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BILL NO.: HB 1125

TITLE: Transit - Grant Funding for Local Service - Alterations

SPONSOR: Delegate Solomon

COMMITTEE: Appropriations

POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

DATE: March 7, 2023

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS WITH AMENDMENTS** House Bill 1125 – Transit - Grant Funding for Local Service - Alterations. This legislation would establish the Locally Operated Transit System Grant Program.

Baltimore County is committed to improving local transit options for its more than 850,000 residents. Many residents work elsewhere in the region and rely on safe, reliable, and efficient public transportation. Baltimore County Executive John Olszewski has championed providing residents with access to transportation by establishing a first-of-its-kind free local bus service in downtown Towson, The Loop, with plans to expand routes and availability to other growth centers. The County supports the spirit of the bill, which would bring more transit funding to local jurisdictions, but believes the bill should be amended to make it more equitable. The allocation of the LOTS funding must be made transparent and equitably distributed based on population. The baseline funding level should be increased as well. Currently, there is no publicly available formula or process that jurisdictions or their LOTS agencies can rely on to accurately predict or request LOTS funding to grow local service.

Baltimore County is the third most populous county in Maryland, behind only Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, yet our County has historically received significantly less funding than other large jurisdictions - less than half a million dollars in operating support despite continuous population growth and diversification. The Baltimore Metropolitan Area is among the most congested urban areas in the country, due largely to a long history of under investment. Residents of the entire Baltimore region deserve access to inter- and intra-jurisdictional transportation options.

The expansion of LOTS funding is absolutely critical, but a blanket expansion of existing funding levels does not address the lack of clarity in the funding allocation or the funding disparities across the state. Therefore, Baltimore County respectfully requests that House Bill 1125 be amended to increase formula funding based on population, so that other large jurisdictions can benefit from these funds. To grow our

economy and support our residents, businesses and visitors, Baltimore County needs additional State resources to support our regional transit development.

Accordingly, Baltimore County requests a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report on HB 1125. For more information, please contact Jenn Aiosa, Director of Government Affairs at jaiosa@baltimorecountymd.gov.