



Mel Franklin
Council Member
At-Large

SB 105 - Southern Maryland Rapid Transit Project - Requirements and Funding

Written Testimony

MARYLAND SENATE BUDGET AND TAXATION COMMITTEE

JANUARY 9, 2020, 2:00 P.M.

Mel Franklin, Prince George's County Council, At-Large Member

Mister Chair and Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to address the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee and, on behalf of Prince George's County Council Chair Todd Turner and my colleagues, to express the County Council's strong support for Senate Bill 105, legislation that would provide for the design, engineering, and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process and secure a record of decision for the Southern Maryland Rapid Transit Project. I would like to thank Senator Arthur Ellis for his leadership in bringing forth this important legislation that will bring us closer to relieving the crushing traffic and congestion that Southern Maryland residents are experiencing on a daily basis. I would also like to acknowledge our Prince George's County members of this esteemed committee, Senator and President Pro Tem Melony Griffith, Senator Doug Peters, and Senator Jim Rosapepe, all great advocates for transit funding. My colleagues District 9 Council Member Sydney Harrison and fellow Council Member At-Large and Vice-Chair of the County Council, Calvin Hawkins, have joined me here today as well to emphasize their strong support for this legislation.

We have a crisis in Southern Maryland. And it is getting worse every day. The rising congestion on the Maryland 5/ US-301 corridor causes thousands of our residents in Prince George's, Charles, and St. Mary's Counties to spend thousands of hours of their lives each year sitting in their cars and away from their families. This reduces the time that our parents spend with their kids and with each other, hurting their quality of life. This traffic nightmare also causes many businesses on this corridor to struggle because residents avoid the area at high traffic times of day. This chokes economic development and job creation in Southern Maryland and hurts our tax base.



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On behalf of these hundreds of thousands of Marylanders, I am here to plead for your help because this crisis has no end in sight. There are no funded projects in the works that would help us take thousands of cars off the road and alleviate this crisis. That's why Senator Ellis' legislation is so important. It would move a project forward that is the answer to our traffic challenges on the MD-5/US-301 corridor, the Southern Maryland Rapid Transit Project. By moving this project through the NEPA and design phases, SB 105 would make this solution "shovel ready" for the day when construction dollars become available. The truth is that we cannot simply pave our way out of this problem. While I appreciate more road improvements for my constituents, they are only temporary remedies for a problem that needs a long-term policy solution. Furthermore, the recently completed Southern Maryland Rapid Transit project study demonstrated that this transit project would be an economic boom for the State, creating billions in economic development and tax revenue, which could be leveraged in a public-private partnership to help pay for the project. The NEPA and design process would yield more definitive answers about how to proceed with the project's construction.

The residents of Southern Maryland need and deserve our immediate action. Please pass SB 105 and help our hundreds of thousands of families and businesses in Southern Maryland and improve the quality of life for many generations to come. We need Southern Maryland Rapid Transit now. Thank you.

Mel Franklin
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Prince George's County Council