



January 27, 2021

**Testimony on SB 199 –
Maryland Transit Safety & Investment Act
Budget & Taxation**

Position: Favorable

The undersigned organizations support SB 199, the Transit Safety & Investment Act, and encourage a favorable report from the Committee.

In July 2019, the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) released its first ever Capital Needs Inventory (CNI) to assess its ongoing 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 this neglected maintenance is that buses, light rail vehicles, subway trains and MARC commuter trains break down more often than its peer agencies, and in some cases more often than any transit agency in the nation. This means that far too often riders are late or simply stranded. Paratransit services continue to malfunction, resulting in riders with disabilities missing dialysis or health appointments and being stranded when paratransit is late or fails to appear. This burden of less safe and reliable transit falls hardest on Marylanders that live in communities of color, low income communities, and people with disabilities. This would be bad enough in normal times, but the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed that a significant portion of

transit ridership is made up of the essential workers we all rely on. TransitCenter found that 40% of transit commuters in Baltimore City and 35% of transit riders in the state work in essential job sectors, with hospital and health care workers being the largest share of riders. A large number of essential workers – nurses, grocery store workers, child care professionals, nursing care staff, and so many more – rely on public transit to get to their jobs. The proposed cuts would make it harder for these vital workers to get to their jobs, which would threaten their employment and exacerbate the devastation of the pandemic.

It is not only riders who suffer from underfunding transit. The transportation sector is now the leading source of greenhouse gas emissions in the country and in Maryland. To reduce those emissions, the state will need strategies that reduce how much we all drive, including giving more people the option to take transit. But people cannot and will not choose transit if it is unreliable. Besides daily delays from disrepair, both the Metro Subway and Light Rail systems have experienced weeks-long emergency shutdowns in the last few years. We can't expect people to choose transit or be able to use it if it's going to suddenly disappear for weeks at a time.

MTA operates local buses, commuter buses, light rail, MARC, and paratransit, and provides funding to locally operated transit systems in every Maryland county, Baltimore City, Annapolis, and Ocean City. The Transit Safety & Investment Act will mandate that MTA's capital budget be at a level that allows it to address all of the needs identified and get the system back into a state of good repair so that it can operate safely and reliably. It will also make funding available to the locally operated transit systems throughout Maryland.

We encourage a FAVORABLE report for this important legislation.

Save Maryland Transit Coalition

350.org

Action Committee for Transit

American Council of the Blind of Maryland

ArchPlan

Audubon Naturalist Society

Baltimore Transit Equity Coalition

Bikemore

Bus Workgroup 14

Blue Water Baltimore

Campaign for Human Rights

Chesapeake Bay Foundation

CCAN

Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church

Central Maryland Transportation Alliance

Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility

Climate Justice Wing

Climate Stewards of Greater Annapolis
Coalition for Smarter Growth
Consumers for Accessible Ride Services
Creation Care Action & Advocacy of the Baltimore-Washington Conf of UMC
Disability Rights Maryland
Downtown Residents Advocacy Network
Emmanuel United Methodist Church, Laurel
Fund for Educational Excellence
Get Maryland Moving
Green for All
Greenbelt Climate Action Network
Howard County Climate Action
Indivisible Howard County MD
Indivisible Towson
Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake
Interfaith Power & Light (DC.MD.NoVA)
Job Opportunities Task Force
Labor Network For Sustainability
League for People with Disabilities
League of Women Voters of Maryland
Maryland League of Conservation Voters
Maryland Legislative Coalition
Marylanders for Patients Rights
Maryland Nonprofits
Maryland PIRG
Maryland Sierra Club
Maryland ADAPT
Maryland Advocates for Sustainable Transportation
Maryland Center on Economic Policy
Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition
Mom's Organic Market
Montgomery Countryside Alliance
NAACP Maryland State Conference
NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland
Nature Conservancy Maryland/DC
National Alliance on Mental Illness Maryland
Nuclear Information and Resource Service
Our Revolution Baltimore
Progressive Maryland
Safe Skies Maryland
Smart Growth Maryland
Solutionary Rail
Strong Future Maryland
Green Team at St. Vincent de Paul Church, Baltimore

Sunrise Movement Baltimore
Sunrise Movement Howard County
Takoma Park Mobilization
Transit Choices
Transition Howard County
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland
VOICES
Washington Area Bicyclist Association
WISE