



POSITION STATEMENT

TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL 778 – TRANSPORTATION - INVESTMENT PROGRAM - MARC RAIL SERVICE
(MARYLAND REGIONAL RAIL TRANSFORMATION ACT)

Sponsor – Delegate Solomon, et al

February 17, 2022

DONALD C. FRY
PRESIDENT & CEO
GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE

Position: Support

House Bill 778 requires the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) to establish individual investment programs to advance the Maryland Area Regional Commuter (MARC) Cornerstone Plan and other MARC improvements, as specified. The bill also requires MTA to (1) advance specified rail priority projects as part of the investment programs, as specified, and (2) conduct a MARC Cornerstone Plan Implementation Study. The Cornerstone Plan would address service to Virginia, Delaware, and an extension of the Brunswick Line to better serve Western Maryland.

Advocating for adequate transportation and mobility infrastructure in Maryland and the Greater Baltimore region has been a longstanding priority of the Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC). The GBC was a leading proponent of the Red Line project and supported the 2013 revenue increase that was intended to provide a portion of the state funding for the project. Following the cancellation of the Red Line in 2015, the region has experienced significant disinvestment of state dollars in the transportation network, particularly in transit.

An October 2019 [report](#) by the Abell Foundation cited transportation as one of the top three systemic drivers that prevent more individuals in Baltimore from accessing job training and ultimately obtaining employment. Specifically, the report states that:

“The lack of reliable and affordable transportation to jobs is one of the greatest obstacles to scaling up training programs. Programs know that they can train and place a greater number of program graduates, but they limit expansion knowing that graduates will be unable to get to their new jobs. A number of programs reported that job growth in their target industry sector is concentrated in surrounding counties and/or is not accessible by public transportation, a problem that particularly impacts the most economically distressed neighborhoods of Baltimore” (page 19).

This bill is also consistent with a key tenet in *Gaining A Competitive Edge: Keys to Economic Growth and Job Creation in Maryland*, a report published by the GBC that identifies eight core pillars for a competitive business environment and job growth:

Superior transportation infrastructure with reliable funding mechanisms. An essential prerequisite of a competitive business environment includes well-funded and maintained highway, transit, port and airport infrastructure that provides reliable and efficient options to move people, goods and services.

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House Bill 778 will require MDOT to make a realistic plan for regional commuter rail transit and to follow through with its implementation.

For these reasons, the Greater Baltimore Committee urges a favorable report on House Bill 778.

The Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) is a non-partisan, independent, regional business advocacy organization comprised of hundreds of businesses -- large, medium and small -- educational institutions, nonprofit organizations and foundations located in Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, and Howard counties as well as Baltimore City. The GBC is a 67-year-old, private-sector membership organization with a rich legacy of working with government to find solutions to problems that negatively affect our competitiveness and viability.