



Environment Committee

Committee: Appropriations

Testimony on: HB0114-- "Maryland Transit Administration-Funding (Transit Safety and Investment Act"

Organization: Takoma Park Mobilization Environment Committee

Person

Submitting: Diana Younts, co-chair

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: February 3, 2021

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for allowing our testimony today in support of HB0114. Takoma Park Mobilization Environment Committee is a grassroots organization with over 100 members focused on State and County level climate legislation and policies.

Public Transit Lifts People Out of Poverty: Public transportation is the great equalizer. It has the potential to move large numbers of people safely and economically throughout the state, connecting them with jobs, community and medical resources. Additionally, it provides economic, educational and recreational opportunities. This is even more important for low-wealth groups and populations of color, where safe and reliable public transportation is an important factor in determining upward mobility.

MTA Benefits Montgomery County: The MTA is valuable to all Marylanders. For instance, MARC Commuter rail provides critical service connecting Montgomery County to the Washington DC and the Baltimore Region. A large percentage of this capital funding will be used for safety systems for the trains to operate properly to protect transit riders and workers and improve accessibility to MARC stations. Our commuter rail system is the 4th worst in the country for breakdowns. We need safe and reliable MARC service to connect workers to their jobs. This is especially important if we want to have a strong economic recovery. The Transit Safety & Investment Act will also make funds available for locally operated transit systems across the state including RideOn.

Transit System At Risk: However, a safe, reliable and affordable public transit system in Maryland that serves the interest of all residents is at risk. In 2019, the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) released its first ever Capital Needs Inventory to assess the MTA's

ongoing, unconstrained capital needs. The Inventory identified \$5.7 billion of capital needs over the next ten years, \$1.5 billion of which is an accumulated backlog of deferred maintenance. The Maryland Department of Transportation's FY 2020–2025 Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP) does not provide the MTA enough funding over the next six years to address the annual maintenance and repairs identified in the CNI. In fact, the proposed program will add to the backlog. The consequences of neglecting maintenance of buses, light rail vehicles, subway trains and commuter trains is that they break down much more frequently than the MTA's peer agencies. As a result, lower-income people who can't afford cars are disproportionately affected by these service interruptions. For low income and essential workers, public transportation is a necessity. These communities rely on public transportation to take their children to school, get themselves to work, grocery shop and fulfill other basic needs.

Reliable Transit Needed for Jobs and the Economy: The Transit Safety & Investment Act will mandate that MTA's capital budget be at a level that allows it to address all the needs identified in the Capital Needs Inventory and get the system back into a state of good repair so that it can operate safely and reliably for all Marylanders. Maryland has no future if we can't get people to their jobs. Jobs will locate in areas with good infrastructure. This is a problem that we've waited too long to solve.

For these reasons we urge you to vote favorably for HB0114.