Paratransit Policy Review & Implementation – Work Plan

1. Purpose and Background

Purpose

Conduct a review of paratransit policies and services in Howard County and make recommendations for changes to begin to be implemented in mid-2019.

This policy review is focused on paratransit services provided by the Regional Transportation Agency of Central Maryland (RTA), but also considers paratransit services provided by other agencies/organizations.

Paratransit services refer to:

i)   service to persons with disabilities that complements RTA fixed-route bus service (also referred to as complementary ADA service, or just ADA paratransit).

ii)   service to seniors and persons with disabilities to parts of Howard County not served by RTA fixed-route bus service (also referred to as "general paratransit".

iii)   specialized transit services provided by a variety of non-profit and for-profit agencies/organizations, such as the Arc of Howard County, Columbia Association, Humanim and Neighbor ride.

Background

Howard County adopted a Transit Development Plan (TDP) in May 2018. The TDP explored paratransit service in some detail and made preliminary recommendations but recommended further review and a community engagement process prior to implementing policy and service changes.

Howard County implemented changes to the RTA's paratransit fare structure in July 2018.

Howard County completed a Non-Profit Organizations Transit Funding Study in January 2018

2. Paratransit Policy Implementation Objectives

- Expand, extend, direct and improve paratransit services to benefit the largest number of and most needy riders.

- Direct paratransit services to where they are most needed.

- Use paratransit budgets to benefit the largest number of and most needy riders.

- Minimize impacts on riders that would be negatively impacted by policy changes.

3. Data/information needs

RTA Mobility Services

General Paratransit (GPT)

- GPT service is provided only in Howard County, serving residents that are ages 60 and older and disabled adults ages 18 to 59.
- Reservations must be made between two and seven business days in advance.
- 1 roundtrip per day
- Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
- $3.00 for a one-way trip.
- GPT riders ride free on fixed routes
- Medical appointments, senior centers, social service agencies, employment and education. Medical trips to select hospitals in Baltimore are provided Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.
- 253 square mile service area (not including medical trips to Baltimore)
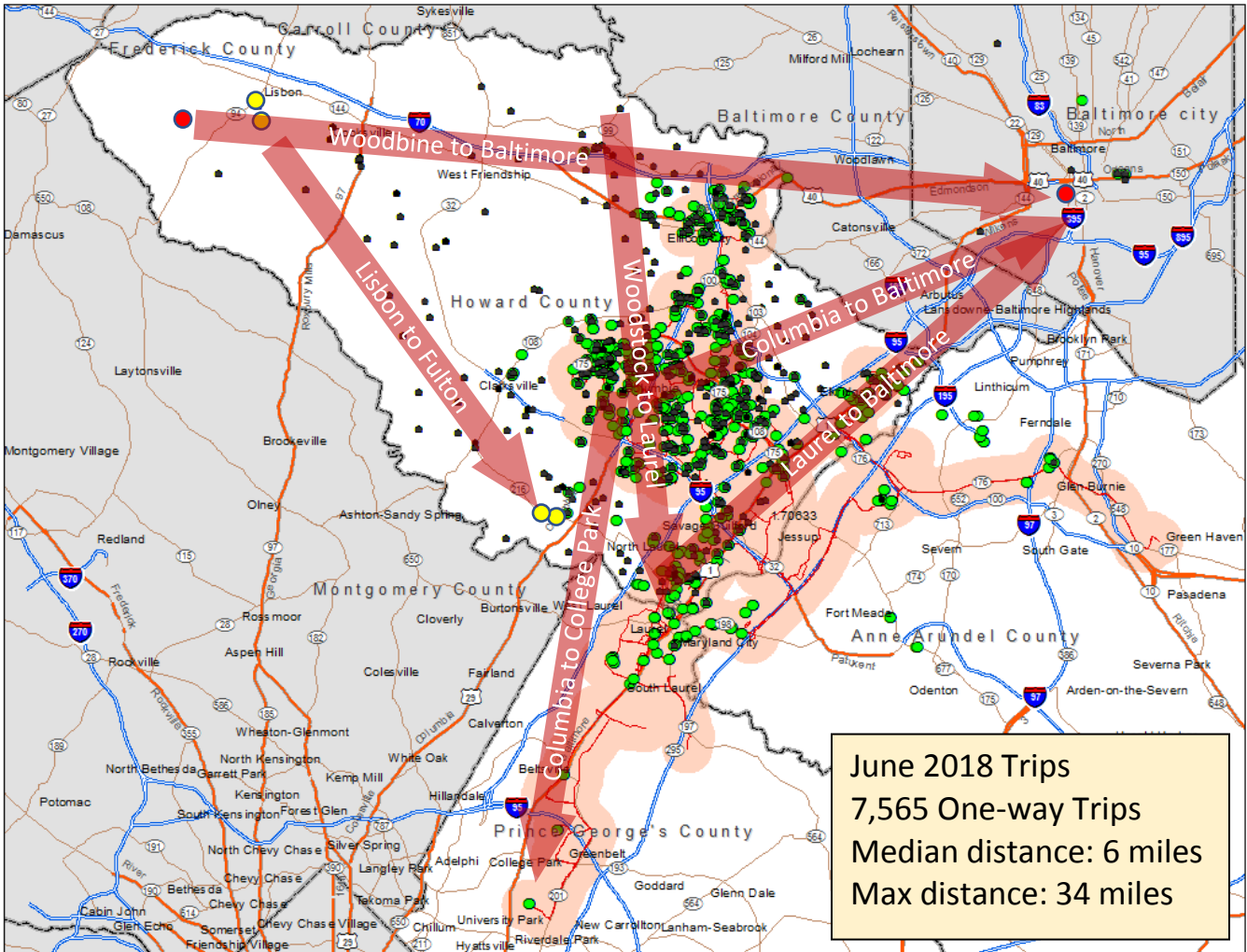
ADA Complementary Paratransit

