhoods. ■ None. Wish for expanddd hours ■ You're doing a great job for residents. ■ I think it should expand narrowly to include the main parking lot area of Wheaton Regional Park (where the playground / carousel / train is). ■ I'm a daily metro commuter. I work in Bethesda and have to travel back all the way to the stone gate neighborhood, sometimes past sunset and before the sunrises. The bus service there(route 39 Briggs Chaney/Glenmont) is sparse and inconsistent so at times I have to walk 30 minutes down and up the hill just to get home or to the next nearest stop. This is all to say I would love it if it'd be possible to expand the service to areas where the bus service is harder to get to to shorten commutes and make transit more accessible to all that need or want it. Please I hope you take this into consideration. -someone that wishes transit was more popular out here ■ I want more information ■ N/A ■ Looks good. Be conscious that many apartments on Layhill are in enclosed developments, so the default intersection may not be the best configuration. ■ It would be nice if the bus could come into the residential area of Connecticut Park, ie. Bushey Drive and Weller Road could be a stop. It would be a lot closer than having to walk to Connecticut Ave. ■ This zone meets my needs since I would only take it to the Glenmont Metro and back ■ Increase boundaries to go along glenallan avenue from Randolph into kemp mill avenue and back to goergia ■ Los horas de operacion necesita sirve 9-8pm

ZONE	RESPONSES
Olney	■ This zone would greatly facilitate connecting to longer-distance public transit! Right now taking the bus from Olney is really hard because there isn't a good way to get to the bus stops at Medstar Montgomery or Georgia & 108. The Flex service fixes that! ■ Please consider including Sandy Spring. It is not very safely walkable or bikeable due to narrow roads with no sidewalks but it would be so nice to get to a bus stop without having to drive and park near the stop. ■ I don’t see Derwood where Rideon. Provided partial service to mecc
Friendship Heights	■ The boundaries are good in general but I would love to see it expand up to Chevy Chase Lake (Purple Line) ■ I'm interested in getting from Bethesda to Kaiser, Gaithersburg. ■ Bethesda. Though this is outside any zone, parking in downtown Bethesda can be difficult and bus transportation from other parts of Bethesda is not very good ■ can't tell what streets the boundaries are on ■ None. I think its a great zoning area + a necessary one as a start. ■ Looks like this would be super useful for my commuting needs!
Kenwood-Glen Echo	■ More Ride on Bus Not the ride on flex bus please and thank you ■ I would like for it to include Cabin John that otherwise it’s left isolated as during the weekend it has zero public transportation options. Could you consider that or at least expand the public transportation during the weekend? I would urgently request the Ride on Flex Service to operate close to the Westbard Redevelopment project. There is a serious paucity of transit services in this zone. It is a critical need given the impending housing density and the lack of transportation infrastructure available here
Aspen Hill	■ Expanded service map from Aspen hill to north bethesda and Bethesda would be ideal ■ I live off of Layhill Road, across the golf course. This current map does not include that area. It would be nice if it did considering it is very dangerous to walk to the current boundary or any nearby bus as-is. Please consider expanding the current proposed map. ■ I suggest expanding the NW boundary to include Manor Lake and Flower Valley including St Patrick Church. Residents in those areas often shop in the Aspen Hill proposed area. There are other churches and medical facilities along both sides of Muncaster Mill south of the creek that feeds Lake Frank that might provide more ridership. Possibly expanding to Meadowside Nature Center and Lathrop E Smith Environmental center. ■ My house is in Aspen Hill area. This works for me. ■ This route makes sense ■ I'm unclear about the boundaries. Am I limited to transport within the boundary where I live? If so, usefulness could be limited. ■ I believe it should work to include they layhill area, it will link two shopping centers and possibly a red center. ■ "Expanding coverage to layhill road wouldn't be a bad idea, especially if you guys plan to replace the 51 Glenmont/ICC P&R! Making sure it connects with other zones would be great too." ■ Just wish this zone included a metro station. ■ The wait time and app needs to be fixed, app has a lot of glitches ■ Busses should run for a longer period of time. Add early bus runs before 6Am for people who need transportation before the common bus starts. People who start work between 4:30-6Am currently have no transportation to certain places.
Leisure World	■ The introduction of the Ride On Flex service to Leisure World is essential. Currently, Leisure World is a densely populated senior community facing significant transportation challenges. The existing shuttle service does not meet the residents' needs, operating only during daytime hours and not at all on weekends. Implementing the Ride On Flex service would greatly enhance the residents' ability to attend appointments, shop for groceries, and complete errands beyond the campus boundaries. This enhancement transcends transportation; it's a matter of improving quality of life. The service would enable residents to safely travel to local employment opportunities, engage in community events, and better utilize the amenities available throughout Montgomery County. ■ Leisure World zone is perfect to cover our 8,000 residents

