

Responses to Public Hearing Comments
January 25, 2023

1a. Why do you not advertise LINK?

Response:

Our current advertising includes a highway billboard, WXYC on-air radio, MVA tv-monitor, signage, and graphics onboard fleet, online, vinyl outdoor banners, flyers and posters in shelters and at our partner agencies, via in-person events, and ads in Harford Magazine, the Aegis, Harford County Resource Guide, and the Harford County Community Calendar. Additionally, we are regular contributors to the MD Transit Update newsletter.

Our website, www.harfordtransitlink.org, is our primary source of all information. We place QR codes directly onto all hard copy marketing materials to provide direct access to our site. CivicPlus, the integrated technology platform for local government, allows us to send out push notifications, publish to an online calendar, and post important route changes and information.

We share updates and information via Blackboard Connect as a mass communications and outreach system. Our large LCD screens at the Aberdeen and Edgewood bus shelters is where we post our system-wide map, important announcements, “how to ride” information, and more.

Our current annual events include Dump the Pump Day, Independence Day Parade, Military Appreciation Night at Ripken Stadium, and Car Free Day. Our community outreach includes Resource Fairs and Expos, and community fairs and festivals, all targeting a variety of demographics. Additionally, we promote workforce transportation via local employment agencies.

We welcome any feedback and suggestions on other ways to share our services.

1b. Why not use PSAs - which would not cost you anything?

Response:

As a county organization, we share news via public service announcements, press releases and media advisories. These, as well as any social media postings, come from the Harford County Public Information Office.

2. Are there any plans to extend service hours into the weekend? Why or why not? People still need to get to work or run errands on the weekend.

Response:

We are continuously working to enhance our service offerings. In January 2019, we added three hours daily to our fixed routes and demand response service. We also restructured the routes to reduce travel times and the need to transfer. Since then, the next highest requested enhancement has been to add weekend service.

The pandemic has impacted our ridership. To implement weekend service, we must meet grant performance measures (passenger trips per mile and hour, etc.), and secure additional buses and drivers. Increasing and extending hours into the weekend would require Harford County to obtain additional funding to meet local requirement funding to make available the extra service hours, which would increase mileage, staffing, fleet maintenance, and fuel costs, etc. This funding comes from federal and state grants with county match and needs to be justified by increased demand proven with ridership data.

Weekend service is still part of future planning, as we work to secure the necessary funding, staffing, and fleet to accommodate the service requirements. All new services must make a good faith effort to achieve the grant requirements of the funding.

3a. In the past when you did "test runs" on a Saturday, there was no notice to the riders that this was going to happen. Why?

Response:

In 2018, before the added hours and route upgrades, we were operating our buses in a training pattern for the drivers to learn the new routing. This exercise proved very beneficial as we transitioned into our major route upgrade in January 2019. Our test runs (trainings) were conducted for our associates only to ensure proper training was completed before our first day of new service. No passengers were traveling with us as we were still refining the service.

4. Additional Stop Requests

Response:

Comments were received asking for additional stops. These requests will be added for consideration in the upcoming Transportation Development Plan process.

5. Scheduling of the Hearing; comment received about access to the Public Hearing

Response:

Prior to the Public Hearings, we ensured any interested resident had transportation to and from the location as well as reasonable accommodations for anyone who arrived early. We will reevaluate the locations and times for future hearings and continue to provide practical transportation for those who may need assistance attending.

6. Americans with Disabilities Act; comment received about compliance

Response:

Our schedules and ride guides are available in large print as well as Spanish. Materials are available online at www.harfordtransitlink.org and in print. If clients need assistance, our dispatch team can assist via phone at 410-612-1620. We note that our materials are available in

alternate formats upon request. Fixed route buses have visual and auditory next stop information. All required postings on our transit fleet are dual language.

7. Same day service; comment received about access to same day service via Demand Response

Response:

Post pandemic, requests for this type of service exceeds capacity daily. We continue to make efforts to schedule as many trips as possible each day we operate.

For qualified ADA complimentary paratransit riders, we attempt to accommodate these requests based on space available. At this time, we require 24-hour notice, but recommend scheduling as soon as you know you will need transportation due to the daily high demand for this service.

8. Small Area Plan – Bel Air, Forest Hill, Fallston; comment received about increasing service in Bel Air area

Response:

A study has been completed to review the Bel Air Circular to improve service in that area. This information will be utilized in our upcoming Transportation Development Plan, which will reanalyze the impact on transit services and forecast the financial impact of this operational change. Due to low ridership on the Route 6, we have sought alternate service methods to control costs while providing potential improved service.

A micro transit service could be operated like Uber through an app or available for riders without smartphone technology to call into dispatch to schedule their trip.

9. School student and family usage; comment received about adding hours to accommodate students and families

Response:

The fixed routes operate until around 9:00p.m., M-F which may accommodate afterschool activities and other needs.

We have a travel training program, where our Rideshare Coordinator will come to a business or organization to perform a demo on how to ride our Harford Transit LINK system. This has been very successful with Harford Community College, where students gain knowledge of our routes and services. This outreach program could have success at area recreational centers and schools as well. Contact rideshare@harfordcountymd.gov for more information.

10. Can a school or employee badge be used for transit payments?

Response:

Token Transit, our current electronic fare payment provider, is working on the technology to use current chip-enabled badges to pay for fares. As of today, each badge type requires individual programming to be compatible. If this becomes viable, we will communicate this with our riders, area employers, and community partners.

11. What about moving to an electric-powered fleet? Or hybrid?

Response:

After extensive research, including working directly with an industry leader in electric bus technology, it has been determined that it is not viable in our rural service area. Hybrid technology is aligned with personal vehicles and has not been successful in public transit due to the nature of bus operations.

12. Is there direct service from Bel Air to Edgewood Train station?

Response:

Yes. The Route 2 Blue line provides direct access from Bel Air (boarding at the Harford Mall) to the Edgewood Train Station, without a need to transfer to a different bus.