

My name is Neil Harris, and I am vice chair of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Transportation Planning Board, TPB for short, and in my 10th year as a Gaithersburg City Council member. My interest in transportation is personal – I work in IT management and commute to Herndon VA, a distance of 16 miles as the crow flies. And I'm pretty sure the crow could get there faster than I can.

A few facts. Maryland has the second-longest average commute in the United States, and ranks dead last in its percentage of workers who enjoy easy commuting times.¹

Quoting a report from the SHA: “Over the years congestion has increased due to the limited availability of funding for infrastructure improvements in roads and public transportation which has not been able to keep up with the growth in demand.”²

The TRAIN commission is exploring how to replenish the state transportation fund. But the status quo is just not enough – it leaves Maryland behind the rest of the country when it comes to transportation. As I said in my OpEd in the Washington Post, the Number 1 problem here is that there is not enough money to move us forward.³

In my 10 years on the TPB, I've looked at best practices from elsewhere that could help. The bill that is before you today is based on one model, which has produced \$4.1 billion worth of additional multi-modal projects in Northern Virginia over the past decade above and beyond state funded levels.

This bill creates the framework to enable regional authorities that provide significant supplemental funding. It does not specify the funding sources, because we will have to make Maryland-specific decisions. The bill enables several regions of the state to decide if they need these authorities, enabling regional approaches to their unique needs.

This is the first step in a process that will improve the quality of life for Marylanders over the years to come by making it easier to move people. Thanks.

¹ Chicago Tribune, 12/17/2010, Maryland Ranks Dead Last Among States in Quick Commutes

² Maryland SHA Mobility Report, Section B: Congestion Trends

³ Washington Post, 7/26/2019, The No. 1 transit problem in Maryland is money