

Good Afternoon, Chairman McIntosh and Members of the House Appropriations Committee.

My name is Herbert Harris, Jr., Chairman / State Representative, Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen.

I am the Legislative Representative and Safety Officer for the locomotive engineers that operate MARC – Penn Line Commuter Service, Amtrak, Acela, Regional, and Inter-City Service, and Virginia Rail Express. I am also an operating Locomotive Engineer with 28 years of railroad experience.

LEGISLATION

Today, I offer our full SUPPORT of HB 778: “Maryland Regional Rail Transformation Act of 2022”. We support the legislation for the following reasons:

First, the legislation finally establishes measurable timelines and bench-mark for the expansion of service on three (3) MARC commuter lines – Camden, Brunswick, and Penn Line.

Over the past two decades, Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) has conducted countless studies and reports on the expansion of MARC rail services. Unfortunately, the multiplicity of studies has only resulted in small improvements, but not quantifiable benefits for riders or any major expansions of the MARC rail system.

Second, the legislation establishes an investment program in the Consolidate Transportation Plan (CTP) to fund the future expansion. Sustainable long-term funding is critical to creating a rail system capable of meeting the future mobility and transportation needs of Maryland.

To reach its full economic development and transportation potential, MARC needs long-term funding and a leadership commitment. The expansion and growth of MARC Rail service should be a bipartisan commitment regardless of who leads the General Assembly or occupies the Governor’s Mansion.

Commonwealth of Virginia is the best example for long-term bipartisan investments in rail. Virginia is a national rail leader and has set new standards for railroad investments. The state is reaping real economic benefits from its long-range rail investments including: Amazon II Headquarters, tourism and travel, College Admissions, and growth to Western Region – Lynchburg / Blacksburg.

INVEST ACT

The INVEST Act signed by President Biden will provide \$66 Billion dollars in federal support for the expansion and development of railroad projects. Thirty six (\$36) billion dollars of the federal funding has been designated for Federal / State grants.

This once-in-a generation federal support should serve as the catalyst to modernize and change the trajectory of the MARC Rail system. This is a seminal moment for rail in Maryland. Go Big or Go Home !!

Competitive rail projects are being planned for corridors throughout the country. What is the plan for the State of Maryland to compete for the available grants? How will the MARC Cornerstone Plan maximize INVEST Act to fund infrastructure, capital, and service expansions of the MARC rail system.

FUTURE POPULATIONS AND MOBILITY

The U.S. Census Bureau projects the population of Maryland from 2007 – 2030 will grow by 25% to 7.0 million residents. New residents will evaluate Maryland based on employment, housing affordability, education, and transportation mobility.

Today, Marylanders are demanding greater frequency and better service on the three MARC commuter lines. More importantly, MARC rail service must meet the mobility needs of residents based on their future work schedules and lifestyles.

MARC Rail system possesses the regional characteristics, infrastructure, and ridership to be a national recognized commuter rail system.

A review of the station statistics and pre-pandemic ridership to shows the potential of the MARC system. The passenger stations: Aberdeen, Baltimore, Cumberland, Rockville, New Carrollton, and BWI Marshall Airport are the most utilized and had and account for 1.8 million annual passengers.

Approximately 38K, pre-pandemic commuters daily utilized MARC Service on the Penn Line, Camden Line, and Brunswick Line. Over 22K, commuters rode daily on the MARC Penn Line between Perryville, Md. – Washington, D.C.

RAIL COORIDORS / SAFETY

Maryland has 770 rail miles owned by the Class I railroads, Norfolk Southern, CSX, and Amtrak. An overlay of the state rail network will show the most populated and traveled passenger and commuter rail corridors are also the primary (North – South) and (East – West) freight rail corridors.

In Maryland, commuter and passenger trains share the same rail corridors with freight trains. The strategic planning, modeling, and investments outlined in this legislation has the potential to improve overall rail safety in the shared rail corridors.

The potential safety improvements derived by this legislation will benefit the traveling public, freight railroads, and Amtrak. This is a Win – Win scenario for Maryland.

CONCLUSION

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony. I strongly encourage your support for HB: 0778 “MARC Regional Rail Transformation Act.”

My colleagues and I are committed to the improvement and growth of the MARC Rail system. We look forward our contributions that will assist MARC realize its full potential as regional commuter rail service.

Madame Chairperson, I am prepared to answer any questions you or members of the committee may have at this time.