

March 8, 2022

**Testimony on HB 1336 –
Greater Baltimore Transit Governance and Funding Commission –
Appropriations**

Position: FAVORABLE

Bus Workgroup14 supports HB 1336.

Leaders in the Greater Baltimore region are seeking to reform the way public transportation is governed and financed. Structural challenges in the current centralized governance structure of the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) make maintaining and improving transit performance difficult. The result is an unreliable public transportation system that further disadvantages many users already negatively impacted by poverty and structural racism, discourages ridership growth and puts the region at a competitive disadvantage compared to other metropolitan areas with robust, reliable public transit.

Moreover, the lack of local participation in planning and funding decisions has been a contributing factor to ongoing maintenance problems and lack of significant expansion or improvement. Of the 50 largest transit agencies in the country, the MTA is the only one that is part of a state department of transportation without a board of directors and where decision-making lies solely with a governor.

In Baltimore City, nearly one in three households do not have a car. Thousands of Baltimore residents depend on public transit—mostly buses—for trips to work, school, day care, shopping, and medical appointments. These trips are often particularly difficult because the bus arrives late, or too early, or does not come at all. Effective public transit has not been a priority of the Maryland General Assembly, and the lack of reliable transit service is a decades-long problem.

HB 1336 creates a governance and funding commission representative of key regional and state stakeholders to answer key questions on how to create a new Baltimore Regional Transportation Authority. Informed by the commission's findings, the General Assembly will then be able to draft authorizing legislation to make that authority a reality. We believe that reforming the current system and creating that authority is a critical step for improving and expanding transit service, increasing oversight and accountability, and bringing additional local and federal funds for transit to the region.

We respectfully encourage a favorable report.

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For Bus Workgroup14