

# **RC Testimony on SB 81 BT.Cmte.pdf**

Uploaded by: Collins, Reuben

Position: FAV

TESTIMONY OF  
Reuben B. Collins, Esq., President  
County Commissioners of Charles County  
BEFORE  
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee  
Senate Bill 81 – “Southern Maryland Rapid Transit Project – Requirements and  
Funding”  
Tuesday, January 26, 2021  
1:00 p.m.

On behalf of the Commissioners of Charles County, I am pleased to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 81 entitled, “Southern Maryland Rapid Transit Project – Requirements and Funding.” Senate Bill 81 restores funding to the design, engineering, and National Environmental Policy Act Process for the Southern Maryland Rapid Transit Project.

Purpose of the Request

The Southern Maryland Rapid Transit Project is Charles County’s HIGHEST Transportation Priority and the most critical component of our future mobility in the Branch Avenue Corridor. This Bill creates the funding to move this project into the “Project Planning” and NEPA Phases now, and will conclude with a “Record of Decision” on the Transit Mode and final alignment. After decades of false starts over partial studies, the residents of Charles County are pleading with the State relieve one of the worst commutes in the Country. We are limited to two major arterial roadways connecting us with the Washington DC Metropolitan Region, and numerous studies have shown that highway expansion alone, will only provide temporary relief. These roads can only carry so many cars, and we need to be forward-thinking in taking the next step to lay the foundation for Fixed-Route High-Capacity Transit now.

The Data

The 2017 SMRT Alternatives Report overwhelmingly demonstrates support for the need of this transit project for our region of Maryland. According to the Report: As of 2015, the Commute-shed area encompassing this corridor contains more than 439,000 people. The Report predicted in its operational year of 2040,

the SMRT will have 24,000 to 28,000 daily riders. To put this in perspective, a light-rail train will hold 150 passengers. To keep pace with the estimated demand during peak hours, it will require trains servicing the stations every 6 minutes. So, there's no question there is a significant demand for this transit service.

### Roads Cannot Solve Congestion

Charles County is limited to two major arterial roadways to connect us to the Washington Metropolitan area, and those highways have limited capacity. You may also be aware that the Governor Harry Nice-Thomas "Mac" Middleton Bridge replacement project is now under construction. Once the bridge opens in 2022 with an additional lane in each direction, the number of vehicle trips crossing the bridge is projected to double. This corridor needs to be prepared to move people and freight in an efficient and expedited manner. Without this high-capacity transit service, gridlock will ensue under the increased traffic in the US 301 corridor.

### Economic Benefits

The transit system is projected to significantly encourage economic growth, vastly increasing job growth, and adding an estimated "\$20 Billion to income, and \$30 Billion to property development and values. The increased employment and property values resulting from rapid transit are projected to expand the tax base by \$5 Billion to \$6 Billion, which in itself would cover the cost of the project."

### Coordination and Support

Two-thirds of this 19-mile transit corridor lies within Prince George's County and we have been in "lock-step" with them all along the way. The Prince George's County Council passed a resolution in 2011 to partner with Charles County and promote the preservation of the transit corridor for this project and focus transit-oriented development along the planned alignment and station areas. Charles County has held this transit project as it's highest transportation for a decade, and has rezoned 300 acres as high-density, transit oriented development. Both Counties hold SMRT as high priority in their respective Transportation Priority Letters, and have been partners at the table with the Maryland Department of Transportation's past efforts on this critical project. This was further cemented this past year when both Counties and MDOT applied for the most recent round of US DOT BUILD Grants to help fund this project.

## Land Use & Transit

Both Counties have done their part to lay the groundwork for future land use and development that supports this project and creating “walkable communities” and “transportation choices” for all our generations, young and old.

The local governments have been taking the necessary action to support and facilitate transit-oriented development. The missing link is the transit connection to the metropolitan transit system. The Project Planning Phase for this project is a small investment in the view of the State’s Transportation Trust Fund, but reaps immeasurable benefits for the mobility of residents, as well as business development in the Maryland Economy.

For all these reasons, I respectfully urge the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee to act favorably on Senate Bill 81, and move it to the Senate Floor.

