

Testimony in Support of HB 114
Maryland House of Delegates
Appropriations Committee
February 3, 2021

On behalf of the Downtown Residents Advocacy Network in Baltimore City, I'm pleased to express our strong support for the Transit Safety & Investment Act. We believe passage of this legislation is essential for Maryland's economic growth, environmental health and equity for our state's residents in the 21st century.

Downtown Baltimore is the fastest growing residential neighborhood in Baltimore City – approx. 40,000 people now live within a mile of Pratt & Light Streets -- and many residents have chosen to live here without owning an automobile. This means we rely on transit for access to much of our work, shopping, medical, recreation, education and cultural activities.

Personally...I rely on light rail to travel between Downtown & BWI Airport, take the MARC train between Baltimore & DC, ride the 51 bus when I teach at Notre Dame of Maryland University and see my dentist in Towson, and ride the commuter bus to meetings in Annapolis. I would not be able to live in Baltimore City without these essential public transportation services.

I can also state that many Downtown Baltimore residents are in a comparable situation. In fact, some have moved out of Baltimore & Maryland due to the region's unreliable and incomplete public transit options.

Moreover, Maryland's lack of comprehensive, reliable public transportation puts us at a disadvantage compared to other east coast states where major metropolitan regions have long had robust public transit systems as well as states throughout the country where metropolitan areas are investing in major expansions of their current transit systems. Attracting and retaining new Maryland businesses and residents in the 21st century clearly requires greater investment in safe, reliable public transportation.

We know that public funding decisions and resource investments are ultimately statements about our collective values and priorities, so we need to ask...

Do we value Maryland's economic health and competitiveness?

Do we value Maryland's quality of life and sustainability of our beautiful natural environment?

Do we value all Maryland residents and their need for transportation that enables them to work, access childcare, get to school, make it to medical appointments and buy food for their families?

If so, the Maryland General Assembly must step up to the plate in 2021. The General Assembly needs to pass the Transportation Safety and Investment Act which will provide the capital investments necessary to keep MTA's vehicles and infrastructure in a state of good repair.

Thank you for considering my testimony. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at psturm@outlook.com.

***Paul Sturm, Chair
Downtown Residents Advocacy Network
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