

Testimony on HB0114
Maryland Transit Safety and Investment Act
Appropriations

Position: Favorable

Johanna Wermers supports HB0114 the Transit Safety & Investment Act.

In July 2019, the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) released its first ever Capital Needs Inventory (CNI) to assess its 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. Unfortunately, MDOT's FY 2021-2026 Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP) does not provide MTA sufficient funding to address the annual maintenance and repairs identified in the CNI. In fact, at current funding levels the maintenance backlog will grow.

The result of the neglected maintenance is buses, light rail vehicles, subway trains and commuter trains that break down more often than the MTA's peer agencies, and in some cases, more often than any transit agency in the nation. Paratransit service also continues to malfunction. This leads to poor service which leads to drops in ridership, and a negative spiral.

I support this bill because we are in the middle of a climate emergency. Most of us drive our cars everywhere we go and that has led to overcrowding of our streets and highways and to transportation being the number one source of fossil fuel emissions in Maryland. Transit systems in good repair can take thousands of drivers out of their cars and into commuter rail service and well-maintained buses. For Montgomery County, where we have a Climate Action Plan designed to bring greenhouse gas emissions down 80% by 2027 and 100% by 2035, well-functioning transit is imperative to the success of the plan. Those who need to be at work on time or pick up children from daycare in a timely manner, will be forced back into their car without reliable transit service. Essential workers and others who do not have cars, but keep our economy going during the pandemic, may be forced to leave their jobs if they do not have reliable public transit to get to work and back home each day.

The Transit Safety and Investment Act will mandate that MTA's capital budget be at a level that allows it to address all the needs identified and get the system back into a state of good repair so that it can operate safely and reliably.

I encourage a FAVORABLE report for this important legislation.