

# Job Access Report

FALL 2018



**Anne Arundel County** has experienced explosive job growth over the last 30 years, as job sites migrated en masse from the urban core to suburbs throughout the Baltimore-Washington corridor. This job migration has grown the County's tax base while creating unaddressed job-access challenges. Anne Arundel County's public transit infrastructure, like other suburban jurisdictions in the Baltimore Region, has not kept pace with job growth created by jobs relocating from urban to suburban areas.

This report will focus on larger County job sites that pay "transit depended" wages along with a variety of potential job-access solutions that address different job access transportation barriers for workers whose compensation falls below the \$40,000/year earnings threshold for reliable car-ownership affordability.

In a recent AAA Mid-Atlantic commuter cost analysis, the average total cost of a vehicle for daily commuting (including both operating and ownership costs) is \$.75/mile in a vehicle that gets average MPG (the cost variable other than miles travelled). By comparison, the federal mileage reimbursement rate is only 71% of this "real" cost at \$.535/mile. Using 75 cents/mile as a baseline:

**A 30 mile round-trip commute, 250 workdays/year would cost \$5,625**

While this is not a budgetary barrier for skilled workforce, a full-time, \$15/hour wage-earner would have to invest 18% of their gross income and over 20% of take-home pay, to own and maintain a reliable car for daily commuting. This cost analysis presents a barrier to car ownership and relegates the majority of wage-earners making less than \$20/hour to “transit-dependent” status. Employers and Economic Development authorities don’t always consider the transit access factor when locating worksites that require wage-earners. And some worksites that do have access to transit-dependent workforce may not have access at all needed shift times. Human Resources Managers may not be fully aware of all the transit options and barriers, leading them to hire qualified people who can’t access jobsites at needed shift times. In such a scenario, employers absorb the steep cost and aggravation of relentlessly high job turnover, while lesser-skilled jobseekers become discouraged.

Anne Arundel County’s public transit infrastructure, like other suburban jurisdictions in the Baltimore Region, has not kept pace with job growth created by jobs relocating from urban to suburban areas. In some cases, residents of Baltimore City/County have better access to Anne Arundel jobsites than local residents, as evidenced by the percentage of jobs they hold in the retail sector at BWI terminal, where direct Light Rail access and the many transit bus lines that intersect the Light Rail provide needed connections. MTA provides express commuter bus lines serving certain corridors in Anne Arundel County, but they operate at peak hours only, make very few stops over long distances and are primarily scheduled to bring suburban commuters into Baltimore or Washington to work - first shift only.

Among the many jobs sectors that pay “transit dependent” wages, some also offer career-ladder opportunities:

- **HEALTHCARE SUPPORT** (Anne Arundel Medical Center, Baltimore Washington Medical Center)
- **HOSPITALITY/ ENTERTAINMENT** (Arundel Mills)
- **CONSTRUCTION** (Jobsites that may vary day-to-day; union apprenticeships)
- **TRANSPORTATION/ WAREHOUSE** (Shift times that may vary day-to-day)

# CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

The construction industry has always had to rely on workforce that had private means of transportation because actual worksites vary geographically day to day - sometimes within a single work day. Employees are expected to report to work on-time regardless of location. A worksite may be transit accessible today and inaccessible tomorrow. This is not a problem for well-paid, skilled tradesmen, but will likely be problematic for the laborers on construction crews.

Sometimes, informal carpools have served the need, in which a car owner will connect with co-workers in need of transport at an accessible pick-up location. If the pick-up location is at a transit connection point, there is a greater chance that workers can connect to the pool vehicle from various residential areas that may intersect with the transit line(s) that serve the pick-up point. However, if the owner/driver of the pool vehicle is sick, on leave or terminated, those co-workers who rely on the pool are left in a lurch, creating high and costly job turnover for the employer.

