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- Wireless
- Home
- Local News
- U.S. & World
- Weather
- Traffic
- Sports
- Business
- Consumer
- Politics
- Healthwatch
- Entertainment
- Food
- Pets
- Water Cooler
- Seen on WJZ
- Riding Out The Recession
- Environment Watch
- Morning Edition
- Manic Monday
- Weekend Morning Edition
- Contests
- Links & Numbers
- Lottery
- Horoscopes
- Community Calendar
- It's Academic
- On Time
- Your New Home
- Lifestyle
- Beauty & Style
- Family
- New Baby
- Collections
- Video
- Slideshows
- Blogs
- Other Ways to Get News
- Newsletters & Alerts
- News Feeds
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Commuters Look For More Transportation Funding



Reporting **Suzanne Collins**

BALTIMORE (WJZ) — A new report says Maryland is only second to New York for the longest commute—more than an hour for most workers.

Suzanne Collins reports money is coming from Washington to improve public transportation, and some hope more will be on the way.

Baltimorean Ben Larson takes the MARC train to Washington, D.C. Then he uses the Metro to get to his job. The commute takes about an hour-and-a-half every morning.

But he says in recent months the trains are more crowded and less dependable. He hopes the state decides to put more money into public transportation, so he doesn't have to drive.

"By car my commute takes longer, it's more expensive and is a much greater hassle," said Larson.

A deputy secretary at MTA says it's obvious Marylanders are using public transportation because the numbers of riders on all modes is the highest it's ever been.

"That number is going up. That 101 million is the largest number ever in the history of the MTA to ride transit in a year," said Henry Kay with the MTA.

The economic stimulus money that is coming right now will be for improvements at train stations, like refurbishing trains and replacing buses. But it will not actually increase the number of rides.

But the investment has groups that support public transportation excited that the trend will continue.

"Saving consumers time and money, cutting our air pollution, decreasing our oil dependence and helping to drive economic growth," said Kristi Horvath, spokesperson from the Maryland Public Interest Group.

The group put out a report on plans for a state in which people can get to and from without every getting behind the wheel of a car. Baltimore's first project would be the Red Line to get people east and west much quicker than the current 50-minute bus ride.

The MTA says that it could be under construction as soon as 2013.

Other proposals include extending the Green Line from Hopkins to Martin State Airport, and running another rail through the center of the city to help people from Towson to the Inner Harbor.

The report, released by MaryPIRG, says the number of miles driven by Marylanders jumped 50 percent since the '80s.

The Greater Baltimore Committee and other business groups are also pushing for more mass transit.

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Click to enlarge Many Baltimore residents take the train to Washington, D.C.

CBS 1 of 1



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