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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HB 1081: Maryland Transit Administration Reform Act

Testimony of Delegate Marc Korman – Favorable

Thank you, Madam Vice Chair, and my colleagues on the Environment and Transportation Committee. I come before you today to present HB 1081, the Maryland Transit Administration Reform Act.

Last session, this committee considered and passed a work group regarding the future of the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA). MTA is a unique agency. It provides local transit service in Baltimore through their subway, light rail, bus, and paratransit program. It provides some statewide commuter transportation programs via the MARC Rail and Commuter Bus. And it is in charge of various aspects of state transit policy. The work group met over the interim five times and dug into the details of how the MTA operates and how it can be improved. You can read the work group's report and meeting materials [here](#).

The MTA Reform Act simply implements the work group report. Specifically, it establishes a Board of Directors within MTA to serve as the governing authority for Baltimore Core Transit Service. Consequently, the Baltimore Regional Transit Commission will be repealed as an advisory body for transit in the Baltimore City region. The bill also creates a Commuter Services Advisory Board within the MTA to provide oversight and guidance for specific MTA commuter rail and bus services in Maryland. These boards will have many benefits including giving the Baltimore-area more of a local voice—but not full control—over their transit service. And it will allow our somewhat neglected commuter services to receive more care and attention.

The interim work group brought to light many differences between how MTA and other modes operate. The work group report—and, therefore, this bill—propose to bring some further parity.

First, the State Highway Administration has what is known as quick take authority for eminent domain. The MTA has the ability to use eminent domain, but not under quick take. Quick take authority allows an agency to estimate fair value of the property and deposit it with the court in order to take the property, although if the court finds a higher value the agency will still need to pay that, with interest. However, this is a constitutional amendment so it is ultimately up to the people of Maryland whether this piece will go into effect.

Second, the bill applies the procurement process that applies to highways to fixed guideway transit systems as well. This includes changes in the Board of Public Works review and other elements of state procurement law, consistent with State Highway exceptions.

Third, the bill applies the same statutory caps on tort liability that apply to the rest of state government. That limit is \$400,000 in injuries to a single plaintiff. This does not impact economic or punitive damages.

Fourth, the bill applies personnel policies that apply to certain designated management positions at the Maryland Aviation Administration and Maryland Port Administration to the Maryland Transit Administration as well. In particular, the bill gives the Maryland Transportation Commission approval authority over compensation and other elements of up to 12 management employees at MTA.

Together, these will make MTA operate similar to parallel entities in the state as well as other transit agencies around the region and country.

The bill also directs the Maryland Department of Transportation, in contract with the Baltimore Metropolitan Council, to complete a technical study on a potential rail financing authority, by December 1, 2026. The technical study should examine peer state models, such as Virginia and Austin in order to determine potential next steps while consulting regional partners. Existing rail service should remain on MTA without undermining funding that would go to Baltimore Core Transit Services.

Thank you for your consideration. I urge a favorable report.