

CSG MD HB1081 MTA Reform Act 2026 testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Bill Pugh

Position: FAV

**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.

HB 1081 - Maryland Transit Administration Reform A

Uploaded by: Brian Wivell

Position: FAV

Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1300

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Proudly representing the transit workers of the MTA!



HB 1081 - Maryland Transit Administration Reform Act Favorable

House Environment and Transportation Committee
February 26, 2026

ATU Local 1300 represents over 3,000 transit workers at the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA). This includes bus operators, bus mechanics, rail operators, rail maintenance workers, and more. Our members keep Maryland moving every day.

Since the cancellation of the MTA's Red Line rail project in 2015, Baltimore transit riders, elected officials, and organizations have renewed their calls for expanded Baltimore regional input and authority over the decisions made that impact their everyday transportation. Some even advocated for the full dismantling of the MTA system in Baltimore and the creation of a Baltimore Regional Transit Authority (BRTA), a move that we believed would have unintended financial and logistical consequences.

In 2023, the General Assembly passed legislation that created the Baltimore Regional Transit Commission (BRTC), a first of its kind entity for Baltimore residents to be given some direct voice in the oversight of MTA services in the area. The BRTC importantly included a seat for labor representatives of frontline MTA workers, following the model of other transit systems around the country. ATU Local 1300 was proud to participate in this process, but we often felt that the BRTC did not have sufficient authority to provide oversight or accountability. The Red Line was re-announced, but many advocates framed their ongoing concerns with one question, "If there were a Governor unfriendly to transit, what would stop them from canceling the project all over again?"

2025's HB 517 paved the way for a comprehensive review of the MTA's structure and explored ways where the administration may make governance changes to provide appropriate oversight and input for local Baltimore City transit services. The Workgroup had some limitations. It wasn't really tasked with tackling some of the complicated funding discussions necessary for any real restructure. Nevertheless, we were happy to attend every meeting as members of the public and interested stakeholders. We provided routine commentary and feedback, especially around ATU's experiences with transit reorganizations. We flagged concerns about UMTA 13(c) issues and jeopardizing federal funding if reorganizations were done poorly. We also raised concerns about how pension liabilities may be transferred. Ultimately, Local 1300 is happy with where the workgroup came to consensus. It does not really make sense, practically, to do a full reorganization or breaking apart of the MTA, though the introduction of a new Core Services Board and a Commuter Services Advisory Board will go a long way towards addressing transit rider concerns. Like the BRTC, we were happy to see the inclusion of a labor seat on the Baltimore Core Service Board.

We believe that long term funding questions for the MTA have not been resolved, but the Workgroup did a thorough job in addressing its charge. We believe the MTA Reform Act found a happy medium between modernization, addressing the concerns of a particular region versus MTA's statewide role, and avoiding common transit reorganization pitfalls. We urge the committee to issue a favorable report on this bill.

HB1081_Maryland_Transit_Administration_Reform_Act_

Uploaded by: Cecilia Plante

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY FOR HB1081 Maryland Transit Administration Reform Act

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Korman
Committee: Environment and Transportation
Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition
Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair
Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB1081 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists, and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

If the remit of the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) was to make transportation in Maryland world class, or even just good, they have failed epically. There is no easy way to get from any one city in Maryland to any other city unless you a) drive (which many people can't afford), and b) sit in traffic forever. We have no good public transportation system.

In Frederick, I live less than 1 mile from a rail station. However, it doesn't run except for rush hour on weekends, and I can only use it to get to DC, not to Baltimore, or Annapolis. And, let's not talk about the idiot move to drop the Red Line. The MTA does not make good decisions and it's time to have some oversight.

This bill, if enacted, would reform the Maryland Transit Administration--which runs Baltimore-area transit as well as statewide commuter rail and commuter bus service--by creating two new boards to oversee their decision-making. The board would have the ability to oversee budgets, approve new initiatives and policies and have approval authority, supported by at least two-thirds of the members of the board, over any decision by the Department of Transportation or the Administration to withdraw a new starts capital investment grant or another federal grant for any Baltimore core transit service area project.

All we have to say, is its past time to do this. Our members have no confidence in the MTA and we believe a lot of our money has gone to waste.

We strongly support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.

