



## **HB74 – Transportation – Maryland Rail Authority – Establishment (Maryland Rail Investment Act of 2023)**

**Testimony before**

**House Appropriations Committee**

**January 31, 2023**

**Position: Informational Only**

Mr. Chair, Mr. Vice Chair and members of the committee, my name is Richard Deutschmann, and I represent the 750+ members of Indivisible Howard County. We are providing written testimony today in **support of the broad goals of HB74**, to create a new Maryland Rail Authority. Indivisible Howard County is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members). We appreciate the leadership of Del. Korman for sponsoring this important legislation.

This bill is a very complex bill, requiring a level of expertise that we as volunteer advocates do not possess within our group. That said, the members of Indivisible Howard County ***enthusiastically support*** major steps within the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) to vastly change the priorities of the state from highway building and expansion to a much greater use of safe, reliable, modern rail to move people efficiently around the state, and to and from their places of employment. The creation of a Maryland Rail Authority within MDOT would appear to appropriately shift people and resources towards this new change in priorities.

Furthermore, we strongly support the listed projects that would become the immediate focus of the Rail Authority, including the Red Line, expansion and extension of MARC, and the Southern Maryland Rapid Transit. Building these systems in the coming years will help to meet the state's goals regarding global climate change, will reduce vehicle miles travelled and the associated congestion on our roads, reduce air pollution and the detrimental health effects on our children, and would be a major justice and equity win for the people of Baltimore. Having a Rail Authority within MDOT would elevate these discussions to the highest levels of transportation planning and execution in the state. Finally, a new Maryland Rail Authority would seem to align strongly with the goals of the new Moore Administration, and signal a new cooperative partnership between these branches of government.

There is one issue that has come to our attention, that we would hope the committee would discuss in detail. Transit advocates in the Baltimore region and around the state are supportive of a new Baltimore Regional Transportation Authority, which would line up our largest city with other major metropolitan areas on the Eastern Seaboard in having a deeper level of local control and the ability to execute on transportation priorities for their region. We would like to see this issue vetted by the committee, with the goal of this new Rail Authority not being in conflict with the possible creation of the BRTA in the future.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

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