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**Bill:** House Bill 1125: Transit – Grant Funding for Local Service - Alterations

**Position:** SUPPORT

Dear Chair Barnes, Vice-Chair Chang, and Members of the Committee:

I write on behalf of the Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland in support of House Bill 1125, which would place funding for the Locally Operated Transit Systems (LOTS) on a more sustainable basis and provide protection from the continuing cost increases we face in providing community transportation.

The Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland was formed to facilitate regional planning and development in Somerset, Wicomico, and Worcester counties. The Shore Transit division is the public transit agency for the region providing fixed route and origin-to-destination services.

We make mobility a reality for our customers. Unfortunately, funding for this program has been cut in the aftermath of COVID-19. As we recover from the pandemic we are being called upon to provide more responsive service to more people while also beginning the transition to low and zero emissions technology.

State support for local transit is critical to ensure our goals of quality service, environmental protection, and equity are reached. As state funding has stagnated or decreased, our local matches for state and federal funding have taken on a greater and greater proportion of funding. Inflation has particularly hit our industry hard, with prices for vehicles increasing 15%-20% and the need for increased driver salaries to remain competitive.

Indexing our funding to the rate of inflation is another key element of HB 1125. Our costs always increase on a year to year basis, but funding is often flat for many years at a time. We need the ability to match increased costs without having to compromise service reach, frequency, or quality.

About 45 percent of Americans have no access to public transit. Black households are three times as likely as white households to have no access to a vehicle. When transit is accessible only for some, there are negative consequences to lack of access for all. Public transportation is a greener alternative. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, transportation makes up 29 percent of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, and 41 percent of these emissions come from cars. Maryland should join other states in making a sustained and sustainable reinvestment in our local transit.

We fully support House Bill 1125's efforts to increase support for the mobility of the citizens and communities we serve.

Sincerely,

Gregory Padgham  
Executive Director



SERVING SOMERSET, WICOMICO AND WORCESTER COUNTIES