Written Testimony .pdf

Uploaded by: David Pendleton

Position: FAV

DAVID PENDLETON SR.
Chairperson/Director

TOM CAHILL
Vice Chairperson/Assistant
Director

BRITTANY GARRIS
Secretary



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February 23, 2026

HB1081 – MARC Rail Authority Act

REPRESENTATIVES

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Local 600
RANDY MARTZ

BRUNSWICK

Local 631
TOM CAHILL

EDMONSTON

Local 1470
BRITTANY GARRIS

BALTIMORE

Local 610
CHRIS ALEXANDER

Local 1949
JACOB STROMAN

Chair Korman, Vice Guyton and Members of my favorite committee, House E&T

Hello, my name is David Pendleton, I am the Director of the Maryland Safety and Legislative Board for the Transportation Division of SMART. Our members in the State of Maryland are employees of CSX Transportation, Norfolk Southern, Canton Railroad, Amtrak and MARC. We are conductors, engineers, yardmasters, switchmen and utility workers. We are **the train union**.

I am here today urging a favorable report for **HB1081**, the MARC Rail Authority Act.

HB1081 would create the Board of Directors for the Baltimore Core Transit Services and the Commuter Services Advisory Board for MARC Commuter Rail and the Administration's Commuter Bus Service within the MTA. Furthermore this law proposes a Constitutional Amendment allowing the Administration certain condemnation Authority and requiring MDOT to complete a technical study on the creation of a rail authority in the State.

Reforming the MTA in this manner, allowing MARC to operate more independently of the MTA will allow it to be more efficient, growth oriented and attentive to the needs of the riding public.

Our neighbor rail commuter agency, the VRE, has had similar authority for decades, while also having similar operations to MARC. According to its [CEO's report](#), in 2024, VRE's operating expenses were 1.8 million dollars under budget. This was due to its leadership being able to make decisions without unnecessary bureaucracy.

Despite ridership being only [33%](#) of pre-pandemic levels, these efficiencies were achieved without having to lay off employees or make cuts to its service. In fact, VRE has managed to expand. Starting construction on many capital improvements at several of its stations and facilities.

To date totaling \$125,000,000.00 worth of capital improvements. Many more are in the development and final planning stages totaling hundreds of millions of dollars more. Creating thousands of good paying union construction jobs.


MARC operates 3 times as many trains as the VRE, runs 7 days-a-week and transports double the amount of passengers. Imagine what MARC can do if it were free to operate in the same manner. Once this model proves to be successful, imagine the positive reforms that could be made.

A better service, more attentive to its customers' needs, while creating and maintaining thousands of good union jobs, a win-win formula for success!

Thank you for your time and consideration of our positions. SMART urges a favorable report!

Sincerely,

David Sr

David Pendleton Sr., Chairperson/Director
Maryland Safety & Legislative Board, LO-023
 SMART Transportation Division

HB1081_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Donna Edwards

Position: FAV



MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

Affiliated with the National AFL-CIO

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HB 1081 - Maryland Transit Administration Reform Act

House Environment and Transportation Committee

February 26, 2026

SUPPORT

Donna S. Edwards

President

Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO

Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 1081. On behalf of our 700 affiliated unions, I offer the following comments.

In 2023, the General Assembly passed HB 794 establishing the Baltimore Regional Transit Commission. This gave Baltimore residents a direct voice in the oversight of Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) services in the area. Importantly, the bill included a seat for labor representatives of frontline MTA workers with lived experience to contribute to the decisions that were being made.

HB 1081 also recognizes the importance of these voices and ensures that workers have a formal seat at the table on the Board of Directors for Baltimore Core Transit Service and the Commuter Services Advisory Board. This seat represents the people who operate, maintain, and support our transit systems, and makes them a core component of decision-making. This reinforces safety and service quality, transparency, workforce stability, and system reliability.

We strongly support the provisions in the bill that put workers first while focusing on further improving and developing our transit system. For these reasons, we urge a favorable vote on HB 1081.



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BRTC Testimony --House EandT -- HB 1081 MTA Reform

Uploaded by: Jon Laria

Position: FAV



Testimony Presented to the House Environment & Transportation Committee Hearing Date – February 26, 2026

House Bill 1081 – Maryland Transit Administration Reform Act Position – Support

Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Jon Laria, and I serve as Chair of the Baltimore Regional Transit Commission (BRTC).

