

## RIDERS SEE LIMITED PARKING AT GERMANTOWN MARC STATION

Germantown's MARC station has more riders than spaces, and spillover lands at the Gaithersburg-Washington Grove station.

By [Tom Ramstack](#) | [Email the author](#) | 11:55am

Germantown's commuter rail station is becoming a victim of its own success as heavy automobile traffic forces transit officials to suggest that customers use other stations.

The problem is the parking.

By early morning during the work week, the Germantown parking lot is filled.

Maryland Rail Commuter (MARC) customers are venting complaints at the transit agency about the scarcity of parking spaces.

MARC officials say they are powerless to resolve the problem.

"The Germantown station is owned by Montgomery County and the MTA is not responsible for parking at that site," said David Clark, spokesman for the Maryland Transit Administration, which operates MARC.

Some train riders cruise up and down Mateny Hill Road in their cars in the mornings hoping to find a place to park at the Germantown MARC station.

In desperation, they have occasionally stopped by the plumbing shop next to the station to ask whether they can use the company's parking lot.

Each time, employees of O'Connor Plumbing and Heating at 19301 Mateny Hill Road have turned them away to reserve the parking spaces for their own personnel.

"The parking they have is very inadequate for the number of people they have on that train in the mornings," said Tommy Eader, warehouseman for O'Connor Plumbing and Heating. "I'm usually here about 5:30 or 6:00 in the morning and it's pretty full by then."

The platform usually is filled with riders "almost to the bridge," Eader said, referring to a bridge over the tracks at the far end of the station.

Incoming Montgomery County Councilman Craig Rice (D-Dist. 2) said he would like to expand the parking lot at Germantown.

"It's something we'll certainly take a look at," he said.

However, in a national economy with close to 10 percent unemployment and significant government deficits, County officials are having trouble finding the money for a parking lot expansion.

Instead, they want to stretch their resources.

"We're not directing motorists to the Gaithersburg MARC station but, because we want them to continue using transit, we're encouraging them to travel the relatively short distance from Germantown to the MARC station at Metropolitan Grove or Gaithersburg for parking," said Catherine Matthews, Upcounty Regional Services Center director.

She said she does not know when the plan to build a new parking garage or expand the existing lot at Germantown will move beyond discussion.

About 750 passengers per day depart from the Germantown MARC station, according to the MTA. Drivers among them can park for free if they can find one of the 648 spaces open.

About 445 passengers per day use the Gaithersburg MARC station. The station's parking lot has 680 spaces.

At the Metropolitan Grove station, about 230 passengers per day ride MARC trains. There are 355 parking spaces available for them.

One proposal currently before the Montgomery County Council is charging a parking fee at the Germantown lot.

However, the proposal is unpopular among Germantown residents, Matthews said.

Germantown, along with Silver Spring and Rockville, are some of the busiest stations on MARC's Brunswick Line between Washington, D.C., and Martinsburg, W.Va.