- Required under ADA
- ¾ mile transit shed
- Must be certified ADA
- Same service span as fixed routes
- $3.00 one-way trip, Howard County; $4.00 one-way trip, other counties
- ADA riders ride free on fixed routes
- 128 square mile service area (includes parts of Anne Arundel County, Howard County, Northern Prince George's County, and the City of Laurel)
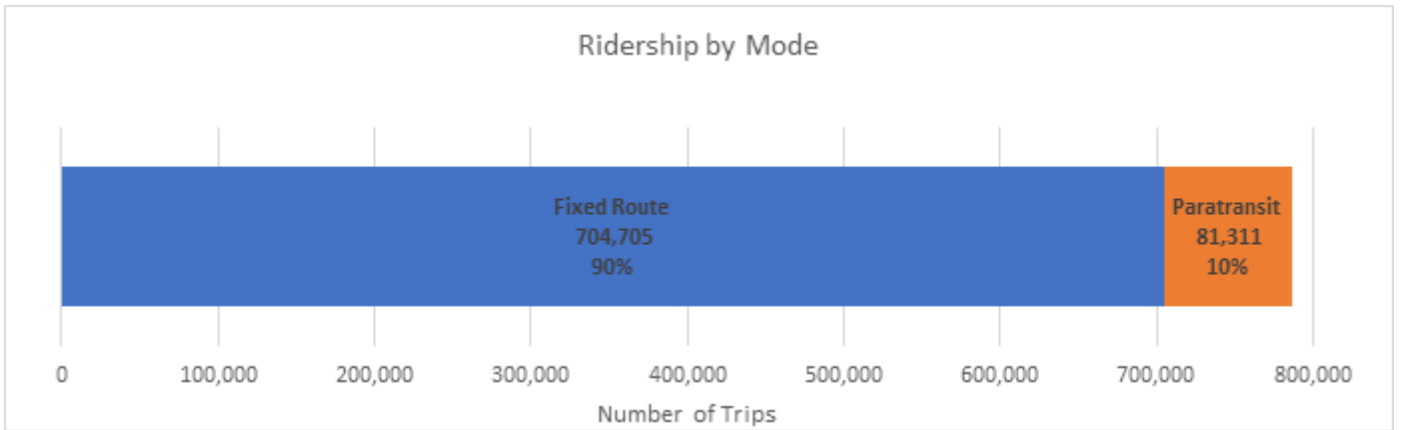
2,500 – 3,000 Registered Riders