The Commission strongly supports House Bill 1081, the Maryland Transit Administration Reform Act. This bill represents the most significant modernization of Maryland transit governance in decades and faithfully implements the consensus recommendations of the Workgroup on the Reorganization of the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) established by Chapter 402 of 2025 (the “Workgroup”). It advances reforms in governance, oversight, organizational capacity, management structure, legal authority, procurement, and long-range planning, each aligned with the Workgroup’s findings and designed to create increased accountability. As the Workgroup concluded, “MTA governance reform would enhance transparency and collaboration for local governments and the public in transit decision-making.”

The BRTC itself was created in 2023 in recognition of the Baltimore region’s local stakeholders’ lack of a meaningful voice in how the region’s transit system in the region operates and serves its residents. In fact, the Workgroup identified this as its first problem statement: “The Baltimore region has lacked direct or shared control over transit and governance decisions... Enabling more local representation and authority is essential.”

HB 1081 addresses this directly by establishing a strong, locally-informed governing board for MTA’s Baltimore Core Transit Service. Unlike the current BRTC, which that Board would replace, the Core Transit Service Board would be required to approve MTA’s operating and capital budget requests, as well as major service plans, policies, and initiatives. Also, withdrawal of a federal New Starts Capital Investment Grant project would require a two-thirds supermajority, an essential safeguard to preserve long-term capital commitments and avoid pre-emptive cancellation of critical projects such as the Baltimore-area Red Line, which was cancelled by a previous Governor absent any input or consensus.

The Workgroup also recognized that commuter rail and bus services operate under different conditions than Baltimore’s core transit network. To address these distinct needs, the Workgroup recommended a separate advisory body. HB 1081 implements this by establishing a Commuter Services Advisory Board with a mandate to advise on service plans, policies, and budget submissions.

The Workgroup also identified inconsistencies in how senior MTA management positions were treated relative to other MDOT leadership roles. To promote coherence and accountability, it recommended aligning MTA’s personnel practices with broader departmental standards. HB

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BALTIMORE REGIONAL TRANSIT COMMISSION

1081 accomplishes this by granting the Maryland Transportation Commission authority over qualifications, appointments, compensation, and leave policies for up to twelve key MTA management positions. This reform reduces the risk of politicized or ad hoc personnel decisions and ensures that MTA’s leadership structure is consistent with statewide norms.

Beyond governance and personnel, the Workgroup highlighted several legal and procedural barriers that have long hindered MTA’s ability to deliver major projects efficiently, which are included in the bill:

1. By capping MTA’s tort liability at \$400,000 per claimant, the bill aligns the agency with other state entities and reduces fiscal uncertainty;
2. By granting quick-take authority through a constitutional amendment, the bill equips MTA with a critical tool for timely property acquisition, an area where delays have historically slowed major projects; and
3. By aligning MTA’s procurement requirements with those of other MDOT modes, the bill allows MTA to adopt procurement practices better suited to the scale and complexity of transit infrastructure and deliver these to the public faster.

Together, these reforms remove longstanding structural impediments and directly implement the Workgroup’s findings.

For these reasons, the Baltimore Regional Transit Commission strongly supports HB 1081. It delivers the accountability, transparency, and regional responsiveness that Baltimore’s transit system requires and deserves.

We respectfully urge a favorable report.

HB 1081 Del Korman FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Marc Korman

Position: FAV

MARC KORMAN
Legislative District 16
Montgomery County

Chair
Environment and Transportation
Committee

Rules and Executive
Nominations Committee



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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.

HB 1081_MTBMA_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Michael Sakata

Position: FAV



Delegate Marc Korman, Chair
Environment and Transportation Committee
Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

February 26, 2026

RE: HB 1081 – FAVORABLE – Maryland Transit Administration Reform Act

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Transportation Builders and Materials Association has served as the voice of Maryland's transportation construction industry since 1932. Our 250 member companies build and maintain the State's roads, bridges, rail, and transit systems. We work closely with federal, state, and local officials to advocate for stable funding, efficient delivery, and long term infrastructure planning. MTBMA supports the direction of HB 1081.

This legislation lays important groundwork for shared State and regional governance of Baltimore Core transit services. By formalizing board authority over major service plans, capital budgets, and key project decisions, the bill reduces the concentration of unilateral decision making and introduces a clearer framework of accountability. That shared structure strengthens public confidence in major capital commitments.