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# **SB81\_FAV\_Smarter Growth Alliance for Charles Co\_1.**

Uploaded by: Cowan, Eleanor

Position: FAV

**AMP Creeks Council \* Audubon MD-DC \* Chapman Forest Foundation  
Chesapeake Bay Foundation \* Clean Water Action \* Coalition for Smarter Growth  
Conservancy for Charles County \* Maryland Bass Nation \* Maryland Conservation Council  
Maryland Ornithological Society \* Mattawoman Watershed Society \* Nanjemoy Vision  
Potomac Riverkeeper \* Preservation Maryland \* Sierra Club Maryland Chapter  
Southern Maryland Audubon Society**

**SB 81 - Southern Maryland Rapid Transit Project- Requirements and Funding**

**Budget and Taxation**

**January 20, 2021**

**Position: SUPPORT**

The 450,000 residents of Prince George's, Charles, and St. Mary's counties who live in the MD5-US301 corridor need the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) to promptly undertake all steps necessary to complete the design, engineering, and NEPA process for the Southern Maryland Rapid Transit Project – high-capacity, fixed-route transit service from the Branch Avenue Metrorail Station to White Plains. SB 81 would require the State to complete this process and commit the necessary funding, estimated at \$27 million over the next two to three years.

In the past 25 years, the State has completed five major studies on the feasibility, alignment, projected ridership, and economic impact of high-capacity, fixed-route transit service to Southern Maryland. The conclusions of every study have repeatedly confirmed the urgent and growing need. Southern Maryland residents suffer through one of the longest daily commutes in the country. Between Charles and St. Mary's counties, there are an estimated 46,000 commuters with a combined ten million hours of lost productivity, family time, and leisure time as a result of excessive commute times.

Additionally, the transportation sector is Maryland's largest generator of greenhouse gases and is a major source of airborne nitrogen pollution that harms water quality. The impacts of climate change are being experienced throughout Maryland, especially on the Eastern Shore where sea level rise and subsidence are resulting in considerable land loss.

Investing in transit and providing Marylanders with alternatives to driving is critical to achieving the State's statutory goal of a 40% reduction in emissions by 2030. Notably, the reduction in emissions will not just be limited to commuters choosing transit over driving. The Southern Maryland Rapid Transit Project will foster walkable, mixed-use, transit-oriented development that allows residents to live car-free or car-light – an attractive option for millennials, seniors, and many others.

The Southern Maryland Rapid Transit project will improve quality of life for Southern Maryland residents, promote economic development consistent with smart growth, and advance the State's emissions reduction goals. We respectfully request your support for SB 81.

Contacts: Elly Colmers Cowan, Preservation Maryland [ecowan@presmd.org](mailto:ecowan@presmd.org)

## **SB 81 Sen. Ellis**

Uploaded by: Ellis, Arthur

Position: FAV

A high-speed train is captured in motion, blurred horizontally, as it passes through a station platform at night. The train's lights create a bright blue and white streak. The platform is illuminated by overhead lights, and a digital display board shows some text. In the background, city buildings are lit up against the dark sky. A yellow L-shaped graphic element is positioned in the upper left and lower right corners of the image.

