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Press Release

The City of Aberdeen hosts local, state and federal decision makers at the Aberdeen Train Station to discuss proposed upgrades

Aberdeen, MD –

On Wednesday, September 1, 2021, Mayor Patrick L. McGrady hosted key local, state and federal decision makers to discuss the Aberdeen Transit Oriented Development area. The project, located at 18 East Bel Air Avenue, will modernize and improve the Aberdeen Amtrak/MARC Station and surrounding areas by providing a safe and efficient intermodal transportation hub, constructing a new pedestrian underpass connecting East and West Bel Air Avenue by removing the physical barrier of the pedestrian overpass, and improve handicap accessibility for commuters, visitors, and the community.

The biggest visible change will be the removal of the current outdated pedestrian overpass, constructed in 1982 which is challenging to use and bifurcates the City. Instead, the plan calls for a modern and accessible underpass, connecting both sides of the station and allowing residents comfortable and safe passage.

Mayor McGrady and the Aberdeen City Council are seeking support from all their government partners and will be working to secure resources to make this project a reality.

The Mayor thanked all in attendance including staff from the offices of Senator Chris Van Hollen, Congressman Andy Harris, and Congressman Dutch Ruppersberger, the Harford County Delegation, Harford County Councilmembers, Amtrak, Maryland Department of Transportation, Maryland Department of Planning, Harford County Office of Community and Economic Development, Harford County Chamber of Commerce, Aberdeen's Main Street and Economic Development Commission, and the U.S. Army Garrison Aberdeen Proving Ground leadership.

Mayor McGrady stated, *"It is important to bring you to the site to see why this project is so critically needed. I have no doubts that after our briefing and walking tour, all attendees will agree that this project is necessary and will add significant value to the region. The project will bring quality jobs to the area and provide residents and visitors an improved commuting*

experience. The vision for this upgraded intermodal transportation hub will give commuters an attractive option to get off the road and onto a train or bus.”

“Improvements to the Aberdeen Amtrak/MARC Station and surrounding areas would make the train station more safe, efficient, and accessible for riders across Maryland while increasing economic opportunities for residents and businesses in Aberdeen. In line with this project, I was proud to help secure federal resources for Maryland transit within the Senate-passed Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, including provisions I authored to remove harmful infrastructure of the past in order to reunite neighborhoods as well as funding to remove barriers to transportation by making our transit systems more accessible for individuals with disabilities. As we work toward implementing the Build Back Better agenda, I will keep fighting to bring meaningful investments to projects like this throughout our state to spur economic growth in Maryland,” **said Senator Chris Van Hollen.**

Congressman Dutch Ruppersberger stated, *“If we want more commuters to opt for mass transit, it must be safe, affordable and convenient and this project certainly aims to accomplish these goals,”* Congressman Ruppersberger said. *“I look forward to working to secure the federal resources needed to get projects like this off the ground and re-investing in the aging infrastructure in communities across the Second District.”*

Congressman Andy Harris stated, *“I always like to have my team attend these meetings to keep me up to date on the happenings across our district. This is exciting news for Aberdeen, which will modernize this new Main Street Maryland Community. I look forward to lending a hand where possible.”*

BACKGROUND ON MEETING and ISSUE: In 2012, the City of Aberdeen worked with the State of Maryland to create the Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Master Plan and district, developing a form-based code, zoning uses were expanded to allow mixed uses, and the hard work of rebuilding Aberdeen’s downtown was elevated. Since then, Aberdeen has taken many steps to increase opportunities for small business and encourage community building, with the 2020 approval of Aberdeen as a Maryland Main Street community. The multi-modal train station is the busiest bus stop in Harford County and is controlled by a variety of different government and quasi-government entities, including Maryland Department of Transportation-SHA, Maryland Transit Administration, and Amtrak.

In 2012, during the TOD work effort, the City worked with the Maryland Transit Administration on the Aberdeen Station Square Feasibility Study to improve the Aberdeen Train Station for transit riders and our community. The proposed phased improvements to the Aberdeen MARC/Amtrak Train Station include: 1) Removal of the pedestrian overpass that is a barrier separating Aberdeen’s Main Street, Bel Air Avenue from the residential and business community. This concrete behemoth structure built in 1982 makes it difficult for Aberdeen’s vulnerable “East Side” community to cross the rail line where they have limited access to fresh foods, job opportunities, and the rest of the City. This structure has effectively segregated Aberdeen into two distinct socially diverse areas and needs to be addressed. 2) Construction of a pedestrian underpass under the Amtrak/MARC line to make it safer and easier for everyone to

access the rail and move from one site to the other. 3) New transit waiting areas that are handicapped accessible to ensure equitable access for everybody traveling to and from Aberdeen. 4) Terraced plazas to improve the accessibility of the Train Station area. The proposed improvements will enhance this major transportation hub and asset for the City of Aberdeen, Harford County, and State of Maryland.

For background and overview of the Station Square Improvement project please view the attached video presentation:

<https://youtu.be/1OqnF39KfaM>

Photographs taken at the event can be viewed:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/147B3ZnoThzLA53Apcv8zE9FFjyH7Le29?usp=sharing>