



# TOWN OF OCEAN CITY

*The White Marlin Capital of the World*

Monday, March 25, 2024

Maryland General Assembly  
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee  
Miller Senate Office Building, Room 3-West  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Bill:	HB950 – Maryland Transit Administration – Locally Operated Transit Systems – Mandatory Funding
Position:	SUPPORT

Chair Guzzone, Vice-Chair Rosapepe, and the Honorable Committee:

My name is Rob, and I’m the Transportation Manager for the Town of Ocean City, Maryland. I am writing to summarize and expand upon the remarks that I provided in support of HB950 to the House Appropriations Committee – because I feel they highlight a different, yet still vital, role of public transit.

Like Maryland’s other Locally Operated Transit Systems, Ocean City Transit provides mobility for a transit-dependent resident population and workforce. This is, of course, a vital service for many, connecting them with food, healthcare, and employment – and you will find testimony from my colleagues across the state detailing the negative impact that a funding cut surely would have on the lives of these sorts of riders. However, it would likely not come as a surprise for you to find that the vast majority of Ocean City’s 1.3 million annual passengers do not fall into this category. You would be correct to assume that most of the folks on our buses are beachgoers and Boardwalk visitors. But you would be *incorrect* to assume that the effect of reduced funding for our service would be nothing more than an inconvenience for vacationers. The effect could very well be a matter of life and death. *(And I understand that this sounds very dramatic – but, I ask that you please hear me out.)*

Ocean City Transit does more than give a lift to those who want to wade into the surf, or play a round of eighteen of mini-golf, or hit the arcades and amusement rides, or grab some Thrasher’s fries. The most important part of our mission is to provide a safe, convenient, affordable, and reliable alternative to driving while impaired. Those who come into town to relax, unwind, and enjoy a few adult beverages always have an inexpensive means to return safely to their lodging arrangements, without getting behind the wheel. There’s no reason even to contemplate doing so. Our bus stops line Coastal Highway along the complete length of the city in both directions, every 800 feet on average. And during the summer peak we have a bus passing by each stop every few minutes.

**MAYOR**  
Richard W. Meehan

**CITY COUNCIL**

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Of the state's ten thousand drunk driving arrests in 2023<sup>(1)</sup>, a mere 310 of them occurred in Ocean City<sup>(2)</sup>. And while collisions between motor vehicles and scooters, bicyclists, and pedestrians occur in modest numbers every year, we have been fortunate to report only four fatalities from such incidents over the last five calendar years. Even including the above, overall traffic fatalities in the city have averaged only two per year over the last five calendar years<sup>(2)</sup>. By and large, despite the festive atmosphere throughout the vacation season, Ocean City is a safe place to drive, bike, and walk.

We like to think that Ocean City Transit plays a massive role in that success. We do not have firm statistics on what percentage of our riders have had a few adult beverages before boarding – but anecdotally I'm sure our drivers will tell you that it's a significant proportion, particularly after the dinner hour. Our fear is that a reduction in funding, which would in turn cause a reduction in the frequency of service (and an increase in the incidence of buses already filled to capacity rolling by stops with passengers waiting to board), would result in an uptick of impaired vacationers making poor travel decisions. This clearly would put themselves, their passengers, other motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians at risk of injury or fatality.

We ask that the Committee consider a favorable report on House Bill 950, guaranteeing sustained funding levels for Maryland's Locally Operated Transit Systems, including our operation in Ocean City. We like to say that Ocean City is "Somewhere to smile about" – and we hope you will do your part to help us keep it that way.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Robert M. Shearman, Jr., CCTM  
Transportation Manager  
Town of Ocean City, Maryland

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(1) WTOP News, "Is this the year Noah Law's loophole closes? Activists push Maryland to prevent repeat drunk drivers," February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Retrieved from <https://wtop.com/montgomery-county/2024/02/is-this-the-year-noah-laws-loophole-closes-activists-push-maryland-to-prevent-repeat-drunk-drivers/>

(2) Ocean City Police Department 2023 Annual Report, page 24. Retrieved from <https://oceancitymd.gov/oc/wp-content/uploads/2023-Annual-Report-FINAL.pdf>