

# U.S. Department of Transportation news:



Office of Public Affairs

Washington, D.C. 20590

FOR PM RELEASE MONDAY  
April 10, 1978

UMTA 20-78  
Contact: Deborah Noxon  
Tel: 202-426-4043

## **\$12 MILLION DOT GRANT AIDS WASHINGTON AREA RAIL COMMUTERS**

Washington area rail commuter service will be substantially upgraded as a result of an \$11,892,080 capital improvement grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation.

The Maryland Department of Transportation will use the Federal funds to purchase and rehabilitate 25 used air-conditioned rail coaches, 10 used rail diesel cars, five used locomotives, and needed improvements at 10 commuter rail stations in the Washington area.

In announcing the grant, DOT's Urban Mass Transportation Administrator Richard S. Page said, "The Washington area rail commuter has undergone all manner of difficulty in recent years because of the poor conditions and overcrowding of the equipment.

"This grant will enable the Maryland DOT to provide much better and expanded service to existing commuters and to attract additional commuters out of their cars." "Page added.

B&O commuter service between Baltimore and Washington, D.C., and Brunswick, Maryland and Washington has seriously deteriorated in the last few years because of aging equipment, slow running speeds, insufficient seating and inadequate or non-existent parking facilities. Ridership

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on these lines has, nevertheless, increased more than 60 percent in the last three years.

The vehicle rehabilitation program will enable B&O to increase seating capacity by 50 to 70 percent and permit potential service increases in the future.

Moreover, the project proposes to provide greater accessibility to semi - and non-ambulatory elderly and handicapped persons who cannot use current commuter service.

At least one train on each route will be equipped with a lift device to accommodate passengers using wheelchairs. Page noted that, "the wheelchair lift equipment is the first in the nation to be installed on rail commuter cars."

Minor improvements -- parking lot repaving and lighting, sidewalk repairs and construction of bicycle storage facilities -- will be made at 10 stations, four on the Baltimore-to-Washington line and six on the Brunswick-to-Washington line.

The project also includes engineering and design funds for major capital improvements at eight additional stations in the system.

The local 20 percent share of funds for this project are being provided by the state of Maryland and Anne Arundel, Frederick, Howard, Montgomery and Prince Georges Counties.

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A local source for additional information is Mr. Charles Smith, Maryland Department of Transportation, P.O. Box 8755, Baltimore-Washington International Airport, Maryland 21240, (301) 787-7337. (MD-03-0009).

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