ZONE	RESPONSES
Silver Spring	■ I would be very glad to have a Ride On zone that would allow me to get to the USP/grocery/medical and library. ■ Please expand the service area to include woodside forest and include important retail destinations in the Aldi's shopping place such as CVS, Dominoe's. In addition Sniders Grocery ■ Should be extended to Montgomery Hills south of 495, there are a lot of grocery stores in that area that a lot of people could benefit from access to. ■ I do not think microtransit is an appropriate service for this area given the density and existing RideOn routes. The priority should be to make sure that existing RideOn routes run more frequently and more reliably. ■ It would be useful if the boundaries of this zone extended slightly further east - out to Chicago Ave, for example. ■ PLEASE expand to include Dale Drive to Piney Branch! Currently I am in between this and the Takoma-Langley zone and I would love to be able to use this!! ■ Looks good, but downtown SS is generally covered, but flexible transit to medical professionals would be very helpful ■ It should be at all hours of the day. ■ N/A ■ I am at Silver Spring but my doctors appointments are at Germntwn, Gaithersburg ■ Extend this zone to serve all of the Montgomery college Takoma park / silver spring campus. The 18 bus is just not reliable ■ Please expand north to Blair and Northwood high schools ■ We live in the space btw 612 & 615. The narrow area btw Dale Dr & Sligo Creek. So we aren't being served by *either* FLEX Zone: 612 OR 615. (Our addr - 402 Mansfield Rd, SS 20910-5515). Wonder if we might be included? Also in this "missing strip" is Silver Spring Intl Middle School & Sligo Creek Elem School ..... these schools (all in one large bldg) might like to have Flex Zone service as well.....?
Wheaton	■ Need in Bethesda ■ I think the boundaries need to be expanded to the Kemp Mill area. The area at the back of the Kemp Mill neighborhood (Gilson, Charleton, Claybrook, Fairoak) are over a mile from the bus routes on Arcola, Kemp Mill Road, and University. The back of this neighborhood has to be one of the most transit isolated parts of the county, especially for the down-county area. Expanding Flex service to this area would provided residents with much greater transit access. ■ I would use this often if expanded to the Wheaton zone 613. I love public transit, if I can avoid driving for certain errands that would be very appealing. ■ I think this should include Arcola Ave as that is not indicated on the map. Arcola includes schools and park access that would be great to have the bus service. ■ Thank you for considering these helpful new routes. As a senior, you can only imagine the difficulty of getting around without a car. The maps are a bit overwhelming - would I be able to go from Wheaton to Olney (Physicians Office Building, the hospital, etc.)? That would be so helpful. Thanks! 69 yr old Mary from Glenmont! ■ I wish the service area extended down to the Snyder's Superfoods, Aldi, and CVS just south of the beltway - along Seminary Pl. Getting to the Wheaton mall is an important link too. I would use this service if the area were created. ■ The 613 area makes sense, connecting to Forest Glen and Wheaton Metro stations. ■ This doesn't affect me, but I think making sure Kemp Mill has some coverage would be beneficial for the residents there. If it's not already covered by a service area. ■ Flex is great if you live far from major roadways. It doesn't work for me as live in 1 zone and work in another adjacent zone. I also had to turn down an employment opportunity because there is no public transportation from Wheaton to Laytonsville. Overall, I love that additional zones are being added. ■ Take flex to Einstein high

