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To: House Environment and Transportation Committee

The members of the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland urge the House Environment and Transportation Committee to give a favorable report to HB1081 - Maryland Transit Administration Reform Act.

This bill establishes the Board of Directors for Baltimore Core Transit Service, which will have the power to suggest new projects related to means of transit governed by MTA, including buses, light-rail, etc. It also begins a technical study on the creation of a prospective rail authority in the state.

Maryland has a vibrant community of blind and disabled people who face accessibility challenges related to MTA and public transportation. These include lack of fixed-route stop announcements, drivers' occasional misunderstanding of etiquette related to blind and disabled passengers, etc. We are happy to see that this bill includes on the board a position specifically allocated to someone who faces accessibility barriers. We believe the board, which includes such a position, has the capacity to make great strides in increasing the accessibility of MTA systems.

Blind people benefit from multi-modal public transportation, which enables us to choose how to arrive at different destinations. Buses and rail systems reach different places, and since we cannot drive, we must learn to use the public transportation resources available to us. While this bill only establishes a study for a prospective rail system, we are confident in the results indicating the benefits of a rail system to passengers in Baltimore.

For those reasons and others, we ask for a favorable report on HB1081. For questions, please contact me at President@nfbmd.org or at 443-426-4110.