



Testimony on HB 1081 – *Maryland Transit Administration Reform Act* – Environment and Transportation Committee

Position: Favorable with Amendments

The Central Maryland Transportation Alliance and Bikemore recommend amendments to HB 1081, which repeals the Baltimore Regional Transit Commission (BRTC) and replaces it with a board for Baltimore Core Transit Service. The bill also establishes an advisory board to provide guidance on the MARC commuter train and Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) commuter bus services.

We support the ongoing efforts of leaders in state and local governments to reform the governance of the MTA. There appears to be broad agreement that reform is needed to address the problems of prolonged underinvestment in the state of good repair needs and the expansion and improvement plans of the MTA, as well as the ability of former Governor Larry Hogan to unilaterally cancel the Red Line project after over \$200 million taxpayer dollars had been spent, \$900 million in federal investment had nearly been secured, and countless hours of stakeholder involvement had been asked for and given.

We think the root cause of the problems is the structural mismatch between the governance and the stakeholders. The stakeholders in the performance of the Baltimore Core Transit Service are primarily the people and businesses near the MTA light rail, MTA Metro Subway and MTA local bus routes. About 38 percent of the GDP of Maryland is generated in the MTA core service area, but only about 30 percent of the state's population lives there. The other 70 percent of the state's population experience indirect benefits when the Baltimore Core Transit Service supports the state's economy, but they probably focus on investment priorities that are more visible to them when they vote and advocate. The governance of the MTA resides solely with the Governor who answers to voters statewide.

HB 1081 eliminates the BRTC which is staffed by the Baltimore Metropolitan Council and replaces it with a board that is staffed by a state government agency. The majority of the new board's seats are appointed by the Governor, and it replaces the election of a chair by the members of the committee with appointment of a chair by the Governor.

These changes would replace the BRTC with a body that is under greater influence of the Governor. That would not be a step in the direction of addressing the root cause of the problems that the Baltimore Core Transit Service faces.

Therefore, we suggest amending House Bill 1081 to have the new board staffed by the BMC and for its chair to be elected by its members.

We encourage a FAVORABLE with AMENDMENTS report for House Bill 1081.