



March 5, 2020

Delegate Barve, Chairman, Environment and Transportation Committee
House Office Building, Room 251
Annapolis, MD 21401

HB 1424 – Public-Private Partnerships – Process and Oversight (Support)

Thank you, Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein, and Environment and Transportation Committee members. This testimony is on behalf of the Maryland Advocates for Sustainable Transportation, a coalition of 25 non-profit and community advocacy organizations committed to collaboration and coordination among local jurisdictions and the state for major transportation projects. We urge you to support HB 1424.

HB 1424 would establish a Public-Private Partnership Oversight Review Board to study and make recommendations regarding P3 transportation projects with a value exceeding \$500 million and prevent the Board of Public Works from approving an agreement without overview from the Legislative Policy Committee.

Currently, the three-person Board of Public Works is able to approve massive public infrastructure projects involving complex financial arrangements and risks to the taxpayers with very little oversight from the Maryland General Assembly. The proposed Oversight Review Board would consist of two Senators, two Delegates, the Comptroller, the State Treasurer, and three members appointed by the Governor with experience in transportation law, public policy, finance, or management consulting. This would bring much-needed perspective and expertise to the approval process for P3 projects, which can currently be fast-tracked without fully considering alternatives, or the impacts on local populations, the environment, and state finances.

P3 projects are massive, long-term, and expensive, with the potential for wide-ranging and long-lasting impacts that could permanently alter the future of our region. Projects such as the potential expansion of I-270 and the Capital Beltway are too consequential and the financial risks too great to rush through without significant input from our legislators. A P3 Oversight Review Board would have the expanded capacity to study the financial and environmental impacts of a P3 project to ensure it is the best fit for all Marylanders.

Finally, we also support the provisions regarding the timing of pre-solicitation reports and environmental impact statements, as the Department of Legislative Services has recommended. For these reasons, we urge you to support HB 1424 and ensure effective legislative oversight for these expensive and consequential projects. Thank you.

Signers:

Audubon Naturalist Society
Central Maryland Transportation Alliance
Coalition for Smarter Growth

Greater Farmland Civic Association
Howard County Climate Action
League of Women Voters of Montgomery County
Maryland Legislative Coalition
National Parks Conservation Association
Transition Howard County