



MARYLAND LEAGUE
OF CONSERVATION VOTERS

March 10, 2021

SUPPORT HB1204: Transportation Equity Analyses and Assurances Act of 2021

Chairman Barve and Members of the Committee:

**Maryland League of
Conservation Voters**

Lynn Heller, Board Chair
Maris St. Cyr, Vice Chair
Michael Davis, Treasurer
Hon. Virginia Clagett
Stuart Clarke
Candace Dodson-Reed
Verna Harrison
Melanie Hartwig-Davis
Ed Hatcher
Hon. Steve Lafferty
Bonnie Norman
Katharine Thomas

Kim Coble
Executive Director

30 West Street
Suite C
Annapolis, MD 21401

410.280.9855
mdlcv.org
marylandconservation.org

Maryland League of Conservation Voters supports HB1204: Transportation Equity Analyses and Assurances Act of 2021 and we thank Delegate Ruth for her leadership on this issue.

This year, the Maryland General Assembly has the opportunity to strengthen Maryland's existing public transit system by ensuring adequate funding to bring a dilapidated fleet of rail, subway, light rail, and commuter rail to a state of good repair by passing HB114. This is one of many measures that this Committee, and the Maryland Senate, will consider that will put our state on the path to confronting climate change; the transportation sector contributes as much as 41% of Maryland's carbon emissions. HB1204 supplements this critical effort by ensuring that transportation spending is conducted in an equitable and transparent manner.

In 2015, after more than ten years of stakeholder meetings, planning documents, feasibility studies, mapping, and considerable legislative muscle to secure nearly a billion dollars in federal funds, Governor Hogan made the decision to cancel the Baltimore Red Line. This East-West light rail was of primary importance to help connect lower-income communities to the region's job centers. The announcement was a heavy blow to many Baltimore residents, who saw it as furthering the disinvestment that had at least partially fueled unrest throughout the city just weeks earlier. Beyond the decision itself, the process of the decision-making demonstrated a profound lack of transparency, as were the decisions that followed regarding the use of the funds previously allocated to the Red Line. Additionally, in September 2020, the MTA announced sweeping cuts to its service, which would have had a disproportionately negative impact on low-income Baltimore residents who rely on the services to get to work – especially in the healthcare industry. After substantial public outcry, these cuts were reversed. The rationale behind the proposed cuts and the and then the reversal of the cuts were both similarly conducted without transparency on the factors that drove the decisions.

In order for Maryland to have an effective, reliable and safe transit system there needs to be greater transparency, accountability, and community input. HB1204 offers just such a solution by promoting an approach that makes equity a primary goal in the Maryland Transportation Plan. It requires MDOT to collect and analyze data on racial disparities and impact on persons with disabilities in the annual Attainment Report, and to create a Commission on Transportation Equity as an independent transit monitor and evaluator. The process proposed in this legislation would increase decision-making transparency and ensure that our state resources are directed to provide urgently-needed access to jobs in low-income, historically redlined communities, and support the most impactful transit-oriented development.

Maryland LCV urges a favorable report on HB1204, which will promote cleaner air, government transparency, and a more robust and equitable economic recovery.