800 – 850 Regular Riders

527 Riders June 2018 (45% ADA; 55% GPT)
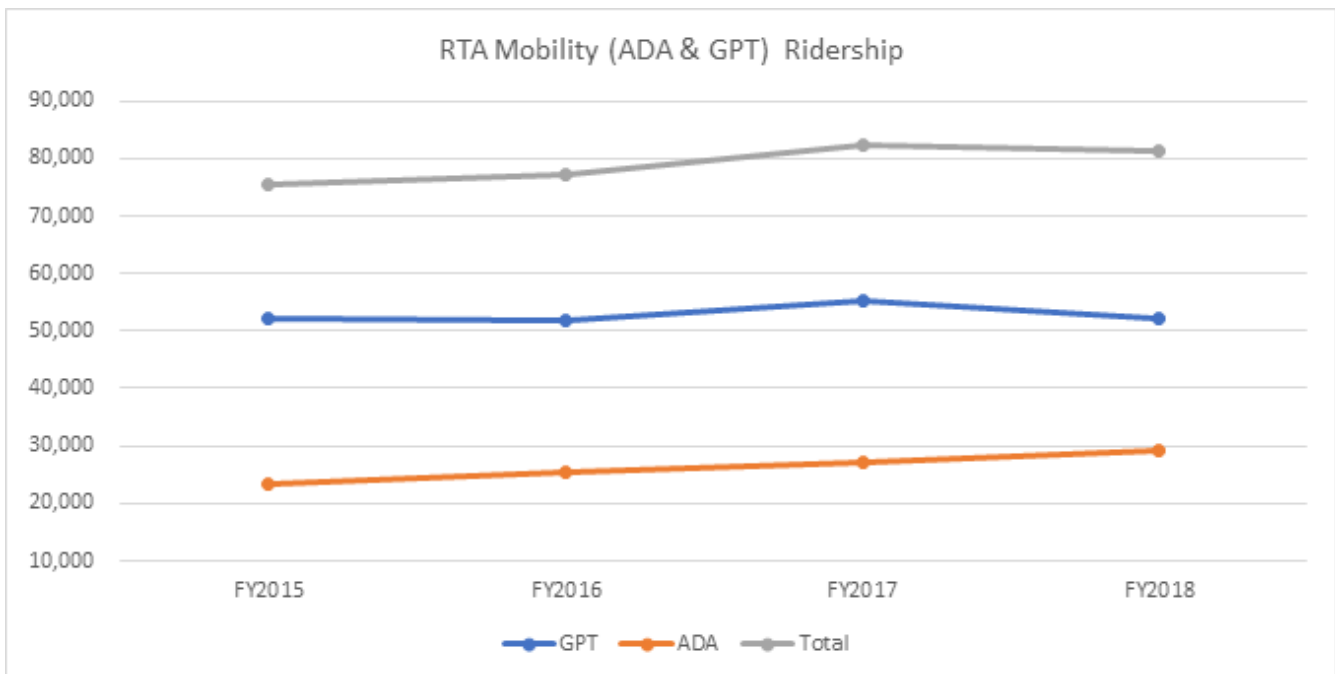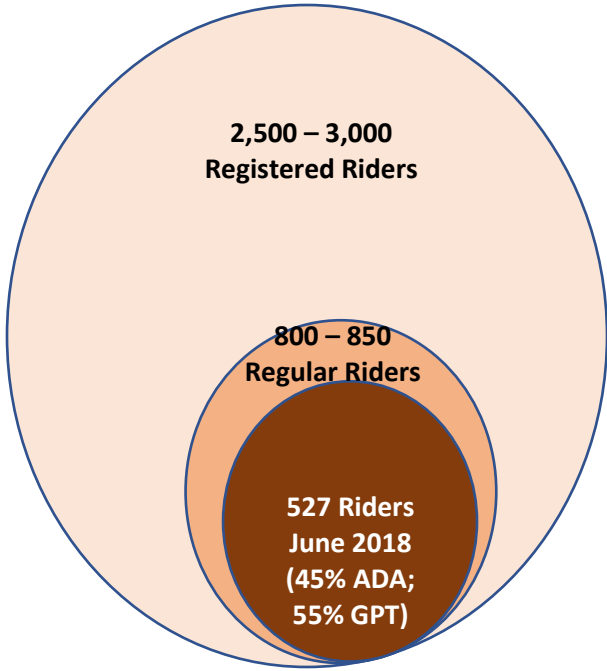
Top 5 Destinations	
Rank	**Location**
1	**Ellicott/Miller Senior Center**
2	**Davita Dialysis – Columbia**
3	**North Laurel Community/Senior Center**
4	**Bain Senior Center**
5	**Howard Community College**

