



POSITION STATEMENT

TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE SENATE BUDGET & TAXATION COMMITTEE

SENATE BILL 199 -- MARYLAND TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION - FUNDING
(TRANSIT SAFETY AND INVESTMENT ACT)

Sponsor – Senator Cory McCray

January 27, 2021

DONALD C. FRY
PRESIDENT & CEO
GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE

Position: Support

The Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) supports Senate Bill 199. This legislation sets minimum capital funding level for the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) each year for FY2023-2028 and prohibits reductions to MTA’s operating funding levels during the same time period. This is analogous to the funding agreement that the Maryland General Assembly passed in the 2018 Session to guarantee funding levels for the Washington Metropolitan Transit Administration (WMATA).

Advocating for adequate transportation and mobility infrastructure in the Greater Baltimore region has been a longstanding priority of the GBC. The GBC was a strong proponent of the Red Line project and supported the 2013 revenue increase that was intended to provide a portion of the state funding for the project. Following the cancellation of the Red Line in 2015, the region has experienced significant disinvestment of state dollars in the transportation network, particularly in transit. Analysis of the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) budget performed by the Department of Legislative Services (DLS) in 2020 indicates that in the time since the revenue increase was enacted, the MTA has received only 2 percent of capital spending above the 2013 base which equates to \$60 million dollars, while the State Highway Administration has received \$2.525 billion in additional funding, or 77 percent of the spending.

The current level of disinvestment of state dollars in the Greater Baltimore region’s transit network is unacceptable. In July of 2019, the MTA released a Capital Needs Inventory report that identified \$4.6 billion in capital needs over the next ten years to maintain the current system in a state of good repair, \$2 billion of which was unfunded. Despite the capital needs outlined in the report, MDOT continues to propose deep cuts to the MTA’s capital budget. Absent a capital funding requirement for the MTA that complements the structure in place for WMATA, recent policy and budget decisions suggest that under the current Administration, MTA will continue to face deep cuts to capital while the State’s contribution to WMATA are fully funded. The GBC supports Senate Bill 199 as a necessary step to ensure that MTA is adequately funded to provide safe and continuous operations of the transit system and to ensure that residents of the Greater Baltimore region have sufficient access to jobs, education and training programs, and health care.

An October 2019 [report](#) by the Abell Foundation cited transportation as one of the top three systemic drivers that prevent more individuals in Baltimore from accessing job training and ultimately obtaining employment. Specifically, the report states that:

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“The lack of reliable and affordable transportation to jobs is one of the greatest obstacles to scaling up training programs. Programs know that they can train and place a greater number of program graduates, but they limit expansion knowing that graduates will be unable to get to their new jobs. A number of programs reported that job growth in their target industry sector is concentrated in surrounding counties and/or is not accessible by public transportation, a problem that particularly impacts the most economically distressed neighborhoods of Baltimore” (page 19).

Finally, the Greater Baltimore Committee’s [2021 Legislative Priorities](#) encourage policymakers to implement balanced transportation and mobility policy and funding priorities that create interconnected, multimodal transportation networks and promote equitable investment in systems across regions, modes, and communities. The 2021 Legislative Priorities specifically cite the need to advocate for consistent and adequate capital and operating funding levels for the MTA to ensure the safe and efficient operations of the current system and to reduce the multibillion dollar backlog needed to maintain the existing system in a state of good repair. The priorities also call for opposition to efforts to disproportionately direct state dollars to other regions in the state and increased transparency to ensure that all capital and operating funding decisions are data-driven and examined through an equity lens.

For these reasons, the Greater Baltimore Committee urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 199.

The Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) is a non-partisan, independent, regional business advocacy organization comprised of hundreds of businesses -- large, medium and small -- educational institutions, nonprofit organizations and foundations located in Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, and Howard counties as well as Baltimore City. The GBC is a 66-year-old, private-sector membership organization with a rich legacy of working with government to find solutions to problems that negatively affect our competitiveness and viability.