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FOR RELEASE MONDAY P.M.
April 5, 1971

The U. S. Department of Transportation today made a technical study grant of \$150,000 to the Metropolitan Transit Authority of Baltimore, Maryland.

The grant, made by the Department's Urban Mass Transportation Administration, will help the MTA develop both short and long range mass transit planning and improve their service to Baltimore bus riders. The technical study will result in a plan for "the unified and coordinated operation of Baltimore's mass transit system," according to Secretary of Transportation John A. Volpe.

When completed and approved, the study also will make MTA eligible for full two-thirds funding of their capital transit improvements. Last April, MTA received a \$14.8 million UMTA grant to cover fifty-percent of the costs of purchasing the privately-owned Baltimore Transit Company, buying 370 new transit buses and making other related improvements.

The remaining one-sixth UMTA funding, which totals \$4.9 million, will go to MTA after UMTA approves the completed technical study, bringing the Federal contribution to more than \$19 million. Local contributions will cover the remaining one-third costs.

Local contributions of \$75,000 in cash and staff services also will be added to UMTA's \$150,000 technical study grant, bringing that total project cost to \$225,000. The technical study will provide MTA with a transit improvement program for the urban area which is expected to cover a five to 10 year period.

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"Since construction of a rapid transit system in Baltimore is still years in the future, improvements to the bus service are urgently needed to meet present public transit requirements," according to UMTA Administrator Carlos C. Villarreal. "Keeping and attracting bus riders now will ensure potential transit riders for the new system. "

Part of the technical study will be devoted to making plans for transition of bus routes to feeder routes when new rapid transit lines eventually are constructed.

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For further information, contact the UMTA Office of Public Affairs at (202) 426-4043.