

**Testimony on HB 1081
MTA Reform Act
House Environment & Transportation Committee**

Date: February 24, 2026

Position: FAVORABLE

The Coalition for Smarter Growth supports **HB 1081**. Our organization advocates for walkable, bikeable, inclusive, and transit-oriented communities as the most sustainable and equitable way for the Washington, DC region to grow and provide opportunities for all. We work extensively in the Maryland suburbs of DC, in particular in Prince George's and Montgomery counties.

In particular, we are testifying in support of two of the bill provisions:

- Establishment of a Commuter Services Advisory Board for MARC and MTA Commuter Bus services; and
- A technical study on the creation of a rail authority in the state.

MARC and MTA commuter bus services are vital transportation options in Maryland, and deserve their own advisory board. Given crowded corridors like the BW Parkway and I-270, enhanced MARC service has the potential to cost-effectively provide more reliable, sustainable and affordable travel options. New direct rail service to major job centers like L'Enfant Plaza and National Landing in Virginia is also in early planning stages. In addition, MARC stations have significant potential to support more homes and businesses, providing affordable locations that save households and workers transportation costs and time. The state-owned transit-oriented development sites along the Penn Line could accommodate 3,000 new housing units and generate \$800 million in new state and local revenue.

The proposed advisory board would help ensure closer stakeholder involvement and guidance to planning and operations decisions. CSG has seen the beneficial role of the advisory board of the Virginia Railway Express (VRE) in the Northern Virginia suburbs of DC. With focused, dedicated boards of regional officials, the VRE commuter railroad has been able to implement a full program of station, maintenance facility, and track improvements, with more on the way.

HB1081 also studies a statewide rail authority, which has been a successful model in other states. In neighboring Virginia where we work, the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPRA), created by the General Assembly in 2020, has brought focus to managing, funding, and growing statewide rail services. VPRA has the authority to own and acquire rail infrastructure. The major investments in the *Transforming Rail in Virginia Plan* are proceeding, with significant benefits for freight, commuter and intercity rail. By adding focus on rail facility and service improvements, a dedicated authority in Maryland could likewise help unleash the potential of the state's extensive rail infrastructure and opportunities for economic development.

We ask for a **favorable report for HB 1081** by the committee. Thank you.