



P.O. Box 278
Riverdale, MD 20738

Committee: Budget and Taxation
Testimony on: HB 632 – “Baltimore East-West Corridor – Transit Study – Requirements”
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: March 29, 2022

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club strongly supports HB 632 as amended in the House. The bill would require the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) to complete the planning, preliminary engineering, and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process for the Baltimore Red Line light rail project and a Maryland Area Regional Commuter (MARC) rail extension to Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center, and then issue a record of decision on those projects.

Contingent on the receipt of federal funds, MDOT would be required to study the economic and employment impacts of constructing and operating the Red Line and MARC rail extension, consider previously completed engineering and environmental studies, and avoid acquiring land that would result in involuntary residential displacement. The bill also would require the Governor to allocate \$5 million annually in fiscal years 2024 through 2027, contingent on the receipt of federal matching funds, to conduct the NEPA process on the two projects. Finally, contingent on the receipt of federal matching funds, beginning in fiscal year 2024, an annual appropriation of \$200,000 would go to the Baltimore City Mayor’s Office for workforce development as well as small, minority, and women-owned business development.

The Sierra Club believes building the Red Line light rail and expanding MARC rail in Baltimore are urgent and necessary measures to address decades of systemic racism and discrimination in housing and transportation in Baltimore. The Red Line project and MARC extension would provide residents in a densely populated and under-resourced area with high quality public transportation that would significantly improve access to employment opportunities, education, housing, and healthcare, dramatically reduce commute times, connect community members to major destinations throughout the region, and foster economic development in the Red Line transit corridor.

Baltimore City has one of the highest rates of mortality due to air pollution in the United States. Transportation is the largest source of climate-damaging air pollution in Maryland now. Building the Red Line and expanding the MARC commuter service would reduce gasoline and diesel-fueled vehicle trips as well as traffic congestion in Baltimore, which would in turn reduce greenhouse gases and other toxic emissions from vehicle tailpipes that are hazardous to human health. This is further justification for proceeding with the proposed transit projects in Baltimore.

In summary, Baltimore currently lacks high quality, safe, reliable, efficient, economical, and frequent public transportation that runs from east to west. Constructing the Red Line and MARC extension to the Bayview Medical Center would address that problem. HB 632 would mandate the next steps to advance these projects closer to fruition, and we are cautiously optimistic that federal matching funds can be obtained to help pay for them. We urge a favorable report on this bill.

Brian Ditzler
Transportation Chair
Brian.Ditzler@MDSierra.org

Josh Tulkin
Chapter Director
Josh.Tulkin@MDSierra.org

Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America’s oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.