

## WRITTEN TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL 73

Submitted by,

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Dear Members of the Appropriation Committee,

We present this written testimony in support of HB 73. We have witnessed unparalleled changes in society in the past year. In transportation, congested freeways were suddenly empty during the peak periods, as work and school transitioned online. Even now, nearly a year into the pandemic, most of our roadways are at freeflow during what would previously have been highly congested periods.

At the University of Maryland, we observed that in July 2020, traffic volumes returned to about 80% to 85% of the pre-pandemic level. Notably, however, congestion did not return.

That is, a 15% reduction in traffic volume, comparing July 2019 to July 2020, eliminated almost all the recurrent traffic bottlenecks in the region. Our modeling suggests that with a 15% reduction in travel demand, the average traveler in the region experienced upwards of nearly a 60% reduction in traffic delay.<sup>1</sup> Even a 5% reduction in travel demand can produce significant reductions in traffic delay, around 20%.

The pandemic produced widespread adoption of teleworking for most of the workforce, and HB 73 incentivizes the continuation of telework. In doing so, the bill provides a mechanism for employers, for example, to facilitate faster broadband connection for their employees. The societal benefits of continued teleworking will accrue in reductions in congestion, traffic accidents, noise, and emissions.

The effects of the pandemic on transportation were unprecedented. We have an opportunity to learn from the changes we have experienced. HB 73 represents an important step toward resilient, sustainable and socially equitable transportation.

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<sup>1</sup> University of Maryland researchers analyzed hypothetical scenarios of travel demand decrease using the Transportation Systems Simulation tool developed and calibrated for Maryland urban/suburban region in the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan area.