The bill also advances tools that improve execution. Defined board oversight, enhanced management alignment, and expanded contract and delivery authorities position the Maryland Transit Administration to move projects more efficiently. For our industry and for taxpayers, predictability and timely contract execution matter. We all want projects to advance without unnecessary delay.

At the same time, MTBMA believes the General Assembly should ensure that these governance reforms fit within a broader statewide transit strategy. As discussion continues around Regional Transportation Authorities, we encourage the Committee to consider how the principles in HB 1081, shared governance, clearer authority, and improved contract delivery, can align with a coordinated statewide framework that promotes consistency across regions. HB 1081 is a meaningful step toward clearer governance and faster, more disciplined delivery. With thoughtful alignment to the State's broader transit structure, it can further strengthen Maryland's transportation system.

For these reasons, MTBMA respectfully requests a favorable report with consideration of amendments that reinforce statewide coordination and consistency.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Sakata", is written over a thin, light-colored line.

Michael Sakata
President and CEO
Maryland Transportation Builders and Materials Association

HB0924 Written Testimony Kelly.pdf

Uploaded by: Mike Kelly

Position: FAV



**Testimony Presented to the House Appropriations Committee
HB1081 – Maryland Transit Administration Reform Act**

Position: Favorable

Chair and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of HB1081 the Maryland Transit Administration Reform Act. I serve as Executive Director of the Baltimore Metropolitan Council, the federally designated metropolitan planning organization for central Maryland, and as a member of the Workgroup on the Reorganization of the Maryland Transit Administration charged with examining MTA governance. After five public meetings and months of work reviewing MTA's structure, national governance models, and operational challenges, the Workgroup reached a clear conclusion: creation of a Baltimore Core Services Board is in the interest of the State of Maryland.

The Baltimore region has not experienced a major expansion of its transit system in more than 30 years. The unilateral cancellation of the Red Line in 2015 demonstrated the structural vulnerability of the current governance framework. Regardless of one's position on that project, the underlying issue is that a generational transit investment can be halted without institutional guardrails or sustained regional input. Today, transit serving Baltimore – buses, light rail, metro, and MARC – is operated by MTA, a unit within MDOT, which must balance competing statewide priorities across highways, bridges, ports, and aviation. In that structure, Baltimore's core transit system lacks a dedicated governance body focused exclusively on its performance, capital planning, and long-term stability. Among the nation's largest transit systems, Baltimore stands alone in lacking its own board.

HB1081/SB947 implements the principal recommendation of the Workgroup on the Reorganization of the Maryland Transit Administration by establishing a Baltimore Core Services Board within MTA focused solely on bus, metro, and light rail services in the region. The Board would provide oversight of annual budgets and planning decisions and create guardrails to protect major capital investments from unilateral withdrawal.

The Governor would retain majority appointment authority and designate the Chair, while the Mayor of Baltimore City and surrounding county executives would appoint additional



members, including representation for riders and key stakeholders. For the first time, local elected executives in the Baltimore region would have an official voice in the operation of our major transit service. Further, our residents and the system's riders would have a public forum to track development, advocate for change and hear directly from MTA's leaders about the system that, for many, is a literal lifeline.

The proposal maintains MTA as a state agency within MDOT and preserves the Governor's ultimate budget authority. It does not create a new independent authority; rather, it is a measured reform that balances continued state control with meaningful local accountability and transparency.

Maryland's structure places transit under state control and land use under local control, making local/state coordination essential. A Baltimore Core Services Board would provide a formal governance bridge to improve transparency in resource allocation, strengthen alignment with transit-oriented development, and ensure greater continuity for long-term capital investments across administrations. The Workgroup on the Reorganization of the Maryland Transit Administration determined that this reform serves the State's interest and enhances accountability without disrupting MDOT's statewide responsibilities. Governance reform alone will not resolve every transit challenge, but it is the necessary first step.

Additionally, the Commuter Services Advisory Board established by HB1081 will establish a statewide body to guide and advise on the investments in our MARC and commuter bus system, which connects the Baltimore and Capital Regions and Western Maryland. Efficient commuter train service can harness the economies of our two largest metropolitan regions and allow suburban and rural jurisdictions to benefit from the economic development potential of transit-oriented development. The Commuter Services Advisory Board and proposed study of a Maryland rail authority will further our state's efforts to connect our residents and expand access to opportunity to all Marylanders.

