



# Montgomery County

## Office of Intergovernmental Relations

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**HB 1236**

**DATE: March 5, 2020**

**SPONSOR: Delegate Solomon, et al.**

**ASSIGNED TO: Environment and Transportation**

**CONTACT PERSON: Melanie Wenger (melanie.wenger@montgomerycountymd.gov)**

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

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### **Transit – Maryland Area Regional Commuter Train – Expansion of Service**

House Bill 1236 requires the Maryland Transit Administration to submit a series of reports annually for the next three years that summarize the efforts undertaken, possible solutions to impediments, and necessary statutory changes to establish a Maryland Area Regional Commuter train service between Union Station in the District of Columbia and Alexandria Station in Virginia. Montgomery County supports this legislation since it is becoming increasingly important to create greater connectivity to regional employment centers. Improved transit options are the solution.

Whether there is market demand and whether it is feasible for the Virginia Railroad Express (VRE) and MARC to deliver service beyond Union Station is not a new discussion. It has been considered by the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board for some time. In fact, the Board is in the process of contracting out for the commuter rail study now. This study, which could be completed as early as June, should help lay the groundwork for how to proceed.

HB 1236 anticipates that next steps will include the need to collaborate and negotiate with a lot of stakeholders. The bill sponsor correctly describes as a goal “binding the region.” Getting started now on how that can best be accomplished is important. Whether the answer is extending MARC and VRE without terminuses at Union Station or, during the process, another solution is identified that better meets the same need, let’s find out – sooner rather than later – since in an increasingly competitive world, being able to tout the existence of a high quality seamless transit system would be a powerful regional marketing tool. For these reasons, Montgomery County urges the Committee to pass this bill.