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Leggett, Sarbanes, Kittleman, Berliner, and Coalition of Supporters Launch Naming Contest for Bus Rapid Transit System

Today, Montgomery County Executive Ike Leggett launched the start of a naming contest to brand the County's Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system, which in the next few years is expected to transform the transportation alternatives available in the County. A broad coalition of supporters attended the event along US 29, which is expected to be the first BRT in the State of Maryland and could serve both Montgomery and Howard counties.

"The future economic vitality of our County depends on increased transportation investment to accommodate more residents and to encourage job growth, and that is why in March, I recommended \$6.5 million in my capital budget to plan and design a high-quality BRT on US29," said Leggett. "I am committed to putting practical, cost-effective transit options on the ground in the near term. One of my highest priorities is to provide world-class transportation options for all our residents who live and work throughout the County that will provide congestion relief and also unlock Montgomery County's economic potential."

Leggett especially thanked the County's federal delegation for their efforts in securing a \$10 million TIGER (Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery) grant to design and implement BRT on US 29. Howard County received \$2 million in funding from the Maryland Department of Transportation for BRT planning efforts.

"This federal grant to advance Montgomery County's transportation infrastructure goals through bus rapid transit is well-placed and I was proud to work for its successful delivery," said Senator Ben Cardin, a senior member of the Senate Environment and Public Works Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee. "It expands the capacity of one of the main arteries in one of the country's busiest corridors for commuter travel, where the sheer number of vehicles on the road can have a dramatic effect on trip times. It also improves the economic development potential for several localities along the Route 29 corridor, better positioning Maryland communities to attract public and private investment. It also is a prime location to illustrate the notable benefits of bus rapid transit to other parts of Maryland looking for new ways to keep local economies and residents' daily lives moving full speed ahead."

"Public transit is a public good, and for residents in Montgomery County, it's a vital connection to major employers," said Congressman John Sarbanes, who attended the event. "I was proud to help secure funding for Montgomery County's new Bus Rapid Transit line, and will continue to fight for more investment in public transportation and infrastructure."

Montgomery County is in discussions with Howard County to make the first BRT line in the network along US 29 a bi-county service.

"Local jurisdictions can't solve transportation issues alone. Solutions require regional cooperation and that is why we welcome the chance to participate with Montgomery County and the state of Maryland in developing BRT along Route 29," said Howard County Executive Allan Kittleman. "More than 13,000 Howard County residents drive daily along this corridor and

that number will certainly grow. Building more roads will not solve our transportation problem and isn't financially viable, which is why projects such as the BRT must be a priority."

BRT will be a network of fast, reliable, train-like buses that will move more people per lane compared to cars, with each bus taking as many as 90 cars off the road, get travelers out of traffic and help residents reach new jobs created along its corridors. BRT often has its own lane on busy roads, makes fewer stops than a traditional bus and is an environmentally-friendly choice that reduces greenhouse gases.

"I am committed to a world-class Bus Rapid Transit system in Montgomery County. Marketing and branding have been critical to attracting riders to these systems in other jurisdictions," said Montgomery County Councilmember and T&E Chair Roger Berliner. "I am pleased that the County is moving forward with this naming effort. It will be important to the success not just of Bus Rapid Transit on Route 29, but on Route 355, Veirs Mill Road and other corridors as we develop a comprehensive, world-class BRT network."

"I am glad that the Route 29 planning process is moving forward," said Montgomery County Councilmember Hans Riemer. "We know from transit planning research that if we provide reliable and frequent bus service on Route 29, ridership will increase significantly. I am ready to support the infrastructure upgrades that may be necessary in order to provide a higher level of service. Let's get this moving now."

The naming contest will be held from November 17 through January 20 to help brand the BRT system. The public will be asked to select one of three possible names – Flash, Rapid or Swift – and will automatically be entered to win prizes through random drawings. Voting will occur online on MCDOT's newly released BRT website: GetOnBoardBRT.com or by texting MOCOBRT to 77453 and then following instructional prompts.

Naming the system is a vital next step as MCDOT moves forward on BRT planning and design.

"We encourage everyone in the County who's concerned about traffic to Get on Board! with BRT -- and the first step is participating in the naming contest," said MCDOT Director Al Roshdieh. "MCDOT is proud to be leading development of the BRT transit system that gets cars off the road, enhancing both riders' and drivers' daily commutes, makes our transportation network more efficient, and provides more reliable transit options for our residents."

To promote the naming contest, the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) will be holding events through January, including:

- Participate in the Montgomery County Thanksgiving Parade on Saturday, November 19, starting at 10 a.m.
- Hold special promotions at the Silver Spring Transit Center on Thursday, November 17, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and Rockville Town Square on Sunday, November 20, 12 to 4 p.m.

Get more contest details and information about BRT online at GetOnBoardBRT.com.

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