



Olivia Bartlett, Co-Lead, DoTheMostGood Maryland Team

Committee: Budget and Taxation

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

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: January 27, 2021

Bill Contact: Senators McCray and Zucker

DoTheMostGood (DTMG) is a progressive grass-roots organization with more than 2000 members who live in a wide range of communities in Montgomery and Frederick Counties, from Bethesda near the DC line north to Frederick and from Potomac east to Silver Spring and Olney. DTMG supports legislation and activities that keep all the members of our communities healthy and safe in a clean environment. DTMG strongly supports SB199 because mass transit is the way of the future in a world warming due to greenhouse gas-induced climate change, and it is imperative that the buses and trains that provide mass transit for workers all over the state are well-maintained, reliable, and safe.

A Capital Needs Inventory by the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) last year showed that the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) needs a capital budget of at least \$462 million per year for the next 10 years just to maintain basic safety and repair of our buses and trains, plus another \$100 million for essential upgrades. However, MDOT's capital program did not meet that minimum last year and its proposed capital program for this year does not meet that minimum either. In fact, lower funding levels are proposed, which would only make the maintenance backlog worse and result in a transit system that breaks down at an alarmingly high frequency.

The saying goes "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure". SB0199 will ensure that MDOT does the right thing now, rather than making future taxpayers pay higher costs for worse service later. Even MDOT Secretary Greg Slater said that maintaining a state of good repair is a case of pay now or pay more later. Funding adequate maintenance and upkeep of our public buses and rail systems is not an extravagance or a favor to riders -- it's the state's fundamental responsibility. This investment now will save money in the long run and create jobs now. Studies have shown that money spent on maintaining the transportation system creates more jobs per dollar than money spent on new capacity.

MARC commuter rail provides critical transit service connecting Montgomery, Prince Georges, and Howard Counties to Washington DC and the Baltimore Region. 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. However, our commuter rail system has the fourth worst record of breakdowns in the country. A large percentage of the capital funding proposed in SB0199 will be used for safety systems for the trains to operate properly to protect transit riders and workers and to improve accessibility to MARC stations.

SB0119 will also make funds available for locally operated transit systems across the state, including RideOn buses in Montgomery County, The Bus in Prince Georges County, RTA in Howard County, and ADOT in Anne Arundel County. Support for these local bus and transit systems is not just about money – it's also about equity. A large percentage of transit system riders is from low-income neighborhoods, front-line workers, disabled riders, and communities of color who have no other way to get to work, shopping, doctor and family visits. TransitCenter found that 40% of transit commuters in Baltimore City work in essential job sectors, with hospital and health care being the largest share of riders. Baltimore residents are one of the most transit-reliant populations in the country. We must support all members of our communities and ensure that they have safe and reliable transportation when they need it.

Funding for SB0199 will only come from the Transportation Trust Fund. Especially in a time of budgetary constraints, money in the Trust Fund should be focused on maintaining assets we have, rather than on expansion efforts. In particular, instead of spending \$43 million on a boondoggle for privatized toll lanes on I-270 and I-495 that were supposed to be built at no cost to Maryland taxpayers, these funds should be used to keep our current transit systems safe to use.

Baltimore legislators fought hard to pass Capital funding for WMATA. It is important that everyone comes together again now to support the state's transit system in the exact same way.

For all of the reasons mentioned above, DTMG strongly supports SB0199 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report on this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

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