

Testimony of Elly Colmers Cowan
Director of Advocacy, Preservation Maryland

Before the
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
January 20, 2021

Pertaining To: SB119, Maryland Transit Safety and Investment Act

SUPPORT

On behalf of the staff and Board of Directors of Preservation Maryland and our thousands of statewide supporters, I thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the value of smart growth in Maryland.

Preservation Maryland is the statewide voice for historic preservation that works to protect the best of Maryland. Since 1931, we have worked tirelessly to protect the places, stories and communities in Maryland that matter. Through our Smart Growth Maryland program, we advocate for a more environmentally and economically sustainable future that creates opportunities for all Marylanders through better development patterns.

SUPPORT FOR SENATE BILL 119

Preservation Maryland supports SB119, which would require the state to invest in improving public transportation across Maryland. Access to reliable and safe public transit is a cornerstone of smart growth, and we believe that SB119 will go far in furthering the goal of an environmentally and economic sustainable future that creates opportunities for *all* Marylanders.

There is much work to be done. In July 2019, the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) released its first ever Capital Needs Inventory (CNI) to assess its ongoing, unconstrained capital needs. The CNI identified \$5.7 billion of capital needs over the next ten years, \$1.5 billion of which is an accumulated backlog of deferred maintenance. Unfortunately, MDOT's FY 2021–2026 Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP) does not provide the MTA sufficient funding to address the annual maintenance and repairs identified in the CNI. In fact, at current funding levels the maintenance backlog will grow.

The result of the neglected maintenance is buses, light rail vehicles, subway trains and commuter trains that break down more often than the MTA's peer agencies, and in some cases, more often than any transit agency in the nation. This leads to poor service which leads to drops in ridership, and a negative spiral.

By mandating that MTA's capital budget be at a level that allows it to address all of the needs identified, the Transit Safety & Investment Act will go far in getting the system back into a state of good repair so that it can operate safely and reliably.

We therefore encourage a FAVORABLE report for this important legislation.