



Voices Maryland

Committee: Budget & Taxation

Testimony on: SB0199-- "Maryland Transit Administration-Funding (Transit Safety and Investment Act)"

Organization: Voices Maryland

Person

Submitting: Sarahia Benn, Legislative Executive

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: January 24, 2021

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for allowing testimony today in support of SB0199. Voices Maryland is a grassroots organization focused on State and County level legislation and policies that impacts marginalized communities and veterans affairs. Environmental and transit legislation is of massive importance to these communities in terms of quality of life.

Public Transit Is A Difference Maker: A one way 12 mile trip to a community college or minimum wage job that takes 21 minutes to drive in a car can turn into a three bus commute taking three hours or more. A late night grocery trip can turn into a choice between walking four miles with heavy groceries or spending an hour waiting for the bus to arrive while your hungry kids are alone home waiting. Equitable public transportation can make medical appointments accessible to a veteran who has no assistance and is unable to work within a stringent veteran system.

With equitable transit it has the potential to move large numbers of people from community to community throughout the state, connecting them with jobs, medical, economic, recreational, and other opportunities. In transit study after transit study, if you want to see economic upward mobility there is safe and reliable transportation that has a direct positive impact on the

community.

Transit System At Risk: Our current transit system is at risk in Maryland that serves the interests of all residents due to the following reasons:

In 2019, the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) released its first ever Capital Needs Inventory to assess the MTA's ongoing, unconstrained capital needs. The Inventory identified \$5.7 billion of capital needs over the next ten years, \$1.5 billion of which is an accumulated backlog of deferred maintenance. The Maryland Department of Transportation's FY 2020–2025 Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP) does not provide the MTA enough funding over the next six years to address the annual maintenance and repairs identified in the CNI. In fact, the proposed program will add to the backlog. The consequences of neglecting maintenance of buses, light rail vehicles, subway trains and commuter trains is that they break down much more frequently than the MTA's peer agencies.

The result of such neglect is lower-income Marylanders who can't afford cars are disproportionately impacted by these service interruptions. For low income and essential workers, public transportation is not an option, it is a necessity. These communities rely on public transportation to take their children to school, get themselves to work, grocery shop and fulfill other basic needs.

MTA Benefits Harford County: The MTA is valuable to all Marylanders. For instance, MARC Commuter rail provides critical service connecting Harford County to the Baltimore and the Washington DC Region. A large percentage of this capital funding will be used for safety systems for the trains to operate properly to protect transit riders and workers and improve accessibility to MARC stations. Our commuter rail system is the 4th worst in the country for breakdowns. We need safe and reliable MARC service to connect workers to their jobs. This is especially important if we want to have a strong economic recovery. The Transit Safety & Investment Act will also make funds available for locally operated transit systems across the state including Harford Transit Link.

Reliable Transit Needed for Jobs and the Economy: The Transit Safety & Investment Act will mandate that MTA's capital budget be at a level that allows it to address all the needs identified in the Capital Needs Inventory and get the system back into a state of good repair so that it can operate safely and reliably for all Marylanders. Maryland has no future if we can't get people to their jobs

Simply put, "an ounce of prevention is a pound of cure."

For these reasons we urge you to vote favorably for SB0199.