One possible solution is to have the employer contract for a lease with a “turnkey” vanpool company, such as Enterprise Rideshare. Turnkey vanpools include a package of all insurances; vehicle maintenance, repair and replacement; emergency roadside assistance (akin to AAA). In a sustainable vanpool model, at least 2 approved drivers are recommended. They must be 25 years of age or older, possess a valid drivers license and have no more than 2 points on their MVA driving record. The total monthly cost variables are based on the type of vehicle (stripped-down or with bells and whistles) and the monthly mileage. The monthly bill is shared by all the people in the pool.

In order to avoid the issue of the vehicle owners being unavailable, as in the carpool example above, the employer would be the lessee of the vehicle. The same collection-point accessibility variables that apply to carpools would apply to turnkey vanpools. Keep in mind that if the van travels far and wide to pick up and/or drop-off riders at various residential or collection locations, mileage and its attendant cost would be impacted.

There is a Maryland employer tax credit available of up to \$100/month per employee-rider, which should cover most of the monthly leasing cost. It is processed via employer payroll as a pre-tax benefit to employees and a tax credit to employers. However, if the employer owes no taxes for whatever reason (e.g. the business in not profitable), the incentive of a tax credit is weakened - and for the tax credit to apply, vehicles must accommodate at least 8 riders and must be at least at 50% of capacity, regardless of the number of seats in the leased vehicle. Vanpool capacity issues can be more difficult with unskilled labor riders. Generally, lower-paid workforce turnover is greater than in jobs of a higher-paid workforce. Tax credits may not apply in a given month if ridership falls below 50% of vehicle capacity. The vanpool leasing company and the employer's benefits managers will know the number of riders who are splitting the leasing fee via payroll from month to month.

# SUPPLY CHAIN/ WAREHOUSING

The situation for warehouse operations is unique in that they generally operate for more than one shift – unlike most construction sites which operate in daylight. It is also common practice for employers in warehousing to require workers to remain on the clock past their normal “quitting time” if there is product left to move or inventory. These two factors alone make it less likely that existing public transit options will serve the needs of the employer. The third factor and most impactful in terms of transit connectivity is the worksite location. A warehouse located off the beaten “transit” track will be seriously challenged to meet hiring needs and will likely have to absorb higher job turnover and its attendant cost.

Because of the relative lack of transit and connective transit hubs in Anne Arundel County, viable solutions will require investment beyond aggregated commuter tax-credit accrual. Job access will also be harder for County workforce trapped residentially away from public transit to access jobsites than those who can access a transit hub, as compared to areas with more transit. There are a small handful of transit hubs in the County with more than one bus and/or rail line converge: BWI terminal; Arundel Mills Mall in Hanover; Cromwell Light Rail station in Ferndale; and Odenton MARC station. These hubs should be points of focus as work-bound employee collection locations and homebound employee drop-off locations.

For the employer to have broader access to needed workforce, express routes from transit hubs to employment areas where workforce is needed in numbers would require funding beyond tax credit accrual. Van or mini-bus vendors could be engaged to collect work-bound riders at a hub and travel an express route to appropriate worksites. You could engage several such routes scheduled to specific shift times that fan out from the hubs to connect people to worksites. In this scenario anyone who can connect to the hub from any of the points along the bus or rail lines that have converge at the hub would have better access to worksites. The employer is probably not as parochially concerned about where people live jurisdictionally so long as they can be at work on time and do the job.

Getting County jobseekers to transit hubs may require a similar investment – with routes that traverse residential areas to pick up local residents prior to starting express service to larger jobsites, though some of these residential communities have adamantly sought to keep all transit out of their neighborhoods. Two other factors that would require acknowledgement: when contracting transportation services, with longer distances travelled and longer travel times come greater costs; certified drivers generally will not accept assignments without being compensated for at least four hours at a time, which may make it hard to hire drivers for short express runs tied to specific shift start times.