# SMRT Project: Revolutionizing Southern Maryland



# Video from WUSA9



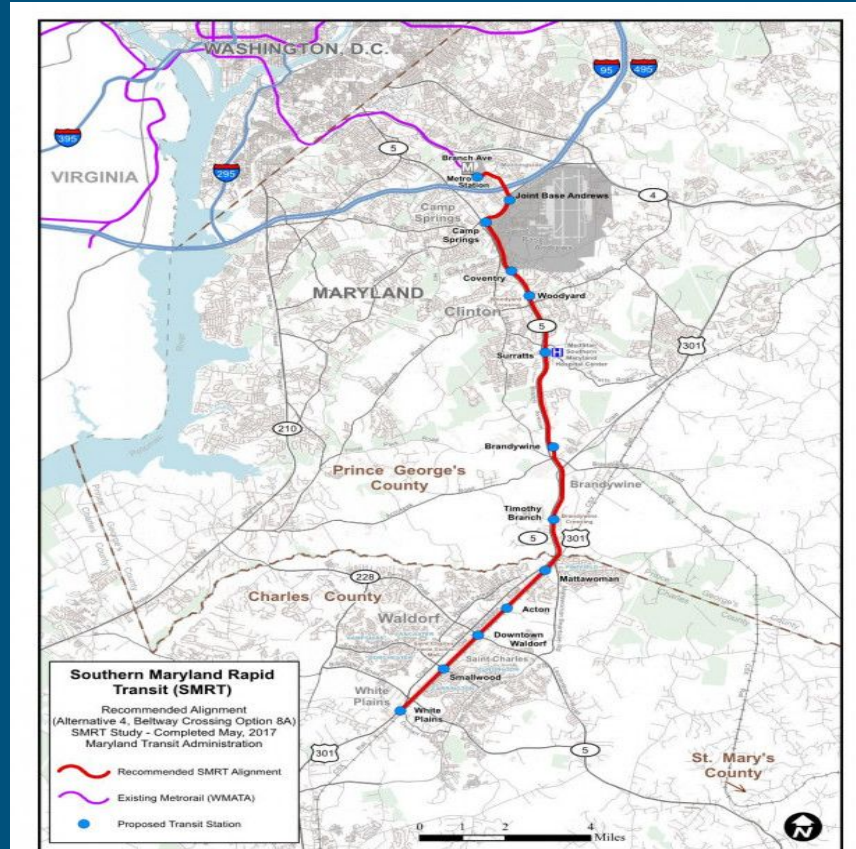
# Overall Purpose for the Project

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- Create an an 18-mile light rail line running largely along the MD 5 right-of-way from White Plains to the Branch Avenue Metro Station in Prince George's County



# Future Light Rail Location



# Why should you support this project?

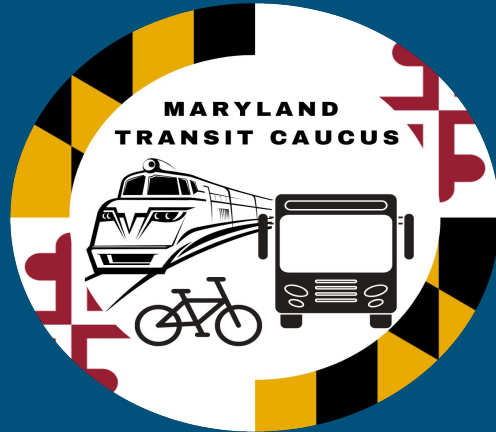
- According to a 2019 Analysis by Bloomberg, Charles County has the **worst commute in the entire country.**

## What are the implications of this problem?

- Commutes of 90 minutes or more take parents away from children for long periods and **prevent low-income people from getting a second job.**
- “Our region has the **highest number of fatalities per capita on the roads**, we have the highest number of people traveling on the roads, and we expect it to get worse..” - Delegate Debra M. Davis (D-Charles)

# Who supports it?

- SMRT has been endorsed as “priority legislation” by the Maryland Transit Caucus, whose membership includes delegates and senators from around the state, including both Central and Southern Maryland



# How is this project way overdue?

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- According to 1997 Southern Maryland Rapid Transit Study recommendations, an 18-mile light rail system with 13 stations in Charles and Prince George's County should be built. Much of the system would be built in the median alignment of Routes 301 and 5 through Southern Maryland.
- **THIS WAS 24 YEARS AGO!**



Affordable



# How much is it going to cost?

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- A 2017 Study recommends spending **\$2 billion dollars** on a light rail system that would connect Charles and Prince George's County residents to the Metro at Branch Avenue.
- However, in this bill, the Senator introduced legislation that would provide **\$27 million** to jump-start light rail service along the MD Route 5 Corridor.

# What does Senator Ellis think?

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Senator Ellis:

- “This project is number 36 on their list of 38 priorities. They’re telling us to drop dead,” said Ellis. “The worst commute in the nation, on average two hours a day, one way, and the state of Maryland is ignoring that.”





# What do Prince George's County officials think?

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- “There really is no other answer,” said County Council member Mel Franklin (D). “If it’s not this project, what’s the answer for the crushing transportation problem of Southern Maryland?”
- During the Prince George’s County Council Meeting on January 7 2020, the county council unanimously voted for the project.