ZONE	RESPONSES
White Oak	■ This should be available to all taxpayers in any area. I live closer to Bartonsville, but my mailing address is Silver Spring. I'm hoping White Oak area would include me. ■ Connecting the Riderwood community to the FLASH bus would be of immense value to the many residents. ■ If possible, service should be expanded to get riders to or close to a metrorail station. ■ Is the Ride On Flex will expand the entire White Oak/Silver Spring area?
Takoma-Langley Park	■ I often shop at Lidl on New Hampshire. If the zone could be extended to 410 it would be more useful. ■ Logical would be to feed into Red Line, Silver Spring and Takoma. Door to door home pick up for older residents and handicapped. Lightening storm and wheelchair bound is of concern. ■ "There are no benches. A shelter on Piney Branch and Philadelphia was taken down within a few weeks. No benches by the College. A neighbor installed her OWN bench on Takoma because the County wouldn't do it. I've tried several times to get a bench installed on west side of Fenton and Thayer by the Safeway, it's dangerous not to have one. Met with surly managers who did not act. ■ ■ " ■ I would want to use this to get from my neighborhood to the Metro and my zone doesn't get me to a Metro station. Without the Purple Line, I'd still need to take a bus to get to the Metro. I love taking public transit but if my public transit trip has more than two modes (one connection), I would rather drive. ■ I think having access to transport within this zone would be extremely helpful.
Chevy Chase-Kensington	■ North Kensington by Einstein high School in Newport Mill Middle School has been completely left out of both the Wheaton zone and the Chevy Chase Kensington zone. The irony is is that most of the people in North Kensington, specifically Newport Mills hills neighborhood are lower income then Chevy Chase Kensington. yet you're giving services to Chevy Chase Kensington. we live on the other side of the tracks. many of us are handicap. is this really a county service or pandering to people with the most money in the county? or pandering to all the places? we're the most illegal immigrants live? sure, we have a quiet neighborhood, and we have lots of schools in our area, but we're still residents in need. even the ride on bus service in this area is scant and oftentimes if the 33 or the 34 isn't running. you have to walk more than 3 to 5 mi to get to a bus stop which for us handicapped people is extraordinarily difficult on many days but especially on inclement weather days. please consider who you're really serving with the flex program. please consider the frequency of buses that come through these neighborhoods when deciding on a flex program because our neighborhood in Newport Mills hills really doesn't have that many that run along Newport Mill. ■ This is a great zone! Love that it hits both Wheaton and Forest Glen, as well as the future Purple Line. Amazing! I'd love for it to be expanded slightly to cover the Kensington Park Library, Newport Middle, and Albert Einstein High. ■ Make sure to include Lexington St ■ would really like both the Silver Spring area, the Chevy Chase-Kensington, and the Friendship Hts area area to be combined. ■ I live at 3333 University Blvd, and I feel this map leaves us on the wrong side of the road. Further, that side of University Blvd is 4 different condominiums, which definitely should not be left out ■ Happy with bus service in this area.

Table 26: If you have any more general comments on Ride On Flex, please enter them below.

RESPONSES
■ Expanded coverage is key! Aspen hill, north Bethesda and Bethesda
■ I love this concept and will be advertising it to friends who live in the current service areas!
■ This is a great service. It would be good to know how one might take advantage of more than one route to a destination outside of the one's current route.
■ again, consider the frequency of ride on in Metro buses through each neighborhood when deciding who should have a flex zone and where the boundaries of it are
■ Great idea but our area in Cloverly does not get any Rideon service (Bus 39) on the weekend and this would fill that gap.
■ Very grateful for the expansion into other areas. I have used the glenmont Wheaton one to commute to work which was more affordable to use.