Addressing unscheduled overtime for the transit-dependent is difficult. MTA offers a free Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) program for transit users who are required to perform unscheduled overtime. A designated taxi service would likely be used in these cases. GRH approval requires a shift supervisor’s OK and is only available four (4) times annually. The local affiliate for ride-hailing company LYFT has recently instituted some affordable options for workforce that are different from their core service; however, there is no track record as of yet, nor lessons to be learn from the services provided.

## HOSPITALITY/ ENTERTAINMENT/ FOOD SERVICE/ RETAIL

Steve Heise, HR Director for LIVE Hotel & Casino (LHC) and Anne Arundel County Local Workforce Development Board Member has been very diligent in seeking reasonable solutions to the issue of broader access to workforce and quite open to new ideas. He tried a vanpool but found that he could only identify one employee to serve as designated driver. Non-drivers don't generally need or have valid Driver's Licenses. This one driver was working 5 days but driving all 7 days a week. It was unsustainable without a second driver to be available during the primary driver's off days. I spoke with him about access to workforce. He also worked with an outside vendor on express shuttle service but it was financially unsustainable.

LHC is a 245/7/365 operation, employs 3,500 people and offers higher than market wages and a package of benefits. His access to workforce is better than many areas of the county because there is a transit bus hub at the adjacent mega-mall. A new service launched in July 2018 that provides connectivity to/from the multi-modal hub (bus and rail) at BWI terminal 18 hours each day of the year.

Since the opening of MGM National Harbor, LHC has ceded the metro DC job market to the competitor that has the advantage of access to the robust transit options provided by the Metro Transit system serving that market.

The two areas where LHC has need to access is the Rt. 2 corridor to the east and the Annapolis area to the southeast. Again, the multi-modal transit hub at Cromwell Light Rail station could provide access to blue-collar workforce living within walking distance of the MTA Local LINK #70 bus that serves the Rt. 2 corridor: Annapolis, Glen Burnie, Pasadena etc. – the most impactful local bus route serving Anne Arundel County in terms of number of communities served. There has been proven success of an express route that Connects Cromwell to Arundel Mills/LHC but that service ended July 1, 2018 with the launch of the new 18-hour a day service connecting to BWI terminal, which better serves Baltimore City/County residents than Anne Arundel residents.

There are also 25 hotels clustered near BWI terminal served by a MTA local LINK #75 and Light Rail access, but again, while a few parts of northwestern Anne Arundel County are served by these routes, Baltimore City residents are far better served – as evidenced by the number of job placements for Baltimore City residents in the hotel district and at BWI terminal – as compared to placements of transit-dependent County residents. As for the retail businesses at BWI terminal, they are required by contract to be operational by 5:00 AM daily and hesitate to hire people who can't be available on Sunday mornings.

In 2013, MTA Local LINK #75 added express service from Baltimore City to BWI, the Hotel District and the Mall/Casino early on Sunday and holiday mornings only – when Light Rail is idle. This decision by MTA to add “gap” service was as a result of an affordable grant-funded shuttle that was proved successful and led to adoption of the route by MTA. This model could be duplicated by picking up people in the Glen Burnie/Ferndale corridor on Sunday/holiday mornings and taking them to the terminal, a few short miles away. The total annual cost for the “gap” service was affordable, at just under \$30,000 – 6 daily service hours, 60 days a year.

These transit commuters would not need the same “gap” service to get home because Light Rail would be operating - though it would require homebound riders to take Light Rail from BWI terminal north and then transfer to the southbound spur that serves Cromwell Light Rail station to connect to some local bus routes.

# HEALTHCARE/UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND BW MEDICAL CENTER

The healthcare industry provides a large number of entry-level jobs with career ladders in a sector that is strong and growing throughout central Maryland. The University of MD Baltimore Washington Medical Center in Glen Burnie fits this profile. Hospitals, particularly teaching hospitals, are more likely to offer specific career ladders within their institutions – and certified, credentialed skills specific to the medical industry are readily transferable. There may also be paid or partially paid certification training opportunities as part of a menu of employee benefits. Assisting with access to these jobs and skills trainings would represent a wise economic investment.