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# **TESTIMONY FOR SB0081 Southern Maryland Rapid Trans**

Uploaded by: Plante, Cecilia

Position: FAV



**TESTIMONY FOR SB0081  
SOUTHERN MARYLAND RAPID TRANSIT PROJECT - FUNDING**

**Bill Sponsor:** Senator Ellis

**Committee:** Appropriations

**Organization Submitting:** Maryland Legislative Coalition

**Person Submitting:** Cecilia Plante, co-chair

**Position:** FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0081 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of individuals and grassroots groups with members in every district in the state. We have well over 30,000 members across the state.

Our members believe in public transportation and we believe that making an investment in public transportation will bring jobs and will support residents. Maryland has very poor public transportation. We don't seem to invest in it like other states do, and as a result, it limits opportunities for Marylanders and makes Maryland a job desert.

There are many places in Maryland where the only option for getting to work is to own a car, or wait for our ailing bus service (which needs a severe infusion of funds) to possibly arrive. Southern Maryland is one of those areas.

We believe that we should make the investment now in order to realize the direct impact of providing construction jobs and the broader impact of connecting residents of Southern Maryland to jobs across the state.

The Maryland Legislative Coalition supports this bill and we recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in Committee.

# **TESTIMONY FOR SB0081 Southern Maryland Rapid Trans**

Uploaded by: Plante, Cecilia

Position: FAV



**TESTIMONY FOR SB0081  
SOUTHERN MARYLAND RAPID TRANSIT PROJECT - FUNDING**

**Bill Sponsor:** Senator Ellis

**Committee:** Appropriations

**Organization Submitting:** Maryland Legislative Coalition

**Person Submitting:** Cecilia Plante, co-chair

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The Maryland Legislative Coalition supports this bill and we recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in Committee.

# **SB81Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Ross, Benjamin

Position: FAV





## Testimony in Support of SB81

Benjamin Ross, Chair, Maryland Transit Opportunities Coalition

submitted to  
Senate Budget & Tax Committee  
January 26, 2021

The Maryland Transit Opportunities Coalition, a statewide coalition of transit riders, transit workers, and transit advocates, strongly supports Senate Bill 81. Southern Maryland Rapid Transit has been a major component of our statewide rail transit plan since our founding five years ago.

On the crowded roads of Southern Maryland, commuters suffer through some of the longest commutes in the nation. Rapid transit will offer them a relaxing trip that speeds past the traffic jams, with a direct connection to the Washington Metro at Branch Avenue.

We are convinced that an objective analysis will show light rail to be the best alternative to meet the pressing needs of this corridor. Light rail will bolster the local and state economy by attracting new jobs and housing to emerging urban nodes around the stations. In today's economy, investors seek out opportunities to invest near rail stations. The strong growth around Washington Metro stations and future Purple Line stops demonstrates the power of a well-connected rail network. Southern Maryland Light Rail will extend the reach of this network. The benefits will emerge not just in the vicinity of the new transit line, but at all the destinations it connects to.

More than half a century has passed since planners recognized the need for a rapid transit corridor through southern Prince George's County into Charles County. Five planning studies have been completed over two decades. With the Biden Administration committed to large-scale investment in infrastructure, now is the time to move forward and build Southern Maryland Rapid Transit.

**MTBMA MAA Testimony SB 81 FINAL.pdf**

Uploaded by: Evans, Hayley

Position: FWA



MARYLAND ASPHALT ASSOCIATION



Senator Guy Guzzone  
Chair, Budget & Taxation Comm.  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

January 18, 2021

**RE: SB 81-FAV W/AMD-Southern Maryland Rapid Transit Project-Funding**

Dear Members of the Appropriations and Environment and Transportation Committees:

The Maryland Transportation Builders and Materials Association (“MTBMA”) and the Maryland Asphalt Association (“MAA”) collectively represent tens of thousands of Marylanders who operate in the areas of transportation construction, production and engineering. Together, for nearly 100 years these organizations have served as the voice of the transportation construction industry. The mission of both MTBMA and MAA is to encourage, develop, and protect the prestige of the transportation construction and materials industry in Maryland by establishing and maintaining respected relationships with federal, state, and local public officials. We proactively work with regulatory agencies and governing bodies to represent the interests of the transportation industry, and also advocate for adequate state and federal funding for Maryland’s multimodal transportation system.