Woodbine to Baltimore

Lisbon to Fulton

Woodstock to Laurel

Columbia to Baltimore

Laurel to Baltimore

Columbia to College Park

June 2018 Trips
7,565 One-way Trips
Median distance: 6 miles
Max distance: 34 miles

● ADA Trip ● GPT Trip ● GPT Trip - Woodbine to Baltimore ● GPT Trip - Lisbon to Fulton

ADA ¾ mile Transit Shed

Average Cost per Trip

	Fixed Route	Paratransit
Cost	~$12.00	~$47.00

(Bar chart, y-axis: $0.00 to $50.00)

Total Paratransit: $3.8m (31%)

Pie chart:
- General Paratransit: $2,361,057 — 19%
- ADA Paratransit: $1,476,387 — 12%
- Fixed Route: $8,698,849 — 69%

Ridership by Mode

- Fixed Route: 704,705 — 90%
- Paratransit: 81,311 — 10%

x-axis: Number of Trips (0 to 800,000)
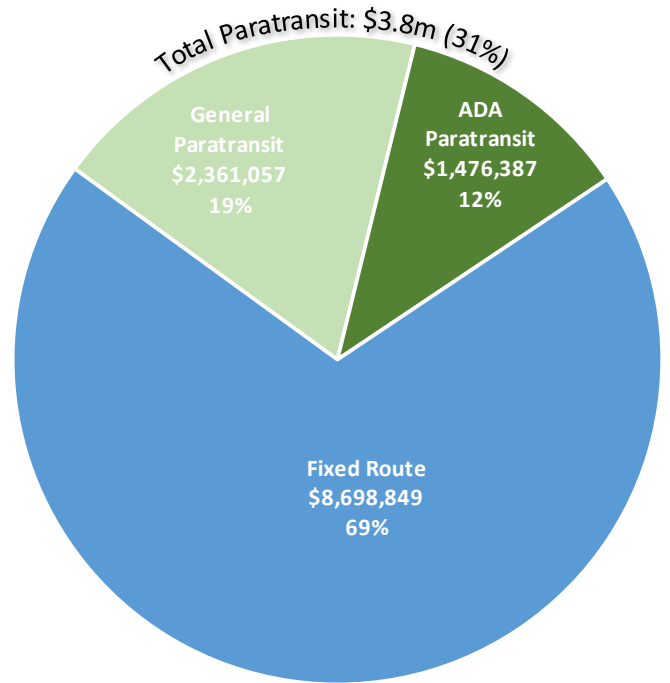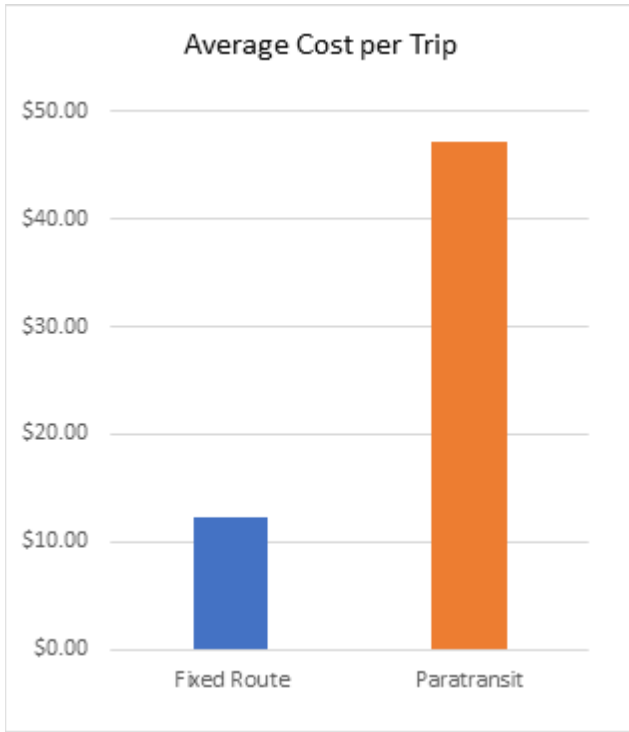
	Howard County	Allegany County	Anne Arundel County	Calvert County	Carroll County	Cecil County	Charles County	Dorchester County	Frederick County	Harford County	Lower Shore Tri County Council	Queen Anne's County	St. Mary's County
Services Provided													
Fixed Route	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES
Deviated Fixed Route	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO
ADA Complementary	YES	YES	YES	YES	N/A	N/A	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	N/A	YES
Paratransit	SENIORS & DISABLED	SENIORS & DISABLED	SENIORS & DISABLED	GENERAL PUBLIC	GENERAL PUBLIC	GENERAL PUBLIC	SENIORS & DISABLED	SENIORS & DISABLED	SENIORS & DISABLED	SENIORS & DISABLED	GENERAL PUBLIC	SENIORS & DISABLED	SENIORS & DISABLED
Operating Expenses													
Fixed Route	$ 8,698,849	$ 997,833	$1,980,723	$ 898,126	$ 356,163	$1,173,993	$4,923,024	$ 810,906	$ 4,123,780	$2,426,068	$3,563,275	$ 714,611	$ 1,758,424
Paratransit	$ 3,839,183	$ 881,697	$2,466,559	$ 390,522	$1,966,744	$ 334,562	$1,426,513	$ 283,436	$ 1,627,320	$1,077,937	$2,694,745	$ 253,115	$ 396,646
% of Expenses	31%	47%	55%	30%	85%	22%	22%	26%	28%	31%	43%	26%	18%
Total Expenses	$12,538,032	$1,879,530	$4,447,282	$1,288,648	$2,322,907	$1,508,555	$6,349,537	$1,094,342	$5,751,100	$3,504,005	$6,258,020	$967,726	$2,155,070
Trips													
Fixed Route	704,705	268,957	179,748	114,636	16,265	101,251	871,161	90,473	612,813	315,962	345,239	17,252	336,683
Paratransit	81,311	22,558	112,056	13,975	118,718	25,660	37,635	24,369	65,105	43,307	48,859	9,672	25,890
Total Trips	786,016	291,515	291,804	128,611	134,983	126,911	908,796	114,842	677,918	359,269	394,098	26,924	362,573

