

Committees: Appropriations

Testimony on: HB 114 - "Transit Safety & Investment Act"

Organization: Individual

Person Submitting: Joseph Jakuta

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: February 3, 2021

Joseph Jakuta, as resident of District 47A and public transit user, supports SB 199, 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 noted in the CNI. In fact, at current funding levels the 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 MTA's peer agencies. Paratransit service also continues to malfunction. This leads to poor service which leads to drops in ridership, and a negative spiral.

While I no longer regularly use MTA because I typically need to take WMATA in order to travel to work and other locations, I understand first hand the need for MTA from when I lived in Bel Air and Charles Village. For several months after college I moved back to my childhood home and would commute using the MARC train every day to downtown DC. If it were not for the MARC, I never could have held down that job and achieved the success I have as a Marylander. I also lived in Baltimore for several years and regularly commuted, visited my family near Reisterstown and Parkville, and traveled to leisure activities using the MTA buses, light rail, and subway.

While this was just my experience with the MTA, I also experienced the benefits of MTA growing up. My mother became a regular user of the MTA to commute from Bel Air to Baltimore City every day, and when she later moved to Baltimore County took the MTA subway every day to work. Unfortunately, her eyesight was never very good and it would have been very unsafe for her to drive such distances day in and day out, and she could not have supported our family without this work.

Though I don't use MTA as much as I used to, to me it is still a crucial service to allow for travel to the BWI airport on business trips and to occasionally visit my friends and family in Baltimore. More so, it is vital for many other communities that rely on it just as my family had in order to get to work and survive. Even with the impacts of Covid-19 many families still rely on this vital service and it will be needed even more as we recover from the current health crisis over the next years.

The Transit Safety & Investment Act will mandate that MTA's capital budget be at a level that allows it to address all of 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.