
ROBERT G. CASSILLY
Harford County Executive

ROBERT S. McCORD
Director of Administration



BARBARA W. RICHARDSON
Director of Housing &
Community Services

Bill: House Bill 950: Maryland Transit Administration - Locally Operated Transit Systems - Mandatory Funding

Position: SUPPORT

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

I write on behalf of Harford Transit LINK in support of House Bill 950, which would protect funding for Locally Operated Transit Systems (LOTS) throughout our state.

We are a small urban system located in Harford County Maryland, operating a fleet of 37 buses, providing 1.4 million miles of Fixed Route, ADA Complementary Paratransit and Demand response service. Our ridership has returned fully since the pre-pandemic, and we are on course to exceed pre-pandemic ridership by almost 20%. Our fixed route rider composition is 75% general public, and 25% representing seniors, persons with disabilities and children. Our paratransit riders are now a blend of our seniors with younger clients with permanent cognitive, developmental, and behavioral disabilities. Many of these clients participated in programs no longer supporting these clients transportation needs.

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. The State funding helps to sustain these services, but in the past years we have experienced a 20% reduction to our 5307 operating State funds which are critical for our County's fixed routes and ADA Complementary. SSTAP funds that have been flat for more than 20 years and these funds ensure seniors receive services at senior centers and we all other Demand response trips. The States funding for SSTAP has remained flat in Harford County at \$170,371 for 20 years, though the cost to operate this program has increased along with the demand. The County now provides more than 1.4 million and our riders fares exceed the State mating funds. In FY20, The State reduced 5307 matching funds by 20% and have not restored those funds.

The services we provide maintain a quality of life for seniors and persons with disabilities. The States matching funds for Transit services are a fiscal demonstration that Maryland fully recognizes and supports the wrap around services provided to ensure Aging in Place, Dialysis Care, Cancer Treatment, Employment, Economic Development and educational opportunities are successful. The demand for paratransit services has increased since the pandemic. Residents' level of access to medical care during

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that period changed, resulting in long COVID, increased cases of kidney failure, later stage cancers and other chronic and acute conditions as a result of delayed access.

As we recover from the pandemic, we are being called upon to provide more paratransit service to more people while also addressing transitions to low and zero emissions technology. Unfortunately, funding for these other programs and services have changed during this time and we have been additionally burdened by clients previously served through other program. This is a tenuous time for Transit services as we are restoring ridership, maintaining aging fleets, and navigating challenging transitions to alternative fuels.

Since 1971, the Transportation Trust Fund has been supporting Locally Operated Transit Systems fund operations to support all Marylanders. State support for local transit is critical to ensure our goals of quality service, environmental protection, and equity are reached. Inflation has particularly hit our industry hard, with prices for small Ford cutaway bus increasing from \$98,000 in FY18 to more than \$167,000 in FY24. These prices are for comparable gasoline buses for paratransit services and do not begin to address the even higher prices associated with alternative fuels and corresponding infrastructure.

Driver Recruitment is a year-round commitment, in addition to the fiscal investment. Making bus operators salaries competitive within the pool of qualified CDL holders is mostly absorbed by each agency. If no stabilization or potential for inflationary increases are considered for state funds, Transit critical services will mirror the available funding affecting those who rely on our local services. We fully support House Bill 950's efforts to increase support for the mobility of the citizens and communities we serve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. Glock", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jodi M. Glock

Trnsit Manager, Harford Transit LINK