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Appropriations Committee

Public Safety and
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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Testimony in Support of House Bill 1367 Western Maryland Marc Rail Extension Study

Chair McIntosh & Members of the Appropriations Committee;
Chair Barve & Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee;

Thank you for hearing *HB 1367 – Western Maryland Marc Rail Extension Study*.

This bill requires the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) to conduct a study and develop recommendations on the feasibility, including the cost, of extending Maryland Area Regional Commuter (MARC) rail service to Western Maryland.

Western Maryland is home to one of the largest cities in Maryland (Hagerstown) that is not currently served by commuter rail. Studying the feasibility with the goal of extending Rail to Western Maryland would open up the potential for greater job accessibility, increased tourism, and a reduction in traffic on interstates 70 and 270. Less vehicles on the road will equate to a reduction in pollution and, ultimately, cleaner environments. Additionally, rail service could significantly relieve congestion on the roads with the highest volume during peak hours thus increasing highway safety throughout our interstate system.

Commuter rail would also provide access to higher paying job opportunities, particularly to those that can't afford to buy, insure, and maintain a vehicle. The construction and maintenance of a Western Maryland MARC rail extension would also provide significant economic development opportunities throughout the Western Maryland region. It is likely that private development would occur around transit stations – these projects may include housing developments, new businesses and other facilities, and would provide a great benefit to the surrounding communities.

Thank you for your consideration. I respectfully ask for a Favorable report on HB 1367.