



MARYLAND STATE & D.C. AFL-CIO

AFFILIATED WITH NATIONAL AFL-CIO

7 School Street • Annapolis, Maryland 21401-2096

Office. (410) 269-1940 • Fax (410) 280-2956

President

Donna S. Edwards

Secretary-Treasurer

Gerald W. Jackson

**HB 114 – Maryland Transit Administration – Funding (Transit Safety and Investment Act)
House Appropriations Committee
February 3, 2021**

SUPPORT

**Donna S. Edwards
President
Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO**

Madam Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 114 – Maryland Transit Administration - Funding (Transit Safety and Investment Act). My name is Donna S. Edwards, President of the Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO. On behalf of the 340,000 union members in the state of Maryland, I offer the following comments.

The condition of public transportation in Maryland is poor. With three consecutive Capital Budgets cutting the MTA capital program, and a \$1 Billion backlog of repairs needed to existing MTA assets, the trajectory of public transit in our State is unsustainable. We need to prioritize public transportation, and the time is now to invest in Maryland's workers, businesses, students, and consumers. Residents need reliable public transportation to meet their needs. Businesses need reliability in transportation for their customers and their workers. Students depend on public transportation to get to and from school. The environment needs safe, accessible, and affordable public transportation for our future.

Increased funding for public transit also transcends mobility of the individual. One of the best ways to address climate change is to invest in public transportation. According to a joint study by Cornell University and the New York AFL-CIO, Bus and light rail systems are much more energy-efficient than cars and trucks, producing 33 percent and 62 percent less greenhouse gas emissions per passenger mile than an average single-occupancy vehicle, respectively¹. Simply put, we need to start thinking about ways to *move more people with less energy* to decrease our carbon footprint. Increased investment into our public transportation system is paramount in combating anthropogenic climate change.

¹ <https://archive.ilr.cornell.edu/sites/default/files/InequalityClimateChangeReport.pdf>

Our movement has a rich tradition of advocating for a first-class public transportation system. We have a long history of fighting to ensure public transportation is safe, supports middle class jobs, lives up to high labor standards, and ensures equitable access for working people and all Marylanders no matter where they live or where they work. Our current public transit systems are failing to meet these critical objectives.

Increased funding for public transit creates potentially thousands of good jobs. We are not talking about bus and train operators, exclusively. Investment in public transit creates a wide array of jobs in manufacturing, construction, and the operations, maintenance, and repair of public transit systems. In these uncertain economic times, a bold investment into public transit will pay dividends in sustainable careers for Marylanders and stimulate economic development.

Looking ahead to the economic recovery that we hope will follow in the wake of COVID-19, our state must step up and stop the deterioration of our public transit systems. Maryland's working families simply will not be able to participate in an economic recovery if we fail to address these significant investment shortfalls in our public transit and commuter rail services and assets. Further, if we fail to act, we will be walking away from the potential to create good-paying, middle class jobs as so many people in our state continue to suffer through this severe pandemic-inspired economic downturn.

Greater access and reliability for commuters, workers, businesses, and consumers, coupled with a cleaner environment through reduced carbon emissions, all while creating good family-sustaining jobs for thousands more Marylanders: These are the benefits that the Transit Safety Investment Act will bring to our State. The time to act is now. For the residents of Maryland, our environment, and the people who create value in our economy, the workers.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on HB 114.