



MARYLAND LEAGUE
OF CONSERVATION VOTERS

March 10, 2021

SUPPORT SB869: Statewide Transit Plan – Western Maryland MARC Rail Extension Study

Maryland League of Conservation Voters

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Bonnie Norman
Katharine Thomas

Kim Coble
Executive Director

30 West Street
Suite C
Annapolis, MD 21401

410.280.9855
mdlcv.org
marylandconservation.org

Madame Chair and Members of the Committee:

Maryland League of Conservation Voters supports SB869: Statewide Transit Plan – Western Maryland MARC Rail Extension Study and we thank Senator Corderman for his leadership on this issue.

This year, the Maryland General Assembly has the opportunity to strengthen Maryland’s existing public transit system by ensuring adequate funding to bring a dilapidated fleet of rail, subway, light rail, and commuter rail to a state of good repair by passing SB199. This is one of many measures that this Committee, and the Maryland Senate, will consider that will put our state on the path to confronting climate change; the transportation sector contributes as much as 41% of Maryland’s carbon emissions. SB869 is also important legislation in this effort.

As the Maryland Transit Caucus wrote in their support of the similar 2020 legislation, “we know that urban sprawl makes communities reliant on cars, degrades the environment, and contributes to public health inequities. Possible MARC expansion would make the region less automobile dependent, unlocking economic opportunity in an environmentally sustainable way.”

According to a 2015 Harvard study, access to reliable public transit is one of the single most important factors to allowing individuals to move out of poverty. In 2013, Washington County, which would primarily benefit from this potential MARC expansion, had a 12% poverty rate. A possibility of expanded commuter rail to this region will help Maryland to reach its fullest potential for economic recovery by offering those in Western Maryland greater access to higher-paying job opportunities, especially those without the financial resources to purchase or maintain their own vehicle. The region would benefit from the economic advancement as tourists and shoppers found greater ability to easily visit one of the most beautiful areas of our state. Additionally, we are proud to stand with our partners at SMART Transportation Division to support the job creation possibilities for more skilled railroad employees that would be required as the service expands.

For all of these reasons, Maryland LCV urges a favorable report on SB869.