



Testimony in Support of SB81

Benjamin Ross, Chair, Maryland Transit Opportunities Coalition

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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.