

HB1023_Korman_FAV

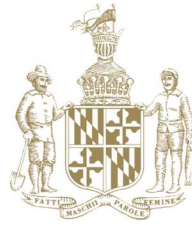
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MARC KORMAN
Legislative District 16
Montgomery County

Chair
Environment and Transportation
Committee

Rules and Executive
Nominations Committee



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

The Washington Suburban Transit Commission Reform Act (HB 1023)
Testimony of Delegate Marc Korman—Favorable

Thank you Madam Vice Chair and my colleagues on the Environment and Transportation Committee. I come before you to present the Washington Suburban Transit Commission (WSTC) Reform Act (HB 1023). The legislation will make several changes to modernize WSTC. As you know the WSTC coordinates mass transit projects between Prince George's County, Montgomery County, and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) and serves as something of a passthrough entity for Maryland's relationship with WMATA. The legislation passed unanimously in both the Prince George's County Delegation and the Montgomery County Delegation.

The Commission consists of seven members appointed to four-year terms. Two are chosen by the Prince George's County Executive and two by the Montgomery County Executive. With Senate advice and consent, the Governor appoints one member from Montgomery County and one from Prince George's County. The Secretary of Transportation serves as an *ex officio* member. The Secretary—or their designee—and one other WSTC Commissioner act as Maryland's principal WMATA Board members. The non-Secretary WMATA board seat rotates back and forth between Montgomery and Prince George's Counties.

WSTC also has a small staff, but under Governor Moore and Secretary Wiedefeld it is becoming more active to ensure appropriate oversight of—and support for—WMATA by the state of Maryland.

We have worked with the Maryland Department of Transportation to propose the following changes to improve WSTC:

- Remove the requirement that all WSTC contracts to conduct its day-to-day business must go through both Councils for approval. This requirement is out of step with other bi-county agencies. The change would reflect WSTC practice over the last 30 years. To be sure, both Councils would continue to have overall oversight of the WSTC.
- Standardize the language for the Transportation Secretary designee's attendance and rights on the WMATA Board of Directors. This is to clean-up provisions of the change we made in 2018 to add the Maryland Secretary of Transportation to the WMATA board.

- Clarify that the non-secretarial Gubernatorial WSTC appointee to the WMATA Board of Directors may be reappointed but cannot be succeeded by a resident of the same County. This preserves the regional balance of the Commission but also ensures that our Board Members can develop expertise to serve on the Board.

The three changes outlined in the bill will modernize WSTC's procedures in line with other bi-county agencies and will improve the efficiency of the Commission overall. At a time in which our transportation system faces major funding and operational challenges it is imperative that the WSTC function efficiently and with appropriate regional balance. I urge a favorable report.

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March 7, 2024

The Honorable Marc Korman
Chair, House Environment and Transportation Committee
251 House Office Building
Annapolis MD 21401

RE: Letter of Support – HB 1023 – Prince George’s County and Montgomery County – The Washington Suburban Transit Commission Reform Act

Dear Chair Korman and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) strongly supports House Bill 1023 as an important step in streamlining and reforming the Washington Suburban Transit Commission and the State’s commitment to the oversight and support of Metro.

By way of background, the Washington Suburban Transit Commission (WSTC) was created in 1965 and is the bi-county agency that serves as the financial conduit for funding of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) and for supporting transit in Prince George’s County through the Washington Suburban Transit District tax. MDOT plays a major role in staffing and supporting the WSTC and alongside Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties, we are working to make WSTC a more useful resource for our partners. MDOT views WSTC as Maryland’s Metro and DC-area transit think tank, aligning with the role NVTC plays in Northern Virginia. As such, MDOT is committed to working more closely with the Counties on transit policy matters and developing a new Joint Study Fund to address key WMATA policy issues.

House Bill 1023 makes three important changes:

1. Clarifies when the Secretary’s designee to the WMATA Board of Directors may attend meetings and confirms that the designee has the same authority as the Secretary when attending meetings. Current law only allows the Secretary’s designee to attend a meeting in the event there is a scheduling conflict – this provision is overly restrictive compared to other instances where the Secretary is authorized to select a designee to serve in their place.

2. Authorizes the WSTC to reappoint a member to the WMATA Board of Directors before the requirement to alternate between a Montgomery and a Prince George's County Director is triggered. Currently, the law is ambiguous in relation to whether current WMATA Board Directors from one of the Counties may be reappointed without triggering a succession event where a Commissioner from another County would need to take the seat. This ambiguity raises questions about the appropriate succession process and may create difficulties in achieving balance between the two Counties when, due to appointment timings and resignations, terms of service on the WMATA Board do not line up neatly with WSTC terms and the term length of previous Commissioners.
3. Repeals the requirement that Montgomery County and Prince George's County Councils must review and approve WSTC contracts. The requirement for the County Council review and approvals of contracts for the normal course of WSTC business is inconsistent with the regulatory regime for the other bi-county agencies such as the WSSC and M-NCPPC and imposes an administrative burden on the WSTC and the Counties.

For these reasons, the Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests that the Delegation grant House Bill 1023 a favorable report.

Respectfully submitted,

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