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Legislative District 28
Charles County

Judiciary Committee

Subcommittees

Juvenile Law

Public Safety



The Maryland House of Delegates
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

January 15, 2021

Dear Chair McIntosh, Vice Chair Chang and Committee Members:

I am pleased to present House Bill – 414 Southern Maryland Rapid Transit Project – Funding. As a current member of the House of Delegates representing Charles County and a former Charles County Commissioner, I fully support this bill which would require the Department of Transportation to undertake the National Environment Policy Act (NEPA) process to move the Southern Maryland Rapid Transit (SMRT) project forward, with light rail as the preferred option.

Based on Bloomberg News' recent analysis more than a quarter of our residents must leave home prior to 6am to reach their place of employment.ⁱ These long commutes degrade our quality of life, reducing the ability of parents to be fully engaged in their children's education. Extreme traffic limits seniors' access to medical care and social services and student's access to internships and employment opportunities. The average commute time in Charles County is 43 minutes, the highest commute time in the region. More than half of our residents commute outside our county for work.ⁱⁱ

High rates of traffic accidents and fatalities on both the US route 301 and Route 210 corridor only compound the problem.ⁱⁱⁱ Our region faces the fastest growing population in the entire state; thus, traffic and related accidents will only worsen if we do not act today. According to the Maryland Department of Transportation, Southern Maryland's population is projected to grow over 31% by 2040, making it the fastest growing region in Maryland.^{iv} Maryland State planning agencies have conducted five studies in the past twenty five years, all confirming the need for improved public transit in our region.

One possible solution is the SMRT project, a proposed light rail route along US Route 301 which would connect Branch Avenue Metrorail Station in Prince George's County to White Plains in Charles County. The light rail line would improve economic development, offer greater accessibility to schools and jobs and allow the region to grow sustainably. The ripple effects of light rail are enormous and would give thousands of people access to opportunities for high-quality employment as well as business a new corridor in which to grow and thrive. In order to move forward with the proposed SMRT project, we must commit funding to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). This legislation will allow us to qualify for federal capital funding, as the NEPA decisions is a precursor to securing federal appropriations support.

For all these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on HB 414.

Sincerely,

Delegate Debra M. Davis

District 28, Charles County

ⁱ Hagan, Shelly and Wei Lu. “The Most Expensive Commutes in America Aren’t in NYC or San Francisco.” Bloomberg. 28 Feb 2019.

ⁱⁱ 2040 Maryland Transportation Plan. Maryland Department of Transportation. Jan. 2019.

ⁱⁱⁱ Bach, Michelle. “This is a Death Trap: More Enforcement promised on Indian Head Highway.” WTOP. 4 Jan. 2019.

^{iv} 2040 Maryland Transportation Plan.