

New MARC plan expands service in Frederick, Brunswick

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Frederick and Brunswick will get expanded train and bus services as part of a new Maryland Transit Administration plan to upgrade Maryland Area Rail Com-

muter operations.

The Maryland Area Rail Commuter (MARC) Growth and Transformation Plan, released Wednesday, aims to expand weekday service on the Brunswick line during the initial five-year phase.

The Brunswick line currently runs from Washington, D.C., to Martinsburg, W.Va. In Frederick County, it includes stops in Point of Rocks, Monocacy, Frederick and Brunswick.

In the five-year phase, peak weekday service is ex-

pected to increase to at least every hour with limited-stop service occurring every 30 minutes at select stations.

The route between Frederick and D.C. is also set to run twice per weekday during the off-peak period.

"Any extension of hours in either direction, either earlier or later, would help me because I do not have predictable hours," Mike Lillis of Lovettsville, Va., a commuter on the Brunswick Line, said. "There are a lot of days where I have to

take the Metro instead of the MARC because the last train out of Union Station back to Brunswick is at 7:25 p.m."

Trains on the Brunswick Line currently run three

(See **TRANSPORTATION** A12)

TRANSPORTATION

(Continued from A1)

times each morning and evening to service commuters traveling in and out of D.C.

Passenger Alex Dilger, who lives in Brunswick, said the limited time options can be problematic: "If something goes wrong with my kids in school, how am I supposed to get back home? It poses an issue, so having midday service to and from would be a lot better if they could make that happen."

A new bus service between Hagerstown and Monocacy on the Brunswick Line is also listed as an implementation from the five-year phase.

"Anytime that you're expanding the MARC service into Brunswick and Frederick, we see that as a big positive," said Dave Ziedelis, the executive director of Visit Frederick, the local tourism agency. "It's not only an opportunity for more visitors and tourists to come to Frederick but also for our residents as well."

The new MARC Plan is divided into a multi-phased implementation strategy spanning five years (FY2026-2030), 15 years (FY2031-2040) and an unconstrained phase (FY2041 and beyond).

Significant goals include increasing service frequencies, expanding hours and adding new destinations, all of which are meant to transform MARC from a commuter-tailored service to a more flexible, regional rail service.

"These recommendations are exactly what we have been recommending for the past several years," state Sen. Karen Lewis Young, former co-chair of the Maryland Transit Caucus, said. "It is a major milestone in transitioning MARC from a traditional commuter service into a modern market, needs-based-oriented rail system designed to meet the needs of Maryland's evolving workforce, communities and economy."



Staff file photo by Bill Green

A MARC commuter train pulls into the Brunswick rail station in February 2022.

The MARC train service comprises three lines — Brunswick, Camden and Penn — that provide direct access to D.C.

The Camden and Brunswick lines operate only on weekdays, while the Penn Line operates seven days a week.

According to a press release on Wednesday from the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA), ridership has grown significantly in 2025, increasing by 58% since January. Ridership on the Brunswick Line is up by 85%.

"Our riders have asked for more frequent and convenient service across the state," Maryland Transit Administrator Holly Arnold said in the press release. "The MARC Growth and Transformation Plan represents an important

step forward in a vision for a more connected and sustainable transportation network."

The 15-year phase will expand to weekend service between Frederick and D.C. and will extend select Brunswick Line trains to Alexandria, Virginia.

"If they did weekend service, we would probably use that fairly frequently to go into D.C. and go to the zoo or the Smithsonian, things like that," Lillis said. "Right now, the congestion is so terrible that we try to avoid the city at all costs, even on the weekends."

In the unconstrained phase, peak Brunswick Line service will begin operating in both directions. Additionally, off-peak and weekend frequencies will improve to an hour or better.

Brunswick Line service

will also extend to new stations at Hancock and Cumberland in Western Maryland during off-peak and weekend hours.

"Expanding the weekend service we see as a big positive," Ziedelis said. "That's when many visitors come because that's when they have time, so anytime that can be done, we see that as advantageous."

According to MTA's press release, the agency is able to begin early projects as a result of Maryland Gov. Wes Moore's investment in transportation.

Three million dollars will be put toward the planning and design of a new Silver Spring station track — one of the busiest stops on the Brunswick Line — and \$13.7 million will be invested in continued planning and design of the Penn-Camden

Connector in Baltimore.

The Growth and Transformation Plan currently has a total estimated capital cost of \$13.7 billion through the unconstrained phase.

In January 2023, the Maryland Transit Administration released the 2023 MARC Brunswick Line Expansion Study Technical Report as an evaluation of opportunities for expanded services on the Brunswick Line.

The study detailed constraints to service expansion, particularly due to MARC trains primarily operating on tracks owned by CSX Transportation (CSXT). Obstacles included needing CSXT approval for service changes and limited available right-of-way for additional tracks.

According to the 2025 MARC Plan, MTA held a se-

ries of meetings with CSXT, as well as Amtrak and other key stakeholders, to discuss MTA's service objectives and capacity constraints.

In addition to improvements on the Brunswick Line, the new MARC plan details expanded weekday and weekend operations to other lines, as well as an extension of Penn Line service.

"We feel Transit does a wonderful job here in Frederick County," Ziedelis said. "It definitely incrementally will be a positive for our tourism. Anytime we can increase weekday or weekend, that's certainly beneficial to our tourism and provides more access for individuals."