

January 30, 2023

The Honorable Benjamin Barnes
Chair, House Appropriations Committee
House Office Building, Room 121
6 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Support for House Bill 0074 - Maryland Rail Investment Act of 2023

Dear Chair Barnes and Committee Members,

On behalf of the Greater Washington Partnership (the Partnership), I am writing to express our support for House Bill 074, which would establish a Maryland Rail Authority tasked with expanding rail access, service, and infrastructure, catalyzing economic development and inclusive growth.

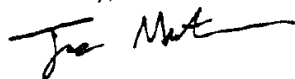
The Partnership is a civic alliance of leading employers in the Capital Region of Baltimore, Washington, and Richmond, who together employ more than 300,000 residents and are committed to making this region one of the best places to live, work, and build a business. In 2018, the Partnership released the [Blueprint for Regional Mobility](#), an action-oriented strategy to transform the Capital Region's transportation system into an asset that ensures our global competitiveness. In 2021, we supported the region's creation of the [Capital Region Rail Vision](#), a 25-year strategy to transform the regional rail network to better connect our diverse communities to jobs, opportunity, and inclusive growth. HB 074 would establish the foundation for a more robust multimodal transportation network with 21st century rail infrastructure for all Maryland residents.

When the Partnership released our [performance-driven tolling principles](#), we called for tolling revenues to improve the wider multi-modal transportation system, invest in cost-effective public transportation enhancements, and benefit residents of all income levels. The Maryland Rail Investment Act of 2023 advances our performance driving tolling principles by establishing a Maryland Rail Authority that will improve the multi-modal transportation system by allocating excess revenues from the state's toll operations to rail transit infrastructure, while also enabling toll discounts for consumers without the financial means to afford the tolls.

This legislation also builds upon the policy recommendations from the Eno Center's report, "[A Blueprint for Building Transit Better](#)" which highlights the need for transit agencies to have the authority, staff, and good governance to effectively and efficiently build new transit projects. Having the capacity to plan, design, finance, build, operate, and ultimately maintain new rail projects will be critical for Maryland to be able to take advantage of the federal grant money dedicated to rail in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, especially as neighboring states along Amtrak's Northeast Corridor already have dedicated Rail Authorities in place.

The approach in this bill is promising and we are encouraged by its introduction. We urge a favorable report from the committee to continue this critical conversation about how we can accelerate the development of the state's multimodal transportation system, including the construction of Maryland's rail infrastructure and the provision of enhanced rail service.

Sincerely,



Joe McAndrew
Vice President for Government Affairs & Infrastructure