As for available public transit to this campus, there are two (2) local MTA bus routes that service Hospital Drive. Both routes operate in a north-south orientation and operate enough hours to serve various shifts, though they run less frequently on weekends/holidays:

- Local LINK #69 connects University of Maryland Medical Center’s flagship Baltimore campus to the campus in Glen Burnie. It intersects Light Rail at Cromwell Station where other transit lines connect and serves a small piece of southern Glen Burnie/Pasadena.
- MTA Local LINK #70 impacts more communities in Anne Arundel County than any other local transit service. It services the Ritchie Highway corridor and is somewhat duplicative of the Local LINK #69 route, but then continues further south into the Annapolis area, intersecting with Annapolis Transit.

Because the available public transit connects to Baltimore and runs north-south, it offers better job access to residents of Baltimore City than to County residents – and there is virtually no connectivity to the east or west of the hospital along the MD 100 corridor. Express shuttles could be set up to serve specific shift times and connect from Arundel Mills, with its many intersecting transit routes, to the Medical Center about 15 minutes away along Route 100. This would provide the hospital with penetration into the Howard County residential labor market. There is no easy way to connect to workforce living east of the hospital in areas along the MD 100 corridor other than vanpools, because there is no transit there – perhaps by community choice.

Workforce Access to Anne Arundel Medical Center in Annapolis from outside the immediate area served by Annapolis Transit is limited to the MTA Local LINK #69 bus (as cited above) and the MTA Commuter Bus #210 which connects only to Kent Island and Baltimore City and operates first shift, peak hours only.

# SUMMATION

Suburban jurisdictions typically have less robust public transit available to local employers and local residents compared to urban areas. Anne Arundel County is no different. Anne Arundel County ranks second only to Howard County in medium income among jurisdictions in the Baltimore Region and most residents simply drive their own vehicles to work. However, for people who live in lower demographic parts of the County and may be residentially trapped away from available transit, commuting is a serious barrier, regardless of the jurisdiction of a potential worksite. There is also a parochial mindset against any and all transit in parts of the County that requires a degree of political will and community engagement before service can be added.

Transit investment needs to be differentiated from transit expenditure. To put it in perspective, about 27% of MTA's core service operating budget is covered by fare collection, leaving 73% to be subsidized by the taxpayer. This does not even factor in the cost of special mobility services for the elderly and disabled, which costs considerably higher per rider than core public transit services. Spending on mobility services for people with special needs is good citizenship. Spending on job access transportation is good business and economics and has a much higher ROI than mobility services. When a wage-earner gets a job, payroll taxes immediately accrue, the new hire's greater spending power churns in the local economy – potentially created other jobs – and those new hires that were receiving public assistance can be weaned off public assistance to the benefit of all.

Parochial “nimbyism” is not uncommon in Anne Arundel County. Communities don't want or see the need for local transit access and, perhaps more importantly, don't want transit-dependent people to have access to residential areas – even if their neighbors lack access to private transportation. However, there may also be misconceptions. Yes, transit can provide community access to people who do not live in Anne Arundel County – and, yes, some may represent a criminal element. However, criminals are not likely to steal or vandalize and depend on less-than-dependable public transit to make a hasty getaway.

Local economic development authorities can and do play a key role in where County jobsites are located, along with the employers. However, the “access to needed labor” factor is not always considered. Decision-making on worksite location may instead be based on a variety of factors such as special economic or zoning incentives. Another possible factor is the experiential mismatch by decision-makers who assume that owning viable transportation for daily commuting is a given. Clearly it isn't. Regardless, economic development authorities can and should consider viable job access issues beyond parking capacity when discussing worksite locations with employers.

