

TESTIMONY FOR SB 199
Maryland Transit Safety and Investment Act

Committee: Budget and Taxation

Testimony on: SB 199 “Maryland Transit Safety and Investment Act”

Position: FAVORABLE

Organization Submitting: Montgomery Countryside Alliance, Joyce Bailey, Education Chair

Hearing Date February 3, 2021

The Montgomery Countryside Alliance supports SB0199, the Transit Safety and 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 the 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. This leads to poor service which leads to drops in ridership, and a negative spiral.

The Montgomery Countryside Alliance was founded to promote sound economic, land-use and transportation policies that preserve the natural environment, open spaces and rural lands in Montgomery County’s Agricultural Reserve for the benefit of all Washington Metropolitan area residents. Some residents of the Agricultural Reserve commute to work daily, traveling to larger urban areas including Rockville, Bethesda and Washington D.C. Many of these commuters rely on the MARC train station and trains to make this commute. Their ability to take the train removes numerous automobiles from our regions overcrowded interstates and highways, automobiles which spew carbon dioxide and particulates into the air and exasperate the climate crisis. Funding for the upkeep and improvements needed to maintain the MARC train system is essential. Some of these train stations are in need of upgrades. For example, the Barnesville MARC station is in need of several safety upgrades including sidewalks between the center of town and the station so residents can walk safely to and from the train station and also traffic calming measures on the entrance and exit to the station.

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.

We encourage a FAVORABLE report for this important legislation.