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Committee: Budget & Taxation
Testimony on: SB424 - “Maryland Transit Safety & Investment Act”
Position: Support
Hearing Date: February 12, 2020

The Maryland Sierra Club strongly **supports SB 424, one of our priority bills for this session.** This legislation would require the funding necessary to meet the capital needs of the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) from the Transportation Trust Fund, from 2022 to 2027, so that the system can be in a State of Good Repair. The MTA operates local buses, commuter buses, light rail, MARC, and paratransit, and provides funding to locally operated transit systems in every Maryland county, Baltimore City, Annapolis, and Ocean City.

In July 2019, MTA released its first Capital Needs Inventory (CNI). The CNI identified \$5.7 billion in capital needs over the next ten years, including a \$1.5 backlog of deferred maintenance. Moreover, the Department of Transportation’s FY 2020–2025 Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP) would not provide sufficient capital funding over the next six years to address MTA’s maintenance and enhancement needs, which would further enlarge the backlog. The appropriation proposed by this legislation would provide an estimated annual increase of \$123 million to MTA over the CTP’s proposed levels to address the gap and bring the system into a state of good repair, in order for the system to be able to operate safely and reliably.

The bill also would address enhancements identified by the CNI needed to improve access to MARC and bus stations, expand bus shelters, and promote sustainability (such as including EV charging at Baltimore metro and MARC stations, and adding rooftop solar at bus depots).

Transportation is the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Maryland and the leading contributor to premature deaths attributed to air pollution. Gasoline-powered vehicles on our roadways account for 70% of all these emissions, and total vehicle miles traveled on our roadways is expected to continue to increase faster than Maryland’s population through 2030.

Investing in public transit provides critically needed transportation for those without cars, and is an essential part of the state’s efforts to reduce climate, air, and water pollution by reducing Marylanders’ reliance on gasoline-powered cars. MTA currently provides 320,000 rides a day to Maryland residents. One individual who commutes 20 miles roundtrip by car could lower their carbon footprint 4,800 pounds annually, equivalent to the emissions of 245 gallons of gasoline, if they instead make that trip each day on public transit.

Properly funding MTA’s capital needs is critical to tackling climate-disrupting pollution and ensuring that people can use transit to safely and reliably get to jobs, education, healthcare, recreation, and other destinations each and every day. **We urge a favorable report on SB 424.**

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Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America’s oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has approximately 800,000 members.