
March 29, 2022

The Honorable Guy Guzzone
Chairman, Senate Budget & Taxation Committee
3 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Letter of Information – House Bill 632 – Baltimore East–West Corridor – Transit Study – Requirements

Dear Chair Guzzone and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) takes no position on House Bill 632 but offers the following information for the Committee’s consideration.

House Bill 632 would require the Maryland Department of Transportation Maryland Transit Administration (MDOT MTA) to undertake all necessary steps to complete planning, preliminary engineering, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process and to secure a Record of Decision for the Red Line and a Maryland Area Commuter Rail (MARC) rail extension to the Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center. As amended, appropriations for these advancements would be contingent upon receipt of federal funds.

The MDOT MTA is in the process of completing an existing East-West Corridor study as a part of the Regional Transit Plan (RTP), which is the next step to move forward with a federally supported investment for new transit service in this corridor. This study builds on work previously completed, updates current conditions, and utilizes projected conditions to evaluate potential routes, modes, and alignments for new transit service from Johns Hopkins Bayview through downtown Baltimore to Ellicott City.

As the RTP East-West Corridor study advances and moves through the alternative analysis, NEPA, and preliminary engineering phases, changes in the landscape and travel environment since the original planning of the Red Line will be taken into consideration and incorporated. These considerations will include new development projects that have impacted alignment placement, regional transportation patterns and projections such as new job centers, current travel patterns and congestion, the increasingly residential nature of Downtown Baltimore, the updated transit system created by BaltimoreLink in 2017, and equity policies and Complete Streets legislation that may impact how roadway space and access are evaluated. Furthermore, all field work, environmental mitigation analysis, 106 Programmatic Agreements, permit applications, demographics, right-of-way analysis, Section 4(f) Evaluation, air quality and noise vibration, historic properties analysis, and other critical NEPA requirements must be done in compliance with current laws. To accomplish this, the MDOT MTA has programmed approximately \$12 million in State funding for the current RTP East-West Corridor project, which will fund the feasibility study, alternatives analysis phase, and portions of the pre-NEPA and preliminary design phases.

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Regarding the MARC rail extension to the Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center, the MDOT MTA interprets that House Bill 632 is intended for development of a new Bayview MARC station on the Penn Line, which would utilize existing Northeast Corridor track, rather than extension of new rail. If so, a Bayview MARC station would need to be incorporated into Amtrak's Northeast Corridor planning and approved by Amtrak to be viable. Additionally, a Bayview Station would be located in an active Norfolk Southern railyard and would require approval by Norfolk Southern. Both railroads are aware of the MDOT's potential interest in a Bayview Station, but agreements have not been reached that meet their approval. Negotiations with the railroads can significantly affect the scope, cost, and feasibility of the project.

The MDOT currently budgets funding on a six-year timeframe and outlines total funds and projects in the Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP). The CTP is established after extensive consultation with Maryland's citizens, State representatives, and local jurisdictions. Projects that preserve transportation system investments, enhance transportation services, and expand transportation opportunities throughout the State are added to the CTP. A strength of the CTP is the flexibility to move funds in order meet certain demands and the MDOT requires this flexibility without the restrictions of mandated appropriations. Specific projects must be considered in the context of MDOT's need to maintain critical infrastructure across Maryland's entire transportation system, including transit, port, and airport facilities.

Finally, the MDOT MTA is committed to reducing the State of Good Repair Backlog, which is over \$1.5 billion across all modes. Ninety-six percent of the MDOT MTA's FY22-27 CTP funding is dedicated to state of good repair projects. Significantly increasing investments in planning and preliminary engineering as mandated in House Bill 632 could put critical safety investments in state of good repair at risk as House Bill 632 does not propose a new funding or revenue source.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee consider this information when deliberating House Bill 632.

Respectfully submitted,

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