



**Olivia Bartlett, DoTheMostGood Maryland Team**

**Committee:** Finance Committee

**Testimony on:** SB0516 – Equitable and Inclusive Transit-Oriented Development Enhancement Act

**Position:** Favorable

**Hearing Date:** February 16, 2022

**Bill Contact:** Senators Malcolm Augustine

DoTheMostGood (DTMG) is a progressive grass-roots organization with more than 3000 members across all districts in Montgomery County as well as a number of nearby jurisdictions. DTMG supports legislation and activities that keep residents healthy and safe in a clean environment and which promote equity across all our diverse communities. DTMG strongly supports SB0516 because it will improve equity in access to transit across Maryland.

Difficulty getting around without a car limits our residents' ability to get to jobs and limits our businesses' potential because they don't have ready access to applicants and workers. Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act was supposed to guarantee equal access to public transportation, but Maryland has not enforced it at the state level. There are many examples of inequity in transportation in Maryland -- from the cancellation of the Red Line in Baltimore to MTA service cuts in September 2020 that placed the greatest burden on routes serving black communities while there were no cuts in the airport or state highway administration and only minor temporary cuts proposed for the MARC commuter rail service with its 65-70% white ridership.

While expansion of mass transit throughout the state is still desperately needed, transit-oriented development (TOD) -- developing jobs and housing near transit stops -- will help fix long-standing inequities in transportation access for black and brown communities. To achieve this goal, SB0516 will require the State to make equity a primary goal in Maryland's Transportation Plan and take a proactive approach to equity in transit and intermodal transit planning and by broadening participation by transit dependent communities.

Building residences and businesses near transit stations allows more residents to access opportunities, especially low-income residents without cars who must rely on public transit. In 2008, the Maryland General Assembly enabled an official TOD state-designation process that allows development projects within a half-mile of designated TOD stations to be eligible to receive state support in advancing transit-oriented development around the station. However, developing around a transit station is often more expensive because of higher land costs, legacy developments, environmental hazards, and the greater need for supportive infrastructure, including sidewalk networks, station parking and bus facilities. Because this TOD program has had little funding or incentives, as of today, there are only 17 state-designated TOD sites throughout Maryland.

SB0516 will therefore improve and enhance the TOD program by creating a \$10 million competitive grant and revolving loan fund to provide financial assistance to local jurisdictions for design, planning, construction or gap funding and financing for public or private development within a state-designated TOD station area. SB0516 will also expand the tax credits that businesses receive for creating eligible jobs in Opportunity Zones to state-designated TOD sites and require the secretary of transportation to report annually on MDOT's efforts to increase TOD throughout the state. These measures will strengthen and rejuvenate the program.

Transit-oriented development is a really good idea that is languishing through lack of funding and incentives. The General Assembly should make the investment in our residents and in the businesses in the state that desperately need a better, more equitable, and more integrated transportation system. Therefore, DTMG strongly supports SB0516 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report on this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

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