



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Marc Elrich
County Executive

February 17, 2022

TO: The Honorable Maggie McIntosh
Chair, Appropriations Committee

FROM: Marc Elrich
County Executive

RE: House Bill 778 – *Transportation - Investment Program - MARC Rail Service (Maryland Regional Rail Transformation Act)* – Support

I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 778, the *Maryland Regional Rail Transportation Act*, which reflects an action plan for making the necessary investments in the Maryland Area Regional Commuter (MARC) rail service as envisioned in the Maryland Transit Administration's MARC Cornerstone Plan. To help guide this effort, the bill requires the Administration to conduct a MARC Cornerstone Plan implementation study, which must be submitted to the Governor and the General Assembly by the end of the year.

A rail system serving Marylanders that creates connections spanning from Delaware to Virginia, is seamless, and much more reliable is becoming increasingly important. Doing this will not only require wherewithal, but also additional State funding, which could help Maryland leverage federal funds that will be flowing from the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act as soon as Congress passes its fiscal year 2022 budget. If the State can successfully compete for these federal dollars, it can advance major upgrades and expansions to the MARC commuter rail system, by adding capacity to the Brunswick, Penn and Camden lines and undertake station improvements. And, to ensure we can compete regionally, investments could be made to establish better rail connections to Virginia and Delaware.

Maryland has tremendous assets. Right now, a high functioning regional commuter rail system is not one of them. That can be changed, however, if we are willing to commit the effort and capital that it will take to change this dynamic. House Bill 778 lays out a strategy to operationalize the MARC Cornerstone Plan, which, is an excellent plan, and, if implemented, will create substantial economic spinoff while at the same time creating a more sustainable transportation system. For all of these reasons, I urge the committee to move favorably on this legislation.

cc: Members of the House Appropriations Committee