

washingtonpost.com

Md. Officials Plan To Expand MARC As Region Grows

N.Va. Service, Greater Capacity Sought

By Philip Rucker
Washington Post Staff Writer
Tuesday, September 25, 2007; B01

Maryland transportation officials outlined yesterday an ambitious expansion of the MARC commuter train service that would extend it across the Potomac River into Northern Virginia and more than triple the system's capacity in the next three decades.

The plan calls for steadily increasing the number of riders from about 30,000 to 100,000 a day by 2035 to accommodate growth in the Baltimore-Washington corridor, part of which will be fueled by jobs coming with military base realignments. Improvements include building stations, increasing peak-time departures, expanding weekend service and providing connections to more Metro stations.

State officials said the plan would transform a rail system used almost exclusively at rush hours by District-bound commuters to a mass transit service more like Metro.

"It lays out a path to gradually transform MARC over a 30-year period of time into something that resembles public transit," said Henry M. Kay, deputy administrator of the Maryland Transit Administration, which oversees MARC. "Rather than being a kind of marginal service that provides a lot of value for a very small number of people, it becomes comparable to I-95. There's a lot of capacity over a very long day."

MARC trains run on tracks owned by Amtrak and CSX, and the railroads operate the commuter trains under contract with the state.

The expansion plan, first reported in yesterday's Baltimore Sun, is designed to increase mass transit for the Fort Meade area in western Anne Arundel County, which will add as many as 22,000 jobs in the coming decade because of the base realignment and closure process, Kay said.

MARC's three train lines end at Washington's Union Station, but service would be extended to Northern Virginia by 2020. Kay said MARC trains would continue past Union Station on lines used by VRE, stopping at L'Enfant Plaza, the Pentagon and Crystal City, home to many defense industry jobs.

"This is spectacular for the region," said Ed Cohen, president of the Transit Riders Action Council, an advocacy group of MARC commuters. The additional stops would allow many riders to avoid transferring to Metro at Union Station.

"It will completely redistribute the ridership in the D.C. system, making it far more efficient and less crowded," he said.

By 2015, the Penn Line would continue north to Newark, Del., providing a connection to Philadelphia's

Advertisement

The advertisement features a vertical stack of four HP printers on the left side, each connected to a horizontal line. To the right of the printers, the text reads: "MASTER IT with HP Web Jetadmin and Universal Print Drive". At the bottom right corner of the advertisement, the HP logo is displayed.

mass transit line.

More immediate improvements, to be completed next summer, include adding afternoon and evening trains and initiating weekend service on the Penn Line. The line, which runs between Perryville, northeast of Aberdeen, and Union Station through Baltimore's Penn Station, is MARC's most heavily traveled. MARC would also add a midday train on the Camden Line, which runs between downtown Baltimore and Union Station.

State officials have not put a price tag on the plan, which could cost several billion dollars. Maryland is facing a \$1.7 billion budget shortfall, and Transportation Secretary [John D. Porcari](#) said the state has a \$40 billion backlog in unfunded transportation projects.

Still, Porcari said, expanding MARC is a top priority for Gov. [Martin O'Malley](#) (D).

"Governor O'Malley directed us to draft a very ambitious plan to connect the two great metropolitan areas, Washington and Baltimore, through better MARC service," Porcari said yesterday. "As we look to increase transportation revenues, after we take care of our system preservation needs, this would be one of the first calls on this."

Kay said the state is considering private development of stations and parking lots to generate revenue for the expansion.

"This is a very ambitious concept, and we don't have money in the bank to pay for it. But we have a reasonable expectation that these are cost-effective ideas that would bring a lot of transportation benefit, and we'll find the money as the years go by," Kay said.

Kay said state officials have discussed their plan with Amtrak and CSX.

"They're willing to talk," Kay said of the railroads. "Ultimately, these are their railroads, and they have to be willing to do this."

Post a Comment

[View all comments](#) that have been posted about this article.

You must be logged in to leave a comment. [Log in](#) | [Register](#)

Comments that include profanity or personal attacks or other inappropriate comments or material will be removed from the site. Additionally, entries that are unsigned or contain "signatures" by someone other than the actual author will be removed. Finally, we will take steps to block users who violate any of our posting standards, terms of use or privacy policies or any other policies governing this site. Please review the [full rules governing commentaries and discussions](#). You are fully responsible for the content

that you post.

© 2007 The Washington Post Company

Ads by Google

Baltimore Map

Feel like a local, wherever you go. Find local results in your area.
Maps.Live.com

Walk Home from Penn Stat.

Affordable Condos in Mount Vernon 4 Blocks Walk to Penn Station
www.ten14condos.com

Washington Dc Metro Jobs

Land Your Dream Job Today. Search 1.6 Million Job Listings Apply Now.
www.wizmall.com