



**Testimony Presented to the House Appropriations Committee  
HB0924 – Transportation – Regional Transportation Authorities**

**Position: Unfavorable**

This testimony is submitted by the Baltimore Metropolitan Council (BMC). BMC is the Council of governments serving the Baltimore region. BMC’s board of directors is comprised of the Mayor of Baltimore City, the County Executives of Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Hartford and Howard Counties; Commissioners from Carroll and Queen Anne’s Counties; Delegate Dana Stein, Senate President Ferguson, and Mark Anthony Thomas, who is the Governor’s appointee.

In 2022, BMC’s Transit Funding and Governance Workgroup, chaired by then Delegate Tony Bridges, released a report that specifically recommended study of a transit authority for the Baltimore region. In 2023 our agency strongly supported Delegate Bridge’s legislation born of this recommendation. While Delegate Bridge’s bill to study a transit authority did not pass in 2023, the concept was incorporated into the work of the TRAIN commission, which will address the question in 2024.

The future of transit funding and governance is a critical issue for our region, and we believe that formal study is warranted. However, without such formal study and analysis that includes direct input from our local governments, BMC cannot support the establishment of a transportation authority at this time.

Additionally, HB0924 appears to duplicate some of the functions of the Baltimore Regional Transportation Board (BRTB), our region’s federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization. A Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is an entity created by federal law to provide local elected officials input into the planning and implementation of federal transportation funds to metropolitan areas with populations of greater than 50,000. The BRTB is housed and staffed by BMC.

HB0924 lays out nine duties and responsibilities for the proposed authority. At least six of these duties and responsibilities are managed substantively by the BMC and/or the BRTB. Specifically, these are:

1. General oversight of regional programs involving congestion mitigation. **As an MPO for a Transportation Management Area (TMA), the BRTB has a federally mandated duty to develop a congestion management plan.**



2. Long range regionally planning for the Baltimore region, both fiscally constrained and unconstrained. **Every MPO is required by federal law to develop the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) for their region;**
3. Recommending to State, regional and federal agencies regional transportation priorities, including public-private transportation projects and funding allocations. **Through our Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), LRTP, participation in the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO), and regular working relationships with all of MDOT's modes, as well as the Federal Transit Administration, Federal Highway Administration and US DOT, the BRTB and BMC formally and informally make these recommendations;**
4. Recommending to MDOT priority regional transportation projects for receipt of federal and State funds. **The TIP works hand in glove with the State's CTP to recommend and program these funds. Every project in the TIP is included in our LRTP, and the BRTB's practice is to submit regional priority projects for the CTP each year;**
5. General oversight of regional transportation issues of a multijurisdictional nature, including intelligent transportation systems, signalization, and preparation for and response to emergencies. **The BRTB has specific subcommittees that focus on ITS, signalization and emergency planning. Additionally, the Baltimore region's Urban Area Security Initiative (BUASI), a committee of our region's emergency management departments, uses a portion of their federal support to focus on transportation issues that have included evacuation planning and a recent tabletop training focused on train derailment;**
6. Serving as an advocate for the transportation needs of the Baltimore region before the State and federal governments. **In addition to the relationships with the State and federal governments described above, BMC is the host of the Baltimore Regional Transit Commission (BRTC), a body created by the Maryland General Assembly in 2023, has a statutory duty to engage in advocacy for the Baltimore region public transit systems maintained by the Administration.**

The creation of a new and separate government agency whose board members overlap with both BMC and would open the door to confusion. Transportation authorities are proven implementers of policy and projects, but the lines between MPOs and any new authorities must be thoughtfully, carefully and clearly drawn.