I respectfully urge a favorable report and timely passage of this legislation so that Maryland can position the next gubernatorial term to deliver tangible improvements for Baltimore's transit riders and the regional economy.

Michael B. Kelly
Executive Director

HB1081-ET-FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Nina Themelis

Position: FAV



BRANDON M. SCOTT
MAYOR

*Office of Government Relations
88 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401*

HB 1081

February 26, 2026

TO: Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee
FROM: Nina Themelis, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations
RE: House Bill 1081 – Maryland Transit Administration Reform Act
POSITION: FAVORABLE

Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) enthusiastically **supports** House Bill (HB) 1081.

HB 1081 provides for governance and accountability at the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) by establishing separate core service and regional transit boards with oversight and approval powers over operational decisions and long-term investment. Furthermore, the legislation would put in place reasonable safeguards for the acquisition of property through condemnation.

In Fiscal Year 2025, MTA accounted for nearly 44% of the State's 162 million transit trips. MTA accounted for more transit trips than WMATA (61.3 million) or all Locally Operated Transit Systems combined (30 million). Baltimore core transit service alone accounted for nearly 65 million transit trips. ("Baltimore core transit service" is defined by HB 1081 as consisting of Baltimore-area bus, light rail, metro, and paratransit.) MTA's core transit service is a critical piece of Baltimore City's transportation network—of its roughly 570,000 residents, one out of three Baltimoreans lack access to a personal vehicle.

In light of these facts, the need for this legislation becomes apparent. HB 1081 would first and foremost insulate MTA's Baltimore-region operations and capital projects from the political climate by creating a layer of oversight at the local level. The Board of Directors for Baltimore Core Transit Service would act as a decision-making body supervising core transit service—light rail, metro, and bus. It would guide long-term investments and operating decisions (such as service adjustments), ensuring that the needs of Baltimore and its peer counties are met. More critically, the existence of this core service Board would ensure that MTA's decisions are informed by the region's best interests, not politics.

In addition, the legislation would establish the Commuter Services Advisory Board, a body tasked with informing the operations and long-term expansion of Maryland Area Rail Commuter (MARC) and commuter bus service. Expanding MARC service through legislation is a long-standing area of interest for transit advocates Statewide. The system served 4.7 million riders in Fiscal Year 2025 and continues to see rapid post-pandemic recovery, but expansion in the way of additional system miles has been

limited. Whereas previous legislation considered the creation of a standalone rail agency charged with the operation of MARC service, HB 1081 instead focuses on creating a forward-looking body intended to guide and advocate for the expansion of this critical rail service. This would allow MARC to remain within MTA's portfolio while providing for independent oversight which, similar to the core service Board, would be insulated from short-term political decision-making.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the creation of these independent boards would ensure that no single elected official can unilaterally decide which communities are worthy of transit investment. The 2015 cancellation of the Baltimore Red Line—a missing link in the region's transit network—was a devastating blow to the region's future. This unconscionable act of targeted disinvestment in tens of thousands of the Baltimore region's most vulnerable residents continues to be felt over ten years later. This shovel-ready project carried \$900,000,000 in federal investment, dollars which were returned to the Federal government as a result of its cancellation. While the Baltimore Red Line has since been revived, thousands of lifelong Marylanders were robbed of what was supposed to be a once-in-a-lifetime investment in the places they called home. Many of them would not live to see this vision realized. Safeguards must be put in place to guarantee that this kind of injustice is not allowed to repeat itself.

For the above stated reasons, the BCA respectfully requests a **favorable** report on HB 1081.

HB1081 - LOS - MTA - MTA Reform Act.pdf

Uploaded by: Patricia Westervelt

Position: FAV

February 26, 2026

The Honorable Marc Korman
Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee
250 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Letter of Support – House Bill 1081 – Maryland Transit Administration Reform Act

Dear Chair Korman and Committee members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully submits a letter in support of House Bill 1081.

HB 1081 proposes significant structural and governance reforms within the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA), including the establishment of a Board of Directors for Baltimore Core Transit Service, the creation of a Commuter Services Advisory Board, clarification of management authorities, tort liability reform, authorization of quick take condemnation authority, and the establishment of a statutory framework intended to strengthen transit system oversight and performance.

MTA directly participated in the Workgroup on the Reorganization of the MTA through the 2025 interim session and supports HB 1081. Based on the report issued by the Workgroup, HB 1081 will enhance governance, strengthen system accountability, and position the agency to deliver reliable, equitable, and forward-looking transit service to Maryland residents.

