



MARYLAND LEAGUE
OF CONSERVATION VOTERS

February 3, 2021

**Maryland League of
Conservation Voters**

Lynn Heller, Board Chair
Maris St. Cyr, Vice Chair
Michael Davis, Treasurer
Hon. Virginia Clagett
Stuart Clarke
Candace Dodson-Reed
Verna Harrison
Melanie Hartwig-Davis
Ed Hatcher
Hon. Steve Lafferty
Bonnie Norman
Katharine Thomas

Kim Coble
Executive Director

30 West Street
Suite C
Annapolis, MD 21401

410.280.9855
mdlcv.org
marylandconservation.org

SUPPORT HB114: Transit Safety and Investment Act

Madame Chair and Members of the Committee:

Maryland League of Conservation Voters strongly supports HB114: Transit Safety and Investment Act and we thank Delegate Lierman for her leadership on this issue. This bill is priority legislation for the Maryland League of Conservation Voters and the environmental community.

The Transit Safety and Investment Act was introduced in 2020, and the need to adequately fund our public transit was clear: the transportation sector represents the single largest contributor to our carbon emissions; our public transit system faces a \$2 billion shortfall in funding to maintain the state of good repair; our public transit system is one of the least reliable systems in the country; the communities most reliant on public transit are those that are the most economically disadvantaged and that are most negatively impacted by the effects of climate change, making it even harder for them to pull themselves out of poverty. The House of Delegates recognized this urgency and passed the bill with a bipartisan majority.

As the world faced a global pandemic, the need for this bill came into even sharper relief than when it was introduced in 2020. While public transit across the country saw a decline in ridership, the MTA had significantly less of a drop than other comparable systems. More than a third of Maryland's transit riders continued to rely on our buses, trains, subway, and light rail to get to their essential jobs. Health care workers represent the single largest share of MTA riders.

Marylanders depend on essential workers who are counting on unreliable public transit. They, and we, deserve better.

In the face of a global fiscal emergency, it is vital that Maryland put its dollars where it will yield the best results. Money spent on public transit supports twice the number of good, family sustaining jobs than the same amount of money spent on highway and road investments, and those jobs are held primarily by women and people of color – the same people most disproportionately negatively impacted by the financial impacts of COVID-19. Additionally, a 2015 Harvard study demonstrated that access to reliable transit is one of the key factors for people successfully moving out of poverty.

We cannot solve climate change if we don't take strong measures to reduce pollution from the transportation sector, and we can't do that without adequately funding transit.

We cannot solve health care without reducing the air pollution that contributes to the severity of respiratory-born illnesses like COVID or ensuring that all Marylanders, including those without cars, can get to their healthcare providers.

We cannot have the best education system in the world if our students - all of our students - don't have the means to reliably get to school on time.

We cannot build back our economy without ensuring that Marylanders without cars can get to their jobs, or ensuring that each dollar spent from the state coffers, including the Transportation Trust Fund, is used to create the greatest numbers of family-sustaining jobs.

We cannot act with fiscal responsibility if we don't recognize that our options are to 1. spend some now or 2. spend much more later.

For the sake of the environment, our public health, our economy, and basic justice, we simply cannot wait any longer to pass this important legislation.

Maryland LCV strongly urges a favorable report on HB114.