

January 27, 2021

**Testimony on SB 199 –
Maryland Transit Safety & Investment Act
Budget & Taxation**

Position: Favorable

I, Clarissa Chen, support SB 199, the Transit Safety & 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. Paratransit service also continues to malfunction. This leads to poor service which leads to drops in ridership, and a negative spiral.

As a resident of Baltimore City that is unable to own a car due to financial constraints, I rely on the public transit system to get to most places, including work, the doctor's office, to public green spaces, and to homes of friends and family. Anytime I think about riding the bus, I have to account for at least 1 hour to get somewhere that would take 20 minutes to drive to. I know that this is deeply unjust - the freedom of mobility is an essential right that our failing MTA has taken away from many Baltimoreans. We cannot allow Maryland to become a state built for cars and those who have access to them. If we want Maryland to be for everyone, we need to build a transit system that everyone can access with ease, safety, and dignity.

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.

I encourage a FAVORABLE report for this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Clarissa Chen
Baltimore City Resident, District 40