MTA is grateful that HB 1081 implements a fair and reasonable liability cap of \$400,000 per claimant for injuries arising from a single incident, aligning MTA with other State agencies and ensuring financial stability while maintaining accountability. As a vital public transportation provider, MTA faces unique liability challenges due to its exclusion from the Maryland Tort Claims Act.

Without a cap, the administration is exposed to unlimited liability, which places significant strain on resources that could otherwise be dedicated to enhancing transit services for Marylanders. High litigation costs, extensive legal processes, and unpredictable financial burdens can divert essential funding away from safety improvements, service enhancements, and infrastructure

The Honorable Marc Korman
Page Two

investments. Implementing a liability limit would allow MTA to better allocate its resources toward its core mission—providing safe, efficient, and reliable transit options to the public.

HB 1081 proposes constitutional amendments and statutory changes to authorize quick-take condemnation authority for MTA projects. Quick-take authority is a critical project delivery tool used by transportation agencies nationwide to facilitate timely project implementation and maintain eligibility for federal funding programs, while maintaining property owners' rights and due process to seek and be awarded fair property value.

HB 1081 also includes reforms that grant MTA delegated procurement authority for capital construction projects on existing, defined, fixed guideway systems. These parity reforms in procurement, tort reform, and quick-take authority are critical and will put MTA in line with peer transit agencies and other MDOT modes, promoting cost and operational efficiencies.

MTA is working with the bill sponsor on several technical amendments for consideration to ensure consistent terminology and definitions throughout the bill, avoid conflicts with language in other state articles, and ensure compliance with federal statutes.

MTA supports House Bill 1081 and its intent to strengthen governance and regional decision making and improve transit system performance.. MTA respectfully requests favorable consideration of House Bill 1081.

Respectfully submitted,

Jalen Sanders
Director of Government Affairs
Maryland Transit Administration
443-810-4461

Matt Mickler
Director of Government Affairs
Maryland Department of Transportation
410-865-1090

2-26-2026 FavorableHB1081_MTA_Reform.pdf

Uploaded by: Ronza Othman

Position: FAV



Live the life you want.

From: Ronza Othman, President
National Federation of the Blind of Maryland
15 Charles Plaza, #3002
Baltimore, MD 21201 president@nfbmd.org

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.

HB 1081 - Sameer Sidh - Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Sameer Sidh

Position: FAV

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.

HB1081 FWA Bikemore and CMTA.pdf

Uploaded by: Brian O'Malley

Position: FWA



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.

HB1081_MTA_KennedyKriegerLOI.pdf

Uploaded by: Emily Arneson

Position: INFO



February 26, 2026

The Honorable Marc Korman
Chairman House Environment and Transportation Committee
250 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: House Bill 1081 – Maryland Transit Administration Reform Act

Dear Chairman Korman:

The Maryland Center for Developmental Disabilities (MCDD) at Kennedy Krieger Institute is proud to be Maryland's designated federally funded University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service. The mission of the MCDD is to provide leadership that advances the inclusion of people with intellectual, developmental, and other disabilities through four core functions: interdisciplinary preservice training, continuing education and training; community services and technical assistance; research and evaluation; and product development and information dissemination. The MCDD is advised by a diverse Community Advisory Council (CAC) composed of more than 50 percent individuals with disabilities or family members and leaders from State agencies and organizations committed to improving the lives of Marylanders with disabilities.

The MCDD appreciates the inclusion of “at least one member who represents riders with accessibility challenges” in both the Baltimore Core Transit Service Board and the Commuter Services Advisory Board within House Bill 1081.

Transportation continues to be a significant barrier for individuals with disabilities due to inaccessible public transit options, limited cross-county transportation, the financial burden associated with travel, and the inconsistency and unreliability of scheduled paratransit services.

An individual with lived experience can provide practical insight into how transit systems function in real life, identify existing barriers, and highlight challenges that may not be visible to planners or administrators. Their active participation within the community brings firsthand expertise that strengthens decision-making.

We value the meaningful inclusion of individuals with disabilities as this bill and its goals advance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maureen van Stone".

Maureen van Stone, Esq., MS
Assistant Vice President & Director
Maryland Center for Developmental Disabilities
Kennedy Krieger Institute