

Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Environmental Justice Ministry (EJM)

January 18, 2021

Testimony in Support of SB-199: Maryland Transit Safety and Investment Act

Budget and Taxation Committee

Position: Favorable

Submitted by: Lee McNair and Nanci Wilkinson for EJM

Dear Senators,

Our faith teaches us to use the lens of our Principles (which include justice, equity, compassion, respect and love for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part) to view our legislative advocacy. Viewed with that lens, we are compelled to speak **in support of SB199, the Transit Safety and Investment Act**. Here are some of the reasons we support this bill:

- The 2019 Capitol Needs Inventory identified MTA's capitol needs over the next 10 years. Per the inventory, MTA needs a minimum Capitol budget of \$462 million per year **just to maintain basic safety and repair needs**. Another \$100 million is required for needed and past due upgrades.
- Minus needed funding for maintenance, repairs, and upgrades, our Transit System breaks down at

alarming high frequencies. In fact MTA transit has the **4th highest breakdown rate in the ENTIRE COUNTRY!** MTA buses break down at twice the rate of buses in other major Northeast cities. Metro Rail and Central Light Rail have undergone recent emergency **shutdowns that have lasted for weeks!**

- **Transportation is the NUMBER ONE contributor to climate pollution in both Maryland and the nation!** Safe, reliable public transit systems reduce traffic congestion by reducing vehicle trips thus reducing greenhouse gas emissions and unhealthy air pollution which exacerbates respiratory diseases like COVID-19, Asthma, and COPD.

Citizens of Maryland are paying high costs for terrible service and this situation can only worsen. Future taxpayers will pay even higher costs for even worse service.

- **An investment in Maryland's Transit NOW will save money in the long term.**
- **Investing in Maryland's Transit NOW** will create more jobs per dollar through maintaining the transportation system than will money spent on new capacity.
- **Investment in MTA NOW** will allow MTA to clear a critical maintenance backlog that threatens its ability to operate! Further, this funding is urgently required for **safety** systems to protect riders and workers.

Strong, safe, reliable public transit systems are essential to our state's ability to make a strong economic recovery, to our state's commitment to equity, and to our hope of clean air, water, energy for our state's future.

- **MARC commuter rail provides critical service** connecting five counties (Montgomery, Prince Georges, Howard, Anne Arundel, and Frederick) to the Washington, DC and Baltimore Region. MTA operates transit systems in **every Maryland county and also in Baltimore City, Annapolis, and Ocean City.**
- **More than 1 in 3 transit riders work in essential jobs.** Many of these workers are among our **lowest paid** employees and can't afford other means of travel. Many work in our health care system, in our hospitals, and elder care facilities. Others rely on transit to reach jobs, go to school, purchase needed groceries and other supplies, get to critical medical appointments.
- **We need these workers for a healthy Maryland economy and they DEPEND ON A HEALTHY BUS AND TRAIN TRANSIT SYSTEM!**
- **Not funding MTA** will delay by years necessary repairs required for safety as well as needed upgrades and expansion of the system. This will result in even less reliable buses, trains, and mobility paratransit.
- **Not funding MTA** is a failure of our state to meet it's responsibilities to it's citizens.
- **Not funding MTA** is an equity issue as communities of color, persons with disabilities, and low-income

communities will be disproportionately harmed through greater and greater lack of reliable, affordable transportation.

- **Not funding MTA** is a health issue as riders may miss dialysis and other critical health appointments, hospitals and other health agencies may lose workers and paratransit users may be left stranded when it is late or doesn't arrive.
- **Not funding MTA** is an economic issue. Riders arrive late to work or can't get there at all which costs employers money and can lead to loss of jobs. AND we know transit repair and maintenance costs will rise above today's rates if we delay funding.

The Transit Safety and Investment Act will avert MTA's funding cliff by providing the funds required to meet MTA's capitol needs. Funding for this bill will **only come from the Transportation Fund and is a far wiser, far more practical use of these funds** than the ridiculous boondoggle of I-270 and I-495 boondoggle which will solve no problems and will end with costly outlay by taxpayers!

For all of the above reasons, the Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Environmental Justice Ministry SUPPORTS a FAVORABLE report for SB199-The Maryland Safety and Investment Act.

Thank you for allowing us this opportunity to express our views.