

Committee: Environment & Transportation

Testimony on: HB 1236 – Maryland Area Regional Commuter Train – Expansion of Service

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: March 5, 2020

HB 1236 would expand MARC rail service to Virginia. The bill directs the state to begin laying the groundwork that would allow MARC trains to travel past Union Station in the District and into Virginia, with the goal of having the Maryland commuter rail service operating across the Potomac River within a few years.

MDOT would be required to enter negotiations and reach a written agreement on a pilot program with the District, Virginia and the railroads that use and own the tracks south of Union Station to allow MARC trains to carry passengers into parts of Arlington and Alexandria. With Amazon's second headquarters opening soon, suburban Maryland residents would have an easy train ride to jobs in areas like Crystal City, soon to be home to 25,000 new Amazon jobs. Today, anyone coming from Kensington via the MARC Brunswick line would need to transfer at Union Station to Metro's Red Line and then to the Yellow Line at Gallery Place to get to Crystal City. The proposed pilot would make this a one-seat ride.

The proposed pilot would include two southbound trips in the morning and two northbound trips in the evening. MDOT would be required to report to the General Assembly on the ongoing negotiations and "identify solutions to any impediments" to carry out the plan.

Note also that this pilot creates the same opportunity for Northern Virginia residents to travel to jobs in Maryland. The more options we can offer to people that don't revolve around driving, the better.

A favorable report on HB 1236 can support this pilot proposal.

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