



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony in Support of HB 116
Transportation – I-270 Commuter Bus**

This bill would require the Maryland Department of Transportation to establish a commuter bus route between Shady Grove Metro in Montgomery County and Tysons, Virginia during peak service hours.

Background - Road Congestion in Maryland

The DC Metropolitan area ranks as one of the worst places for traffic in the country.¹ According to the Maryland Department of Transportation, stretches of I-270 experience rush hour conditions between 7 to 10 hours per day.² A 2020 study on transit coordination between the state and local governments found that the I-270 corridor is an “underserved transit market” with 41,000 daily commuters traveling between Montgomery and Fairfax Counties.³

Governor Hogan’s “P3 Project” to widen I-270 and I-495 has not included concrete commitments to public transit, despite repeated calls for inclusion of public transit in the project from Maryland residents, elected officials, and transportation advocacy groups. This bill fills a gap in existing plans for traffic congestion relief in Maryland by beginning to implement public transit on this corridor.

Recommended Commuter Bus Route

A December 2020 analysis conducted jointly by the states of Maryland and Virginia identified eight viable commuter bus routes to serve Frederick and Montgomery Counties and northern Virginia.⁴ Bus service between central Montgomery County and Tysons, Virginia was among the recommended routes.

¹ Washington Post. Washington is No. 3 in traffic congestion, study says. https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/trafficandcommuting/its-a-waste-of-time-washington-is-no-3-in-traffic-congestion-study-says/2019/08/22/e6602e0e-c4d6-11e9-b72f-b31d77212_story.html

² MDOT. I-495 & I-270 Managed Lanes Study. <https://495-270-p3.com/environmental/purpose-and-need/>

³ MDOT. Transit Service Coordination Report. <https://495-270-p3.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Transit-Coordination-Report-May-2020.pdf>

⁴ “I-495 American Legion Bridge Transit/TDM Study, Draft Summary Report,” December 2020, Maryland Department of Transportation and Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation.

The bus route proposed by this bill would serve the needs of commuters in both Frederick and Montgomery Counties. Population centers in central Montgomery County do not currently have any direct transit options to job centers in Northern Virginia.⁵ Additionally, the proposed bus route would provide a needed transit connection for commuters from Frederick to northern Virginia and would connect with an existing commuter bus line that operates from Frederick County to Shady Grove Metro.

History has proven that a bus route from Maryland to Virginia is viable in terms of ridership. From 1995-2009 WMATA ran a bus route between Bethesda, Maryland and Tysons Corner, Virginia. At the time, the bus route served over 500 riders a day, a number which experts suggest is likely to be higher today due to population and job growth in both Maryland and Virginia. Additionally, current bus routes connect Huntington Metro Station in Virginia to MGM National Harbor and serve roughly 1,000 riders a day.⁶ The proposed bus route would provide similar public transit options for Frederick and Montgomery Counties.

Good for Traffic and the Environment

Traffic experts have consistently cited increased availability and use of public transportation as the most efficient and impactful way to lessen road congestion.⁷

Additionally, getting cars off the road is one of the most impactful ways to reduce greenhouse emissions in Maryland.⁸

This bill requires MDOT to take the first step in expanding public transit along I-270 by implementing a commuter bus route they recommended between Maryland and Northern Virginia.

⁵ A trip on Metrorail from central Montgomery County requires riding to downtown DC before transferring Metro lines to head to Virginia. This trip on Metro takes 1 hour 10 minutes, as compared to 30 minutes by car.

⁶ WMATA Bus Data Portal. <https://www.wmata.com/initiatives/ridership-portal/Bus-Data-Portal.cfm>

⁷ Michael L Anderson. *Subways, Strikes, and Slowdowns: The Impacts of Public Transit on Traffic Congestion*. University of California Berkeley and the National Bureau of Economic Research.

⁸ Sierra Club. Climate change impacts of proposed expansion of I-270 and I-495. <https://www.sierraclub.org/sites/www.sierraclub.org/files/sce/maryland-chapter/Climate%20Change%20Impacts%20of%20proposed%20project.pdf>