SENIOR TRANSPORTATION

Neighbor Ride (NR)

- Door-to-door service to seniors that are 60 years of age and older.
- Must be ambulatory and be able to get in and out of a vehicle independently.
- Schedule at least 3 business days in advance.
- Service provided daily depending on availability of volunteer drivers.
- Maximum of 12 rides per rider per month.
- Serves Howard County and up to 35 miles from pick-up location.
- Registration fee of $20.
- Fares:
  - < 3 miles - $8.00
  - 3 – 4.99 miles - $10.00
  - 5 – 6.99 miles - $12.00
  - 7 – 9.99 miles - $16.00
  - 10 – 14.99 miles - $22.00
  - 15 – 19.99 miles - $28.00
  - 20 – 35 miles - $36.00

- Trip Types:
  - Religious services
  - Classes
  - Volunteer Activities
  - Social outings
  - Medical appointments
  - Shopping
  - No trips to airports, cruise terminals, Amtrak stations, or gaming venues
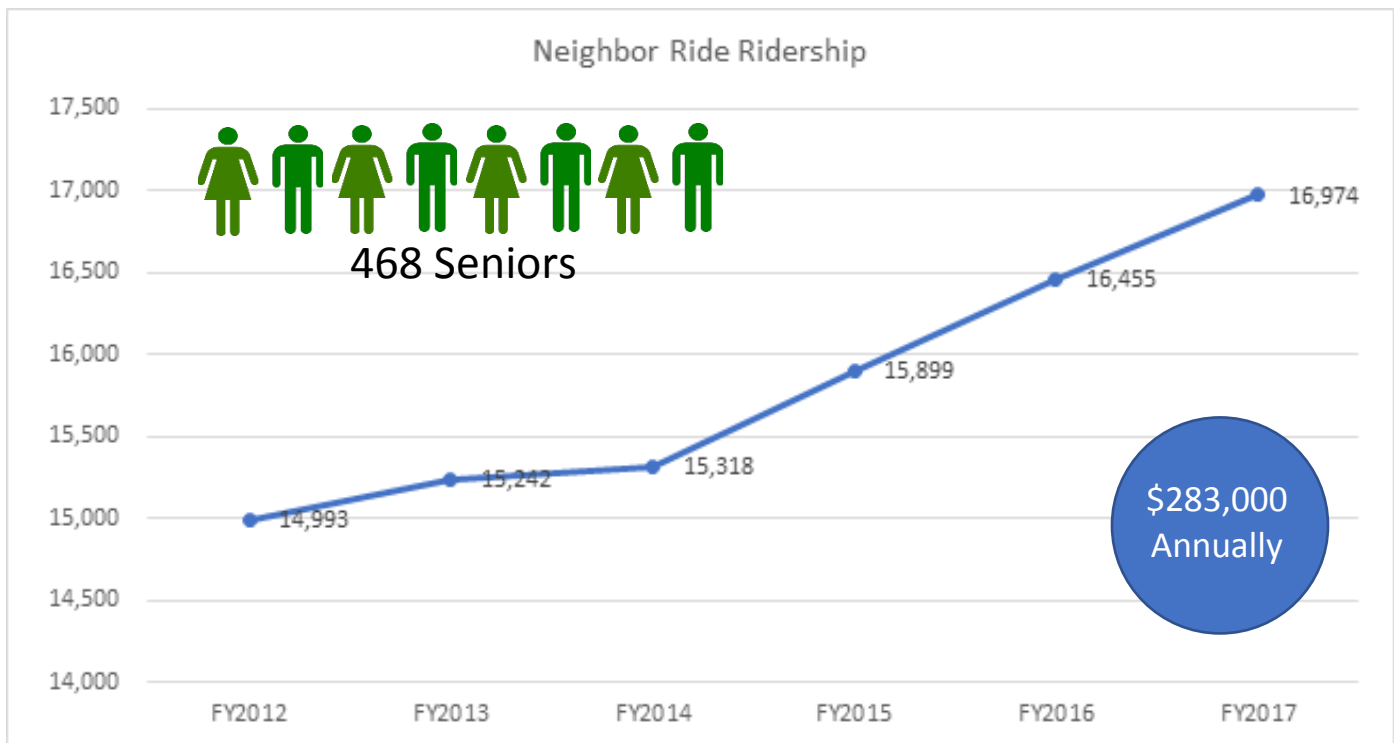
SPECIALIZED TRANSPORTATION

- Individualized transportation that goes beyond what is available through RTA Mobility. Caters to the special needs of the riders that may have medical and behavioral needs.

- Howard County Non-Profit Organizations Transit Funding Study
  - ARC of Howard County – Transportation to day and employment programs
  - Athelas Institute - Transportation to day programs, employment, recreation, and medical.
  - Humanim – Transportation to employment sites and agency programs.
  - Winter Growth – Transportation to medical, shopping, and recreation.

- Client needs/challenges identified through the Non-Profit Organizations Transit Funding Study
  - Aides to ensure safe trips
  - Specific pickup and drop off times; Not 30-minute window
