

## Introduction and Overview

- Good afternoon Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton and Members of the Committee.
- My name is Sameer Sidh and I serve as the Director of Maryland Government Affairs for Johns Hopkins University and Medicine.
  - However, I join you today in my role as the Chair of the Workgroup on the Reorganization of the Maryland Transit Administration.
  - My views expressed today are my own and don't necessarily reflect the views of Johns Hopkins University or Johns Hopkins Health System.
- The Workgroup was established by this body to study the potential of reorganizing the Maryland Department of Transportation and the Maryland Transit Administration.
  - We were tasked with considering alternative reorganization plans, weighing the costs and benefits, identifying certain contractual, federal, and workforce obligations of the MTA, and ensuring that Baltimore City maintained appropriate oversight and input into the core Baltimore transit services provided by MTA.
- The Workgroup met five times between September and December 2025. We were provided briefings by MDOT, MTA, the Baltimore Metropolitan Council, the American Public Transit Association, members of the public, and other subject matter experts to help us guide our work.

## Problem Statements

- After robust discussion amongst the Workgroup membership, we identified two problem statements that focused our efforts:
  - First, Baltimore regional transit is lagging behind the neighboring Washington DC metro region from a growth perspective, and that there has been no meaningful expansion of the system in over 30 years.
    - Informing this problem statement was a side by side comparison of maps for both the Baltimore and Washington planned metro systems from 1967, and the current state of each system. Undeniably, Washington's metro system has realized significantly more of its 1967 vision than the Baltimore region.
  - And second, improvement of the MARC commuter rail service, which has seen reduced ratings from national publications in recent years.
- Though expansion of Baltimore regional transit is primarily a financial issue, there are clear governance issues at play as well that must be addressed to grow the system.
  - Those governance issues were highlighted in 2015 when the Red Line project was cancelled unilaterally with no check or balance from a governance perspective.
- We also know that MARC services must be improved to reflect updated working patterns after the COVID-19 pandemic, and to better weave together job opportunities in both the Baltimore and Washington regions.

## Key Findings

- In December, the Workgroup submitted a Joint Chairmen's Report of our key findings during our interim work period.
- At a high-level, the Workgroup endorsed the creation of two Boards of Directors – one overseeing Baltimore Core Services and another overseeing MTA Commuter Services. These boards would be tasked with various powers and duties, but I wanted to highlight a few:
  - First, the Baltimore Core Services board would be appointed by both the Governor, the Mayor of Baltimore, and the County Executives of the service counties.
    - Establishment of this board with shared State and local appointments represents a major milestone in advancing shared governance between the State and the Baltimore region for transit.
  - Second, the Baltimore Core Services board would be vested with supermajority veto power over future decisions to withdraw major, federally funded, transit projects that have reached certain engineering and financial commitment milestones.
    - This power would provide an important check on politically driven decisions to block multi-year and multi-administration transit expansion projects.
  - Third, both boards would have the opportunity to review and advocate for the MTA's budget requests and needs, for their respective services. This ability will help public understand the MTA's true needs to deliver the services

Marylanders deserve and enable effective advocacy here in Annapolis for resources.

- And, lastly, new Deputy Director positions would be created at MTA to be the direct links between the boards and MTA operations and capital decisions.
- While the Workgroup believes governance reform is critical to MTA's success, we also recommended several legislative and policy items that would enhance MTA's operations and ability to effectively deliver projects and services to Marylanders.
  - These include liability reform, executive personnel compensation reform, and certain delegated contract authorities that are in line with MTA's roadway modal counterparts.

## **Conclusion**

- The legislation before us today fairly represents the views of the Workgroup and would represent a monumental step towards a stronger, more transparent, and responsive transit system for Maryland.
- I also want to acknowledge Sean Winkler from MDOT, who is on the panel with me today, Patrick Tracy, Counsel to this committee, and Samuel Quist of DLS, who provided dedicated staff support for our work.
- With that, I urge a favorable report on HB 1081 and I look forward to any questions you may have.
- Thank you.