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**Testimony on HB 368 –
Maryland Transit Safety & Investment Act
Appropriations**

Position: Favorable

Interfaith Power & Light (DC,MD.NoVA) supports HB 368.

In July 2019, pursuant to §7–309 of the Code of Maryland, the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) released its first ever Capital Needs Inventory (CNI) to assess the 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 FY 2020–2025 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 it will add to the backlog.

The result of the neglected maintenance is buses, light rail vehicles, subway trains and commuter trains that break down way more often than the MTA’s peer agencies. This leads to poor service which leads to drops in ridership, and a negative spiral.

This past fall, over 50 congregations of many different faiths all across Maryland celebrated Climate in the Pulpits. Pastors, rabbis, imams, and other clergy joined together in a call to focus on the moral duty we have to respond to climate change. Those congregations gave special attention to the harm done to our neighbors by an overreliance on automobiles. The pollution from our traffic-snarled streets and highways damages our climate and steals breath from the lungs of vulnerable populations, like children and the elderly.

When we choose instead to invest in good, reliable public transportation, we are investing in the health of our climate and our neighbors. Public transportation gives access to jobs, healthy food, and medical care. It connects our neighborhoods and builds community. Hundreds of people of faith in those congregations signed a petition asking their legislators to protect the blessings of clean air by shifting our transportation system away from fossil fuels and towards public transportation.

The Transit Safety & Investment Act will mandate that MTA’s capital budget be at a level that allows it to address all of the needs identified and get the system back into a state of good repair so that it can operate safely and reliably.

We encourage a favorable report.