

Testimony in Support of House Bill 368: Transit Safety and Investment Act
House Appropriations Committee | February 4, 2020

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The Chesapeake Climate Action Network (CCAN) Action Fund supports House Bill 368, legislation to ensure the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) can meet its capital needs and continue operations without reducing service to Maryland transit riders. We thank Del. Brooke Lierman for sponsoring this legislation to fund public transit, keep more cars off the road, and prevent increases in vehicle-based greenhouse gas pollution.

CCAN Action Fund and our grassroots network throughout Maryland is dedicated to achieving a net zero greenhouse gas emission economy by 2045, as is recommended by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). To create this future, we must invest in frontline and historically disadvantaged communities, protect workers, create good-paying union jobs, and result in greater wealth and income equality.

According to the Maryland Department of Environment (MDE), greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector make up 40% of the state's climate pollution, making it the top climate change contributor in the state. The vast majority of emissions within the transportation sector come from fossil-fuel powered vehicles, making up roughly one-third of all emissions in the economy.

In MDE's draft climate plan, as required by the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act, "fiscally unconstrained" transit expansion is credited with an expected reduction of 250 million miles driven in 2030, equivalent to removing 25,000 vehicles from the road in 2030. It is a core component of the agency's plan to reduce emissions 44% by 2030 -- enough to comply with state law, but well short of the 60% reduction recommended by the world's leading climate scientists in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. That means we will likely need to hit much higher goals for reducing vehicle travel to meet key climate benchmarks.

This legislation is essential for preparing our transit system for that needed expansion in the future. Without a properly maintained and functioning system, it will be difficult to expand service. This is a fiscally responsible plan to erase MTA's capital needs shortfall -- a very necessary first step to reducing transportation-based climate pollution. CCAN Action Fund urges the Committee to give HB 368 a favorable report.

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