Dear Members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee,

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City and Baltimore County. We are also working in collaboration with Baltimore Transit Equity Coalition. I am a resident of District 12. For three years, I lived in an area with good public transportation. Having returned a year ago to Maryland to find transit worse than when I left, and learning of the disproportionate impacts of transit policies on communities of color, **I am testifying in strong support of the Transportation Equity Act of 2022 (HB 141).**

The Transportation Equity Act of 2022 requires setting equity as a primary goal in the Maryland Transportation Plan by requiring:
- MDOT to collect and analyze data on racial disparities across modes of transit, and impact on persons with disabilities in the annual Attainment Report;
- Creation of a Commission on Transportation Equity as an independent transit monitor and evaluator;
- MDOT MTA to conduct transit equity analyses, cost benefit analyses, and outreach to affected communities before public hearings on any major service change;
- Increased transparency with annual reporting and service change analysis reporting.

Maryland has a shamefully long history of racist transportation policies, from highways built through and dividing Black and Brown communities to the cancelation of the Red Line route, which would have provided urgently-needed access to jobs for residents in low-income, redlined communities in Baltimore and regional economy-transforming, transit-oriented-development (TOD). Equitable transportation will play a key role in dismantling systemic racism by:

- Increasing access to good jobs, schools, education, and healthy food;
- Providing incentives for community economic development;
- Reducing smog, air pollution, and heat islands, which disproportionately impact Black communities;
- Setting right years of disinvestment that have hurt all Baltimoreans

Equity is currently treated as an afterthought after decisions are already made. Thresholds for triggering an equity analysis should be set and evaluated by an independent body with more public input in order to check for preventable, disparate impacts. *MDOT MTA should not be required to police itself.*

Current transit equity analyses study each mode of transit separately, which does not accurately capture the racial and economic impacts of department-wide policy. For example, the core bus ridership (local bus system) is majority Black while the commuter rail ridership is majority white. If more cuts are made to core bus service than to commuter rail routes, a disparity is created that will not show in separate analyses. In a state where all transportation is funded and managed through one agency, cross-modal analysis of all transportation is needed to better assess and address systemic equity issues.

Ultimately, there is a need for greater transparency, accountability and community input. ***Equity must be central to all planning and decisions throughout the process.***

One example of why we need this kind of oversight is when last year, in response to record low ridership due to the pandemic, the Maryland Transit Administration proposed to eliminate 25 Baltimore bus lines that would affect mostly Black neighborhoods, and the Black essential workers who still needed to show up to their job each day during the pandemic, with the bus as their only transit option. Even though the MTA backed off its proposed service cuts, they should never have been able to make those budget cut decisions without an analysis for how much it would disproportionately impact Black workers in Baltimore, and those across the state of Maryland trying to get to their jobs.

Sharif Rashid, a Baltimore resident, transit rider, and impacted member of the Baltimore Transit Equity Coalition, had to spend most of their day's pay to get a ride to their job at the Amazon warehouse in South Baltimore. In an article published on Dec 28th 2020 by The Public News Service, journalist Diane Bernard quotes Sharif Rashid: "When the pandemic hit I had to change the location of my job, and now I'm currently at FedEx," Rashid explained. "Just for, you know, a $16 or $17 wage, I've got to go hours out of the way. If I catch a Lyft or Uber, it's $25 or $30; I didn't really make anything for the day, you know what I mean?". Rashid has an almost three hour commute to get to his job that would take less than 30 minutes in a car.

Mayor Brandon Scott stated in a video recording for the 2021 Transit Equity Solidarity Day on Tuesday, December 21st, that "Baltimore's Black neighborhoods are still dealing with the challenges and injustices of biased transit policies. Historically, transit and equity has always been linked back to racial injustice, in Baltimore and beyond," Scott remarked. "The work that's happening today is building on the work of civil rights leaders like Claudette Colvin and Rosa Parks, who we know started the Montgomery bus boycott."

Transportation equity is also important for people with disabilities. Because many people with disabilities do not have the option to drive cars, lack of access to other modes of transportation disproportionately harms them. Without access to transportation, people with disabilities continue to be alienated from the economic mainstream. People with disabilities are twice as likely to live in poverty in part due to difficulty accessing jobs, education and medical care. Because many individuals with disabilities have increased health care needs, isolation can have a profound impact on quality of life, health, and safety.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to **vote in support of HB 141**.

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Erica Palmisano
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Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore