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Committee: Budget and Taxation

Testimony on: SB 151 – “Equitable and Inclusive Transit-Oriented Development Enhancement Act”

Position: Support

Hearing Date: January 25, 2023

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club supports SB 151 that would establish the Transit-Oriented Development Capital Grant and Revolving Loan Fund as a special, non-lapsing fund whose purpose is to promote the equitable and inclusive development of transit-oriented development (TOD) throughout the state. The Fund would receive an annual appropriation from the State sufficient to ensure it had a balance of at least \$10 million at the start of each fiscal year.

The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDOT) would be authorized to use the fund to provide financial assistance to counties and municipalities for TOD that meets equity goals established by MDOT. The equity goals would specify projects need to enhance access to transit for low-income and minority residents of the jurisdiction, enhance access to transit in areas with affordable housing and a diversity of job and educational opportunities, or encourage development around underdeveloped and underutilized transit stations in TODs.

Transportation is the largest source of climate-disrupting greenhouse gases in Maryland and our nation today. Tailpipe emissions from vehicles also are hazardous to human health, and are linked to cancers, heart disease, asthma, emphysema, and other respiratory diseases. Promoting increased development throughout the state within a half mile of transit stations would encourage greater use of transit vs. cars, increase revenue for transit, dramatically lessen the need to own a car, decrease sprawl, promote more walking and biking, and make effective use of land by creating more housing, employment opportunities and sustainable economic development near transit.

In summary, providing small, competitive grants and loans to support TOD planning and construction in an equitable manner would accelerate development around Maryland’s transit stations. This would be good for the environment, public health, the state’s economy, and the general well-being of Maryland residents and communities. We urge a favorable report on this bill.

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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.