  - Specific training for drivers that can monitor and identify changes in passenger behavior
  - Drivers or aides that can go into homes or facilities to assist people to be transported
  - Unable to wait for a bus unattended, may wander off
  - Difficulty in scheduling and remember trip reservations
  - Difficulty making transfers

	The Arc of Howard County	Athelas Institute, Inc.	Humanim	Winter Growth	Totals
Number of Riders	187	320	190-220	n/a	727
Passenger Trips	61,700	173,394	95,077	8,274	338,445
Number of Vehicles	24	44	27	5	100
Operating Costs	$534,831	$1,370,963	$903,567	$182,948	$2,992,309
Operating Cost per Trip	$8.67	$7.91	$9.50	$22.11	$8.84

4. Policy Options

The following options were identified in the TDP (see attached page 5-37 for more detail). Other options may emerge from this work effort.

1. Incentivize paratransit riders to use fixed route service:

2. Increase fares in Howard County, implement a fare in Anne Arundel County.

3. Raise senior age (from 60 to 65)

4. Rider education — provide travel training in how to use the fixed-route system.

5. Service adjustments.

6. Use taxi vouchers/subsidies in lieu of providing RTA trips. Use on-demand /taxis for ridesharing.

7. Improve service productivity (RTA operation).

5. Schedule

July 5 2018	Review work plan
July 10	Present work plan to TPAG
July	Outreach to other agencies/organizations
August to December/January 2019 Sep 29 Accessible Transportation Forum*	Paratransit Workgroup meetings
January/February 2019	Paratransit Workgroup recommendations
February to May 2019	Recommendations review/public outreach
June/July 2019	Implement recommendations

* Marian Vessels CMRT project