There was a time when jurisdictional workforce entities did not consider a job placement a “win” unless it was a County job for a County resident. The Statewide WIOA Plan wisely stresses the importance of serving the customer (whether a local employer or a local job-seeker) above adherence to achieving program metrics. Similarly, assisting a local employer with broader access to the transit-dependent workforce is a “win”, regardless of where that workforce resides – and assisting a local resident in finding gainful employment is a “win” regardless of the jurisdiction of the worksite. And if a local job-seeker can be placed in a local job that's a “win-win”.



# NEW AND UNDER-UTILIZED RESOURCES

## State-Funded J.A.R.C. – Job Access Reverse Commute

The State Legislature unanimously passed a Job Access Reverse Commute bill in the 2018 session to fund a “pilot project”. The bill, introduced by local State Delegate, Pamela Beidle, is modeled after an abandoned federal program that assists the working poor to access jobs by funding projects that mitigate the transportation barrier. There will be \$280,000 available to NPOs in a competitive bid process. The legislature might increase future funding if a one-time “pilot project” proves successful.

This funding requires 20% matching funds from a source not related to transportation. Shuttles from a transit-hub to proximal large worksites that are scheduled to meet shift times could be supported via this funding. The best choice for a grant application focus should be a project most likely to demonstrate success quickly – low hanging fruit – and save more ambitious projects for potential future funding.

## MD TRIP

Maryland TRIP [www.mdtrip.org](http://www.mdtrip.org) is a unique, free and highly under-utilized resource to assist all travelers in Maryland other than those driving alone. Their website captures virtually every public transit option available, with constant updates as services change, including all the differing fare rates and transfer policies from one system to another. Users can access the online trip-planner or call their information operator (weekdays only) to plan any in-state trip, regardless of which transit systems their trip entails. Human Resource Managers and Job Developers can use the site’s trip planner to evaluate a transit-dependent prospective hire’s ability to access a jobsite at shift times. MTA’s trip-planner only guides travelers to options within the MTA purview. MD TRIP is operated by the Center for Mobility Equity (formerly Central Maryland Regional Transit) and is supported by MDOT/MTA.

Contact: [www.mdtrip.org](http://www.mdtrip.org) or for specific assistance 1.877.331.TRIP (8747)

## Maryland Commuter Tax Credits

Maryland, via MDOT/MTA, offers tax credits to employers who help fund employee access through shared-ride commuting (not driving alone). The programs are under-utilized by employers, in large part because manpower to market the benefit program more broadly within MTA is lacking. Perhaps the Maryland Department of Commerce could partner with MTA to drive targeted awareness among employers.

The benefit program provides employers with a tax credit of up to \$100/month per employee, based on the actual amount invested. For employees it is processed via payroll as a pre-tax benefit. To engage employers wisely, HR managers, Benefits managers and Payroll managers need to be involved. The monthly deductible limit increased from \$50/month to \$100/month recently and it can be applied to transit passes/fare media or to offset the cost of employer-subsidized vanpools or shuttle buses that are part of an employee’s commute.

These tax-deductible employer investments should be viewed as a way to mitigate the hard cost of job turnover and boost job retention rates. Additionally, research shows that more young workers who can afford to own a car choose to forgo the cost and burdens of car ownership, so that offering benefits programs like Commuter Choice MD can attract essential, yet mercurial young workers.

Contact: [www.commuterchoicemaryland.com](http://www.commuterchoicemaryland.com) or to talk to a Specialist call 410.865.1100

## Guaranteed Ride Home Program

Almost a decade ago, the State of Maryland, via MDOT, expanded the free Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) program for commuters who choose shared-ride options on a regular basis to include most of central Maryland. Prior to 2009, the program was only available in the Washington Metro region, serving only residents of Prince Georges and Montgomery Counties. Shared-ride commuters are required to enroll annually, providing home and work address, phone contact and the contact to the enrollee's work supervisor, who will be contacted when the employee requests service. A taxi can be dispatched to take someone home from work up to four (4) times a year. It's available from 6am to 10pm Monday through Friday only. It is not available for all shifts or on weekends/holidays.

