



Testimony HB 141
House Environmental and Tax Committee
January 27, 2022
Position: FAVORABLE

Dear Chairman Barve and Members of the House Environmental and Tax Committee,

The Community Development Network of Maryland (CDN) is the voice for Maryland's community development sector and serves nearly 200 member organizations. CDN—focuses on small affordable housing developers, housing counseling agencies and community-based non-profits across the state of Maryland. The mission of CDN is to promote, strengthen and advocate for the community development sector throughout Maryland's urban, suburban and rural communities. CDN envisions a state in which all communities are thriving and where people of all incomes have abundant opportunities for themselves and their families.

HB 141 would require that equity be considered when State transportation plans, reports, and goals are developed; altering the membership of the advisory committee on State transportation goals; establishing the Commission on Transportation Equity to assist in developing policies and performance measures to ensure the State transportation system is equitable; requiring the Department of Transportation to conduct transit equity analyses and consult with certain communities before announcing or proposing service changes.

As the current public health and economic crisis continues, people of color are bearing the brunt of the effects of COVID-19. Improving the lives of all Marylanders is critical to the state's recovery. We cannot simply tinker around the edges of systems that were never intended to serve all people. In order to center racial equity, policymakers must focus on data, plan for the most vulnerable, and implement race-conscious approaches to counter persistent racial inequities.

According to a recent study by Johns Hopkins University and the Baltimore Transit Equity Coalition, public transit provides relatively low-cost access to jobs, food, and healthcare, while also reducing pollution and greenhouse gas emissions by taking cars off the roads and increasing physical activity. Despite these benefits, public transit in Baltimore often fails to serve the people. This is especially concerning since low-income people of color represent the majority of transit-users in Baltimore, many of whom during the COVID-19 pandemic were classified as "essential workers".

For too long, the Baltimore region has ignored the region's need for a first-class transportation system that serves industry and moves people to work, school, services, and amenities in the region. There has been little regard for the need for the overall health and growth of the region. Instead, the state redesigned the bus system without regard to high concentrations of transit dependent tax paying community members.

It is time that we work toward a more equitable transit future where community members throughout the region have the opportunity to prosper.

Please support the Transit Equity Act.

Submitted by Claudia Wilson Randall, Executive Director, Community Development Network