RESPONSES

- frequently need to cross into other zones for medical, some other errands.
- Would like later night coverage to safely get to metro station at night.
- How about thinking about the tax paying citizens in the up county once in a while especially the elderly on fixed incomes.
- Hopefully there are enough buses to make it work!
- Overall I think this is a good idea.
- Good service
- Thank you for doing this! I look forward to using the service.
- It would be great if the ride on flex could travel from one zone to another because a lot of people work in a different zone then they live.
- Expand as much as possible.
- The area numbers on the "Ride On Reimagined" map do not match the numbers in this survey. (9xx vs. 6xx). Therefore, I could not choose my area.
- As usual the wealthy areas of Potomac and most of the west of 270 are not included in this proposal. This plan makes sure that there is no transit equity in the county. Why won't the county start putting in transit in the wealthier areas of the county? This is an extension of redlining. Please rethink this flex plan.
- There are very many seniors in housing developments of community who can benefit. Including Marlboro/Middleboro, Plantations, Honeysuckle Drive, Seneca Brook, Hickory Ridge, Johnson Farm...
- "Flex will make my life safer.
- All this happened to me on Georgia Ave in the 3.4 miles near the entrance to Leisure World:
- Bike. A Leisure World neighbor drove into my bicycle at 50 mph.
- I survived only because I was wearing a full-face motorcycle helmet, when I came down head-first on the car. DriveA small car hit my car and a fast-moving truck came close.Making a left turn with a green arrow, I had no way of knowing that the oncoming straight traffic had been given a green light. Other similar intersections had red-lights facing the left turning vehicles.The state highway department rebuffed my efforts. A week ago, I saw another crash scene there, same cause. Walk. Crossing Georgia from Leisure World's main entrance, requires avoiding traffic where there are no paint markings, walk / no-walk signals, and no period where the traffic signals stop traffic. Nearby is a recent memorial marker to a pedestrian. Bus. When I try the bus, the short trips take more than double the time to drive. So I drive, tho I'm 80....Flex. If the present Flex zone were expanded to the cover the adjacent Georgia Ave/Leisure World area, I would have a safer way to get to most of the places I go to. (Glenmont Metro, Olney Swim Center, Costco, Home Depot, CVS, 2 shopping centers and the Mall.)
- No more of the flex bus
- Glad you're all working on this, happy that Moco is making it easier for everyone to get around regardless of mobility status.
- Need more Flex Buses. Children should not use them just to go 2 or 3 blocks. Otherwise this causes longer wait times for those who travel farther.
- Make one that goes Kensington-Potomac/Potomac-Kensington
- Microtransit is not an efficient use of transportation resources and the county and its riders are better served by improving and expanding fixed route service. Many of the Zones under consideration are dense areas served by existing fixed routes. This is supported by substantial evidence from ongoing and concluded microtransit pilot programs across the country.
- The elderly and disabled need better transportation in rural areas and need some agency like Dept of Aging to help them get information as to how to sign up or apply for this transportation.
- I really appreciate Ride On and MCDOT reaching out to get resident perspective.
- Some drivers have better attitude than others; would like to see better training on customer service.
- Will it be electric?
- weekend especially during food distrubtion, groceries, medical clinic, near tech road, adventist hospital,
- Uber is a more economical option.
- Glad to see this service being expanded. I think increasing fares for this more direct service would make sense and would be good to raise funds for more frequent conventional bus service. And at less than 3$ would probably still be competitive with Uber/lyft
- More frequency of the rides and pick up passengers earlier in the morning rush hours & later in the evening rush hours.
- I love the idea of the service and how well it's functioned when I've used it. The drivers have always been pleasant; I just wish it was safer for me to get to.
- There are so many greater human needs in this county than personalized transportation! I am opposed to any expansion other than for disabled persons or safe rides to school for young children. We have fabulous public transportation already in this area. Please let's spend resources and money on food insecurity,

RESPONSES

youth mental health and family stabilization. This survey appears designed to only solicit support for something you want to do. There was no opportunity aside from this box to object to this program.

