

February 5, 2021

Environment and Transportation Committee  
House Office Building, Room 251  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Appropriations Committee  
House Office Building, Room 121  
Annapolis, MD 21401

## **HB 485, Public-Private Partnerships – Process and Oversight (Support)**

**Testimony for February 9, 2021**

**Jane Lyons, Maryland Advocacy Manager**

Chair Barve, Chair McIntosh, Vice Chair Chang, Vice Chair Stein, and delegates, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 485, Public-Private Partnerships – Process and Oversight. Please accept these comments on behalf of the Coalition for Smarter Growth, the leading organization in the D.C. region advocating for walkable, bikeable, inclusive, transit-oriented communities as the most sustainable and equitable way to grow and provide opportunities for all.

We urge you to support HB 485, which would establish a Public-Private Partnership (P3) Oversight Review Board to study and make recommendations regarding P3 transportation projects with a value exceeding \$500 million and prevent the Board of Public Works from approving an agreement without overview from the Legislative Policy Committee.

Currently, the three-person Board of Public Works is able to approve massive public infrastructure projects involving complex financial arrangements and risks to the taxpayers with very little oversight from the Maryland General Assembly. The proposed Oversight Review Board would bring much-needed perspective and expertise to the approval process for P3 projects, which can currently be fast-tracked without fully considering alternatives, or the impacts on local populations, the environment, and state finances.

P3 projects are massive, long-term, and expensive, with the potential for wide-ranging and long-lasting impacts that could permanently alter the future of our region. Projects such as the potential expansion of I-270 and the Capital Beltway are too consequential and the financial risks too great to rush through without significant input from our legislators and experts. A P3 Oversight Review Board would have the expanded capacity to study the financial and environmental impacts of a P3 project to ensure it is the best fit for all Marylanders. This legislation also comes before you again at a time when the Board of Public Works is expected to select a private concessionaire prior to the

completion of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). With HB 485, the presolicitation report for major P3s would be required to include a final EIS in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act – a common sense requirement.

For these reasons, we urge you to support HB 485 and ensure effective legislative oversight for these expensive and consequential projects. Thank you.