



Committee: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs
Testimony on: SB0137 - Maryland Transit Administration – Conversion to Zero-Emission Buses (Zero-Emission Bus Transition Act)
Organization: Climate Justice Wing of the Maryland Legislative Coalition
Submitting: Laurie McGilvray
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: January 28, 2021

Dear Mr. Chairman and Committee Members:

Thank you for allowing our testimony today in support of SB0137. The Maryland Legislative Coalition's Climate Justice Wing, a statewide coalition of over 50 grassroots and professional organizations, urges you to vote favorably on SB0137. The bill will prohibit the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) from entering into a contract to purchase buses for the State fleet that are not zero-emission buses beginning in fiscal year 2023, and will require an annual report to include a schedule for converting the State transit fleet to exclusively zero-emission buses, an evaluation of necessary charging infrastructure, a plan for transitioning adversely affected State employees, an estimate of the potential emission reductions, and analysis of projected costs.

Transportation and Climate Change

Transportation is one of the largest contributors of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in Maryland. In order to reduce the impacts of climate change, Maryland must rapidly reduce its GHG emissions. Electrification of the transit bus fleet is an essential strategy in achieving necessary GHG emission reduction.

Benefits Outweigh Costs of Bus Electrification

Although purchasing zero-emission buses is more expensive in the short-term, there are a number of longer-term benefits. Clean and reliable bus transit will have health and economic benefits, particularly for the residents of Baltimore. Nearly half the population of Baltimore lacks access to a car and the 80 bus lines serving Baltimore provide a critical means of transportation to work, school, grocery stores, and medical appointments. The reduction in air pollution from buses will result in health benefits for Baltimore residents. In addition, electric buses have reduced operation and maintenance requirements and therefore lower costs. Conversion of the MTA transit bus fleet to electric buses will improve reliability and reduce O&M costs over time. Finally, these same benefits will accrue to bus riders and residents across Maryland since MTA buses serve many other counties in the state.

For these reasons we urge a favorable vote for SB0137.