- I doubt Flex will work for most of my errands as I need to cross multiple zones for my errands.
- I simply love the Rockville Town Center and would like the pickup time to 5pm
- this is a really nice addition to the area; please continue making investments like this into our public infrastructure in the future
- I would not ride if I could not open the windows. Immunocompromised
- I would like to know the finances of the operation. I assume it is subsidized, like many public transit services. Can I ask to what extent? Is it less expensive than other options? How does the budget/finance compare to Metro Bus or RideOn? Many thanks. I think this is a great idea.
- "Way too long to have implemented this. Years in the making.
- Too much online maps, ShowMyStreet, all online, your work is much less. Shameful. Big black eye to the County.
- Please expand not only the area, but also the times! It would be great if you could go somewhere and also come back after 3.30pm! I usually have to walk home.
- "I used flex once and was stranded at my destination, needing Uber to return home. Customer service was useless, since they are in some ""satellite"" location and had no clue of our area.
- This is what has kept me from using the service! I love the idea, and would be very greatful for it's expansion."
- Start early at 8:00am and ends 4pm
- Would love to go from Wheaton-Glenmont zone to Rockville zone
- The zone is too small. It needs to go to Aspen Hill. And it needs to be available 24/7
- Expanding would be wondering!!!!! Wheaton 613
- Expanding route 33 to have service during the day going to the Medical Center Metro would be helpful
- Thanks for expanding this cool local bus concept! I've been so jealous of the folks in Wheaton that had it. I didn't even know about the Rockville area.
- How will this integrate with MetroAccess?
- Please have more Flex buses available, so rides can be more frequent, with less wait times.
- none
- Please supplement Derwood to Redland shopping center. I live near muncaster mill and Bowie mill and don’t have many options.
- Many times I have not been able to get a return trip back home! Incredibly frustrating
- North Bethesda would love this! Pike district is a bit of a sprawl
- Wonderful idea; wonder how many folks have yet to know it exists? (Like me, until today when my "NextDoor Neighbor" app included your link.
- The proposed 476b Poolesville flex zone is a good start. However, the western Montgomery County area, including Poolesville, is quite large, and the flex zone needs to be larger than just Poolesville.
- Invest in fixed route bus service. It is more efficient and cheaper per passenger. Use a 30' bus if you need to. Subsidizing individual taxi service is ridiculous.
- Love this service! Makes our lives better all the time. Thanks, MCDOT!
- Would RideOn Flex be interested in presenting and discussing its service with the PG/Moco chapter of the National Federation of the Blind? If so, please email me at jabaer811@outlook.com and I can make the introduction to that group.
- I think this is a great idea. There isn't enough ridership nowadays to support the current fixed-routes (e.g. #7 that has been my mainstay for 22 years). The Flex idea takes advantage of the new mobile technology that (almost) everybody has in their pockets nowadays. Hope you can find funding for this.
- I would love to see the hours expanded in the evenings to 8pm.
- reduce times between buses on current routes to 30 minutes or fewer
- I hope you will also expand the hours! The limited hours when launched were also a constraint. I am very glad the county is expanding this program!
- The map and arrival estimate have often been inaccurate. I'll be waiting for the Ride On Flex where I'm supposed to and suddenly I'll get the notice that I wasn't there so the driver left. When the map didn't show the vehicle near me and I didn't see it while I was waiting. That gets frustrating to have to make multiple requests when I've been where I'm supposed to be. And sometimes the next requests need me to walk even further to get to the new pickup location. I'm usually requesting rides when I'm carrying a lot or when I need the extra assistance to move around.
- The Ride On Flex app shows stops at Macy’s, Target and Costco, but the Ride On drivers don’t follow the directions of the app for these locations.
- The app is a little glitchy. Sometimes it says a bus will there in like 12 mins - but when it gets to the time, it starts over. It cancels me out. And that is very inconvenient for when I’ve already waited

