



POSITION STATEMENT

TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL 368 -- MARYLAND TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION - FUNDING (TRANSIT SAFETY AND INVESTMENT ACT)

February 4, 2020

**DONALD C. FRY
PRESIDENT & CEO
GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE**

Position: Support

The Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) supports House Bill 368. This legislation sets a minimum capital funding level for the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) of \$500 million each year for FY2022-2027 and prohibits reductions to MTA's operating funding levels during the same time period. This is analogous to the funding agreement that the Maryland General Assembly passed in the 2018 Session to guarantee funding levels for the Washington Metropolitan Transit Administration (WMATA).

Advocating for adequate transportation and mobility infrastructure in the Greater Baltimore region has been a longstanding priority of the GBC. The GBC was a strong proponent of the Red Line project and supported the 2013 revenue increase that was intended to provide a portion of the state funding for the project. Following the cancellation of the Red Line in 2015, the region has experienced significant disinvestment of state dollars in the transportation network, particularly in transit. Recent analysis of the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) budget by the Department of Legislative Services (DLS) indicates that in the time since the revenue increase was enacted, the MTA has received only 2 percent of capital spending above the 2013 base which equates to \$60 million dollars, while the State Highway Administration has received \$2.525 billion in additional funding, or 77 percent of the spending.

Last July, the MTA released a Capital Needs Inventory report that identified \$4.6 billion in capital needs over the next ten years to maintain the current system in a state of good repair, \$2 billion of which was unfunded. It was incredulous to then see \$303 million in cuts to MTA's capital program in the FY2020-2025 Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP). Absent a capital funding requirement for the MTA that complements the structure in place for WMATA, current policy suggests that the \$300 million cut to the MTA is a trend of disinvestment that will persist and worsen over the coming years.

The current level of disinvestment of state dollars in the Greater Baltimore region's transit network is unacceptable. We cannot stand by and watch state dollars diverted while the Greater Baltimore area's transit system falls further into disrepair, harming the economic growth and competitiveness of the region. The GBC supports House Bill 368 as a necessary step to ensure that MTA is adequately funded to provide safe and continuous operations of the transit system and to ensure that residents of the Greater Baltimore region have sufficient access to jobs, education and training programs, and health care.

An October 2019 [report](#) by the Abell Foundation cited transportation as one of the top three systemic drivers that prevent more individuals in Baltimore from accessing job training and ultimately obtaining employment. Specifically, the report states that:

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“The lack of reliable and affordable transportation to jobs is one of the greatest obstacles to scaling up training programs. Programs know that they can train and place a greater number of program graduates, but they limit expansion knowing that graduates will be unable to get to their new jobs. A number of programs reported that job growth in their target industry sector is concentrated in surrounding counties and/or is not accessible by public transportation, a problem that particularly impacts the most economically distressed neighborhoods of Baltimore” (page 19).

This bill is also consistent with a key tenet in *Gaining the Competitive Edge: Keys to Economic Growth and Job Creation in Maryland*, a report published by the GBC that identifies eight core pillars for a competitive business environment and job growth:

Superior transportation infrastructure with reliable funding mechanisms. An essential prerequisite of a competitive business environment includes well-funded and maintained highway, transit, port and airport infrastructure that provides reliable and efficient options to move people, goods and services.

Finally, the Greater Baltimore Committee’s 2020 Legislative Priorities encourage policymakers to implement a balanced transportation policy and funding priorities that create interconnected, multimodal transportation networks and promote equitable investment in systems across regions, modes, and communities. The 2020 Legislative Priorities specifically cite the need to advocate for consistent and adequate capital and operating funding levels for the MTA to ensure the safe and efficient operations of the current system and to reduce the multibillion dollar backlog needed to maintain the existing system in a state of good repair.

For these reasons, the Greater Baltimore Committee urges a favorable report on House Bill 368.

The Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) is a non-partisan, independent, regional business advocacy organization comprised of hundreds of businesses -- large, medium and small -- educational institutions, nonprofit organizations and foundations located in Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, and Howard counties as well as Baltimore City. The GBC is a 65-year-old, private-sector membership organization with a rich legacy of working with government to find solutions to problems that negatively affect our competitiveness and viability.