As an industry we are supportive of any efforts to modernize and update our transportation networks in Maryland and we applaud the Sponsor’s goals in this piece of legislation. However, we would suggest an amendment to SB 81 to change the funding source for this project from the Transportation Trust Fund to another source of revenue. The needs of our members and our industry are great, and we as a State cannot afford to further reduce the inadequate resources we currently have. The Transportation Trust Fund, which supports Maryland’s transportation infrastructure, is critically underfunded as is and this bill would exacerbate those losses.

We thank you for your time and consideration of this bill and ask that if you pass SB 81 it is with the amendments we have advocated.

Sincerely,

Michael Sakata

President & CEO, MTBMA

Marshall Klinefelter

President, MAA

**SB0081 - TSO OPCP - SMRT - OPP\_FINAL.pdf**

Uploaded by: Westervelt, Patricia

Position: UNF

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January 20, 2021

The Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Chairman, Senate Budget and Taxation Committee  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis MD 21401

***RE: Letter of Opposition – Senate Bill 81 – Southern Maryland Rapid Transit Project – Funding***

Dear Chairman Guzzone and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) respectfully opposes Senate Bill 81 and offers the following information for the Committee's consideration.

The Southern Maryland Rapid Transit (SMRT) project is a proposed rapid transit system along 18.7 miles of the MD 5 (Branch Avenue)/US 301 (Crain Highway) corridor, between Branch Avenue Metrorail Station in Prince George's County and the Waldorf-White Plains area in Charles County. This area of the State has seen significant growth over the last twenty years and is in need of congestion relief and transportation alternatives.

MDOT can attest to the importance of the Southern Maryland Rapid Transit Project through the recent submittal of a Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Discretionary Grant application. Charles County, in partnership with MDOT and Prince George's County, submitted a BUILD Grant application for \$4.98 million to fund the completion of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Southern Maryland Rapid Transit (SMRT) project. The DEIS is an important next step in the delivery of this vital regional project. By opposing this bill, MDOT is not taking a philosophical position on the project itself, which would be a positive step in providing commuting benefits for tens of thousands of daily commuters.

Senate Bill 81 mandates appropriations of \$27 million between FY 23-24 to complete the design, engineering, full NEPA process, and secure a Record of Decision from the Federal Transit Administration for the light rail solution for Southern Maryland Rapid Transit Project. This bill selects a project alternative before a NEPA process has been initiated and ultimately, the decision on how to move forward (light rail vs. bus rapid transit [BRT]) must be part of a federally sanctioned NEPA process.

The Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Page Two

The development of MDOT's capital program involves many stakeholders and public meetings to prioritize needs across the State. The process includes: the submission of priority letters from all counties, the annual CTP tour to allow State officials to hear from local jurisdictions, elected officials, and the public in every county (a practice that has been in place for over 100 years), and a prioritization of needs. Projects are prioritized based on the State's goals, the availability of funding, and the scoring system established by Chapter 30 of 2017.

Selecting a certain local project to receive transportation funding through the legislative process does not take into consideration the collaborative process used to develop the CTP. Requiring funding of certain projects through legislative mandate without regard to total cost, constructability, or prioritization of Statewide needs sets a precedent that undermines the CTP development process.

Lastly, the TTF was established to provide flexibility in funding projects across the entire State. Designating portions of the TTF for specific purposes restricts MDOT's flexibility to distribute funds between the transportation business units to fund the most pressing capital expansion and system preservation projects.

It is important to understand that the TTF is a non-lapsing, special fund that provides funding for transportation. It consists of tax and fee revenues, operating revenues, bond proceeds, and fund transfers. Any statutory diversion of funds will negatively impact the ability of MDOT to issue bonds backed by TTF revenues and diminish any investment income generated by the TTF fund balance. Redirecting these funds will require other construction-ready projects already included in the CTP to go unfunded.

For these reasons, the Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee grant Senate Bill 81 an unfavorable report.

Respectfully submitted,

Heather Murphy  
Director of Planning and Capital Programming  
Maryland Department of Transportation  
410-865-1275

Pilar Helm  
Director of Government Affairs  
Maryland Department of Transportation  
410-865-1090