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**Testimony on SB 424 –
Maryland Transit Safety & Investment Act
Budget & Taxation.**

Position: Favorable

Susan Nerlinger, Resident of Olney, Maryland and member of the Maryland Sierra Club supports SB 424.

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 with sufficient funds over the next six years to address the annual maintenance and repairs in the CNI.** In fact it will add to the backlog. This is unacceptable.

The result of the neglected maintenance is buses, light rail vehicles, subway trains and commuter trains that break down way more often than the facilities of MTA’s peer agencies. This leads to poor service which leads to drops in ridership, and a negative spiral. This is not the direction in which we want to go.

Transportation, primarily the personal automobile, is the number 1 contributor of greenhouse gas emissions in Maryland. Also, scientists are increasingly aware of the damage to human health caused by tailpipe emissions from gasoline and diesel-powered vehicles. Heart disease, asthma, emphysema and other respiratory disease are directly related to the emissions from vehicles burning fossil fuels.

It is urgently necessary that emissions be reduced and building a network of public transit options that citizens of Maryland can use to get to work, school, doctors’ appointments and other destinations is the main way in which emissions can be limited. In Montgomery County, students were allowed to use Ride On and Metro buses free of charge and ridership increased by 57% from 2019 to 2020. This is a testament to the potential of efficient, reliable and affordable public transit in Maryland. (<https://bethesdamagazine.com/bethesda-beat/government/youth-ride-on-usage-has-doubled-since-kids-ride-free-expansion/>, retrieved on 1/30/20)

Failing to fully fund the MTA’s capital budget would be going backwards at a time when Maryland should be increasing public transit options and expanding its public transit network. It

makes no sense. There should be a public transit option for traveling from the metro D.C. area to the Eastern Shore across the Chesapeake Bay Bridge and for traveling to Annapolis as well. The western part of the state should be incorporated into a public transit network.

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 and attract new riders, not lose them.

I encourage a favorable report.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.