



February 1, 2021

Testimony on HB 114, *Transit Safety and Investment Act*  
*Appropriations Committee*

Organization: Sunrise Movement Baltimore

Person Submitting: Molly Sherman

**Position: Favorable**

Dear Mr. Chairman and Committee Members,

Thank you for considering my testimony today. My name is Molly Sherman, a resident of Dickerson, district 15. I am a member of Sunrise Movement Baltimore, a movement led by young people fighting against the climate crisis. This testimony represents my support for Testimony on HB 114, *Transit Safety and Investment Act*.

Maryland transportation is failing, and we cannot afford to let it fail any longer. [For the third year in row](#), the Central Maryland Transportation Alliance's 2020 report card gave the Baltimore region an overall "D" grade. The current state of transportation is unacceptable - late buses, buses that never show up, neglected safety upgrades, underfunded essential repairs - and it affects all sectors of Maryland life.

Transportation has been identified as the nexus of economic opportunity and racial justice across the country. By neglecting it, we fail communities of minorities, hiring firms, and, ultimately, ourselves. But, if we fund the basics of transportation, the system will become more efficacious to its users and the greater economy.

Legislators in the 2021 Maryland legislative session have an opportunity to remedy neglected transit systems and improve economic opportunity. [The Transit Safety and Investment Act](#) requires the state invest in transportation by raising the minimum funding level for the Maryland Transportation Administration. Funds generated over a 10-year period, starting in 2021, will go towards the operation of the Maryland Transit Administration for basic safety and accessibility upgrades for public transportation. This bill will enhance the reliability of transit services through maintenance and safety assessments, prioritizing issues that arise, and accurate analysis will be uninhibited by funding constraints.

This bill addresses and abundantly evident need for improved transportation. Amid the growing disparity between income groups, the number of low-income people who grow up in poor neighborhoods, isolated from job opportunities, has been rising. The inadequacy of Maryland's transportation infrastructure calcifies the problem.

Based on a rigorous study analyzed in the book "Poverty and Place" by Paul A. Jargowsky, job opportunities are found increasingly in outlying suburban areas that many minorities living in



cities do not have access to, partly because of a lack of transportation accessibility and reliability. As it exists, public transportation does not provide adequate services to meet the existing demand for job seekers and employers.

Why is this impacting Black individuals, disproportionately? Minority individuals are more likely to live in areas composed of other members of their minority group. This phenomenon is known as residential segregation and may partly reflect living preferences of the group; however, racial segregation of residents reflects lower wealth levels, barriers to housing market integration, and discrimination by landlords and financial institutions, deterred from investment in new businesses and housing, due to the tendency of whites to exit changing neighborhoods.

According to William M. Rodgers III, a professor of public policy at the Bloustein School for Planning and Public Policy, low-income urban residents, especially minorities, have difficulty accessing job opportunities in suburban areas, where job growth is occurring. This transit-driven gap between jobs and job seekers limits employment opportunities for minorities residing in city cores.

Applying Jargowsky's analysis, transportation barriers prevent minorities from accessing employment options in other neighborhoods. This is a reality for the Baltimore region where only 9% of jobs were reachable within an hour using public transportation in 2018, according to data from the Accessibility Observatory at the University of Minnesota, which evaluates accessibility-based transportation systems across the country.

The transit recovery initiative reduces the gap between job seekers and job opportunities. Beyond direct employment access, better transit will improve minority access to information and contacts. A large percentage of workers generate their jobs through friend and family contacts. Jargowsky found that by increasing transportation options, minorities will have the opportunity to partake in more activities near job opportunities to improve their access to employment information and contacts like meeting employers in public and making friends that will connect them to job opportunities. Networking is crucial for acquiring employment as [80 percent of new jobs are never listed and instead filled internally](#).

Beyond growing networks and connections, reliable transportation will strengthen job retention. [Currently, MTA buses have an on-time rate of only 70%](#), not including the buses that do not show up at all. With better transportation, employees can reduce the unnecessary stress of wondering and waiting for transportation to child care or employment, improving their well-being and efficacy.

Transportation investment also benefits employers. This initiative improves the labor supply for suburban businesses seeking employees as well by expanding the pool of potential hires to everyone who is qualified, not just those with cars or who live in the neighborhood.

By improving the equity of transportation, Black people living in Baltimore will be positioned to access income and opportunities withheld from them as a result of being redlined into



neighborhoods with fewer employment opportunities. More reliable transportation will improve transit user well-being, productivity, and labor supply at hiring businesses.

Improving our transportation network will benefit everyone, even those of us who are not daily public transportation users. As a young person living in the agricultural reserve, this public transit improvement will not affect me directly, but I believe the social and economic benefits of improved transportation are more than enough of a reason for me to take action in support of this important bill. It's for all of the moms, dads, students, essential workers, seniors, to get to their kids, their childcare, their schools, their important and life-saving work.

We encourage a FAVORABLE report for this important legislation.

Sincerely,

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