



February 4, 2020

**Testimony on HB368-
Maryland Transit Safety & Investment Act
Appropriations**

**Position: Favorable
Indivisible Howard County Supports HB 368**

In 2004, Richard White, the then Chief Executive Officer of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA/Metro) stood before his Board of Directors and warned that the system was facing a death spiral due to deferred maintenance if the WMATA contributing jurisdictions did not increase capital funding so that the enormous Metro infrastructure could achieve a state of good repair. This followed a capital needs inventory that showed alarming deficiencies. That threat has remained an ever present possibility in the intervening years and Maryland has joined with the other WMATA jurisdictions to ensure adequate capital funding to a profoundly valuable regional asset. The rest of Maryland's transit systems' infrastructure deserve the same consideration and support because the same threat exists for those systems if they are not provided the funds identified as necessary to achieve and maintain a good state of repair.

In July, 2019, the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) released its own first ever Capital Needs Inventory (CNI) to assess MTA's ongoing unconstrained capital needs. The CNI identified \$5.7 billion of capital needs over the next ten years, \$1.5 billion of which is an accumulated backlog of deferred maintenance. The Maryland Department of Transportation's FY2020-2025 Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP) does not provide the MTA enough over the next six years to address the annual maintenance and repairs in the CNI. In fact, the backlog will increase.

The result of the neglected maintenance will be buses, light vehicles, subway trains and commuter trains that break down far more frequently than is the case with MTA's peer agencies. This leads to poor service which, in turn, leads to a drop in ridership and a negative spiral, trends that are very difficult to reverse.

Indivisible Howard County believes that robust transit systems are vital to the economic and environmental health of Maryland. Climate change is the existential threat we now face and transportation is the #1 contributor to climate pollution in Maryland. It is essential to first adequately maintain and then expand Maryland's public transit systems to reduce congestion and cut the emissions that cause climate change. It is hoped that Maryland will be a signatory to the Memorandum of Understanding that will underpin the Transportation and Climate Initiative which recognizes that a cleaner more efficient transportation and transit sector will "improve public health, create new economic opportunities and provide enhanced mobility for all communities." The Transit Safety & Investment Act will mandate that MTA's capital budget be funded at a level that allows it to address all of the needs identified and return the system to a state of good repair so that it can operate safely and reliably.

We encourage a favorable report.

Indivisible Howard County

Carol B. O'Keeffe