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February 9, 2021

Testimony on HB 485 – *Public-Private Partnerships – Process and Oversight* Environment & Transportation

Position: Favorable

The Central Maryland Transportation Alliance supports HB 485.

The current public-private partnership (P3) model in the State, where the three-member Board of Public Works is the sole approving body, lacks the oversight necessary to ensure that large-scale infrastructure projects are in the public interest. P3 projects, such as the one Maryland is pursuing to expand I-270 and I-495, can have far-reaching fiscal, environmental, and development impacts that deserve the highest degree of public scrutiny.

By creating the Public-Private Partnership Oversight Review Board, HB 1424 will improve P3 oversight by involving a broader selection of elected officials, as well as appointees who have relevant expertise in key professional fields.

Although the current P3 model does provide flexibility and speed that can be appealing when it seems that projects drag through too many years of planning, it is important to balance that sense of urgency with proper public oversight. There are multiple examples in the U.S. of poorly structured P3 deals that taxpayers and government leaders come to regret. If we prioritize the speed with which we enter a contract with a private partner, we may sacrifice on the cost and/or quality of the project. HB 485 can help to ensure the State is more fully informed on the costs, risks, alternatives, and outcomes before entering into P3 agreements.

We encourage a favorable report.

