

House Environment and Transportation Committee
House Bill 1507: Transportation - Change in Bus Service - Impacts Report
Date: March 20, 2024

Position: Support (with Amendment)

Thank you to the Committee Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the committee for the opportunity to provide testimony. My name is Gabriel Rubinstein and I am an attorney with Disability Rights Maryland, the protection and advocacy organization for Maryland. DRM's mission is to advocate for the legal rights of people with disabilities throughout the state. One of the mandated purposes of DRM's legal work is to ensure that people with disabilities are included in their communities.

House Bill 1507 increases the transparency of agency decisions, and facilitates engagement and oversight from the community. We believe this is an important bill that requires some amendments. Community integration requires public transportation systems that are equally reliable, effective, and accessible to people with disabilities. To be most effective, we believe this bill should also apply the same changes to paratransit service. Paratransit service is federally mandated Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) service that operates within $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile of fixed route services (metro/light rail/local bus). Our requested amendments are as follows:

On page 1, in line 19, strike "**SECTION**" and substitute "**SUBSECTION**"; and in the same line, after "**LINE**" insert , "**OR THE CORRESPONDING PARATRANSIT SERVICE AREA**".

On page 2, in line 9, strike the first "**THE**" and substitute "**: 1. THE**"; and after line 9, insert:

"2. PARATRANSIT ROUTES;

3. THE CORRESPONDING PARATRANSIT SERVICE AREA; AND

4. THE ESTIMATED NUMBER OF PARATRANSIT RIDERS IMPACTED;".

All Marylanders should be able to rely on travel plans to facilitate their various life activities. When transit agencies change routes or reduce service unexpectedly, the result can be extremely chaotic for riders, and cause serious disruptions to riders' day-to-day activities. Those with disabilities are no exception, as many people with disabilities rely on bus and paratransit to travel to critical events like work, school, and medical appointments. Of course, it's important that our transit agencies have the ability to adapt to demand to allow systems to function optimally for all, but there must be a clear process and means of notice and engagement for those impacted. House Bill 1507 provides such a process; the understanding that alterations to bus routes directly impact paratransit riders is paramount, and House Bill 1507 can address this linkage by including paratransit in this legislation.

In conclusion, House Bill 1507 is not just about transparency in transit changes; it is a crucial step toward ensuring accessibility and inclusivity for all individuals, including those with disabilities who rely on paratransit services.

For these reasons, DRM strongly supports House Bill 1507 with amendments, and requests a favorable report.

Respectfully,

/s/

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