There are three (3) eligible scenarios: family emergency, in which the ride provided could be used to go home or to a school or hospital; illness, in which the employee came to work well and became sick; and, employer-required overtime, in which an employee may miss their pool ride or last transit option home. Anyone eligible would be foolish not to enroll annually.

To register go to: [tdm.commuterconnections.org/mwcog/CCRegistration.jsp](http://tdm.commuterconnections.org/mwcog/CCRegistration.jsp)

## Ride-Hailing Services

The recent and rapid rise of the ride-hailing companies like Uber and Lyft have become both a substitute for car-ownership (as noted above) and a means of supplementing income for independent contractors who drive ride-hailing vehicles. Ride-hailing's core service, which is similar to a conventional taxi service, costs too much for the working poor and is largely done in smaller capacity vehicles as compared to vanpools, bus pools or public transit. However, the LYFT affiliate that oversees operations in central Maryland has shown interest in assisting lower-paid workers to get to and from their jobsites. They recently presented two new programs that may make their service affordable in certain key situations. We look forward to learning more regarding the viability of these tailored programs as they are implemented and begin to establish a track record.

Two possible applications for the use of ride-hailing services come to mind. It is not at all uncommon for warehouse workers to be tapped on the shoulder and informed that they'll have to work later than scheduled on a regular basis, exceeding the limit of 4 usages per year provided by the state's Guaranteed Ride Home program. Perhaps LYFT could explore ways of assisting people to get home from with employer-required overtime – or provide Guaranteed Ride Home services on weekends and for shift workers.

## The County Connector

Free and open to the public, this GPS-tracked, circulator shuttle operates 19 hours a day (check the link for schedule) 365 days a year. It connects to the BWI Airport Light Rail station; BWI MARC/AMTRAK Rail station; Arundel Mills Mall; LIVE Casino/Hotel and nearby residential areas to the south and west.

[www.bwipartner.org/CountyConnector](http://www.bwipartner.org/CountyConnector)

## Commute with Enterprise

Enterprise provides business with shared-cost “turn-key” options for commuters who live near or along a commute travel route and work with or near one another on a similar or flexible work schedule. This vehicle lease arrangement includes new/late model vehicle; month-to-month lease; full operating and vehicle insurance; fuel card; maintenance; and road-side assistance.

[www.commutewithenterprise.com](http://www.commutewithenterprise.com) or to ask about Enterprises Customized Business Rental options call Matt Leis at [matthew.d.leis@ehi.com](mailto:matthew.d.leis@ehi.com) or call 410.412.4686

## Travel Training

A free program designed to teach targeted travelers (disabled, elderly, economically disadvantaged) the skills to independently travel on available fixed route public transit. This can be done via one-on-one training, group trainings and train-the-trainer sessions for human services staff.

[www.mobilityequity.org/travel-training](http://www.mobilityequity.org/travel-training) or contact Alex Pelzer at [alex.pelzer@mobilityequity.org](mailto:alex.pelzer@mobilityequity.org) or call 245.346.4967 to arrange training sessions.

## Vehicles for Change (VFC)

The nation’s largest non-profit car ownership program for working families who face specific barriers. VFC accepts donated vehicles, reconditions them and awards them to stably-employed working families with children. Awardees receive 1-year discount financing and 6-month vehicle warranty. \*\*For car donors, the available tax deduction is considerably higher than donating cars to other worthy entities, expressly because they are being re-purposed to facilitate upward mobility for working families. VFC has also established an in-house Auto Mechanic Training and Certification program specifically for ex-offenders.

[www.vehiclesforchange.org](http://www.vehiclesforchange.org)

Representing both private and public-sector organizations, the Anne Arundel County Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) provides leadership, direction, and policy oversight for the workforce delivery system in Anne Arundel County.

[lwdb@aawdc.org](mailto:lwdb@aawdc.org)