RESPONSES

- If you expanded Ride On Flex to the area between Redland and Shady Grove Metro I would use it 10 times a week, straight up
- Thanks for the service! I just wanted a ride to the Z6 bus stop instead of walking down the street to it
- Keep up greatjob
- thank you, i'm very excited for this, please have this be available at night like 8-9 pm because that is the time where either the bus is not available or I feel unsafe using it.
- "Please provide enough vehicles for the service to be frequent 🙏If you guys could collaborate with Silver Spring-New Carrollton adjacent PG county areas that'd be cool to."
- I love Montgomery County
- Will residents be able to hail a ride within other zones? (To go from the Metro to my doctor's office, for example)?
- What are the hours of operation for this service?
- There should be flex service hub/station from Shady Grove Metro Station to Gaithersburg, German Town etc
- This would be significantly better still if the regions are connected, so you could get from anywhere in one to anywhere in another without a transfer. Transfers are a major hassle and accessibility barrier for many disabled people, myself included. This would be a huge help! Please and thank you!!
- Please make it clear which zone would cover the loss of Route 31 since it is outside the current Wheaton-Glenmont zone.
- I can see that this would reduce the number of car trips greatly if it were used for commuting to workplaces and coordinated with shifted scheduling at the workplace.
- "Thrilled to see ""911 Aspen Hill"" includes me and my 8,000 neighbors in Leisure World.
- A concentrated group of mainly old people, many with low fixed incomes.
- We will have much better way to get to nearby stores, doctors and the Metro.
- Flex is a perfect match for Leisure World.
- Our family will finally be able to get rid of our car !"
- Longer hours of service
- I would like you to expand the time instead of peak time.
- Unless you can control traffic lights, this service is meaningless
- Is the Ride On Flex will be accessible in entire county?
- I live along Darnestown road. Can this service pick me on the way to Shady Grove station
- Expanding the hours of service would be really great too (vs. just expanding the service areas).
- None
- I'd love to have this service available in my neighborhood!
- Love the idea of the service and all the assistance it serves to the community <3
- With many residents "aging in place", expanding the service to zone 610 is a no-brainer.
- Thank you for reaching out
- The Ride on Flex service seriously ignores the needs of Bethesda. Despite high property taxes, none of the funds are used to invest in any facilities or civic amenities in Bethesda. There is a crying need to invest in transportation infrastructure in the 20816 and 20817 PIN codes.
- Gaithersburg need Ride on Flex as well.
- Please continue to improve the app experience
- People in our area who don't have cars (like us) have only a single nearby bus (L8--Aspen Hill to Friendship Heights, up and down Connecticut Avenue), and as best I can tell we're not served by Flex.
- Need services in the Clarksburg area for general errands and the outlet
- Please make it happen. Make the bus wheel chair accessible too for elderly.
- Should be advertised more. I had very little knowledge pertaining to the service before this survey.
- Good job ride on!!
- Integrate this better into the app. As a transportation jurisdiction on the border of DC and Maryland, it's critical that people know that WMATA payments work with this.
- Why would you want to use this if in most areas the bus already has a stop where your going and also if your old you can get metro access

RESPONSES

- It would be nice to have improved connectivity between the HUGHES campus, MC Germantown, and the south Germantown area, eliminating the need to drive to and from work.
- N/A
- Although I live in the area across the street from one of the Purple Line stops, the Ride-On Flex would be more convenient for the neighbors around this area mostly because there are mostly seniors around this area and it would be better for those seniors that are currently employed.
- Poolesville to shady grove adventist is greatest need. The is one doctor in poolesville, but he hasn't accepted any new patients in the last decade.
- Ride On Flex needs to work with senior care communities to make sure information is widely available and seniors understand how to use the service. If possible, appoint Ride On Flex navigators to help seniors get comfortable using Ride On Flex service.
- Ok
- Not having a Gaithersburg zone seems pretty bad
- A great concept!
- Accept credit cards when getting into bus
- "Nice service. Need to fix the fare vending because buses aren't accepting any form of payment right now, and people still might be in COVID phase and not pay. I would hate for this to be discontinued because everyone is freeloading
- Extend the time ranges to the evening for Rockville Flex. There are so many doctor offices in the areas And appointments can go all the way up to 6 PM.
- Thank you for the bus
- "evrything i s good .
- Go to einstein and more more hours
- "Thank you for developing more FLEX zones -- I think this would make using transit much easier & more availabe to MANY residents -- especially seniors who may no longer be able to drive. And especially helpful to anyone who doesn't use a car!
- Thanks to you Guys and Good Luck with this project !
- Estoy satisfecha con ellos nos ayuda mucho para salir a diario al trabajo
- Que los buses pasen a la hora
- Los sábados y domingos a línea roja es una desastre, los tiempos de espera son casi de 30 min, solamente mejor por el cherry blossoms... dándole más importancia al turismo que nosotros que lo usamos diariamente
- Los tiempos de espera han aumentado notablemente. Y muchas veces el tiempo de espera que nuestra la app no coincide con el tiempo real de espera. A veces necesito cancelar después de 30 min de espera, mientras la app decía 5 min