



Favorable Testimony - HB0778, the Maryland Regional Rail Transformation Act

Dear Delegate McIntosh and members of the Appropriations Committee:

As the mayor of Maryland's second largest city, the City of Frederick, I would like to express my support for HB0778 and its companion bill, SB0514. Improved MARC train service would be a benefit to our city, region, and the whole state. Thanks to the MARC Cornerstone Plan, we know the path forward; it's time to start along it.

For years, MARC train service along the Brunswick Line has been one of our city's top transportation priorities. While we welcome existing investments to ease congestion today, we know that any congestion improvements by roadway expansion are only part of the solution. Investment in the Brunswick Line will permanently mitigate the impacts traffic congestion has on our residents, businesses, and visitors.

As a gateway to Western Maryland and a major destination in our own right, we in Frederick are always looking to grow our tourist market. But as bicycling and transit become more popular in Washington, we are leaving a major untapped audience stranded. With off-peak and weekend MARC service, we would be able to serve the whole region, not just those who have access to the car. This would have the added benefit of reducing traffic downtown during our large festivals, which regularly attract thousands of visitors.

Businesses, too, are looking to relocate to places with reliable transit service. With a major rail artery effectively closed to most trips because of infrastructure constraints, we can struggle to attract and maintain employers – an issue faced not just by communities along the Brunswick Line but by those along Camden and Penn as well. The Cornerstone Plan will create a stronger, more competitive railroad that can be the backbone of our future transportation system.

Lastly, Frederick residents who cannot afford a car are often left stuck without a way to see friends, attend doctors' appointments, or participate in the civic life of our state are often left without any transportation options beyond some very limited hours built around the peak commute. For reasons of equity, too, MARC train service is a critical priority for our city.

By directing the State to prioritize and fund needed rail infrastructure, HB0778 could be the first step to a stronger, more livable, more competitive, and more equitable Maryland. We urge its passage.

Thank you for your consideration and a favorable report on HB0778/SB0514.



Michael O'Connor
Mayor
The City of Frederick