



**Transportation
Alliance**



Bikemore

March 10, 2022

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

Position: Favorable

The Central Maryland Transportation Alliance and Bikemore support 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 (MTA buses and trains have some of the highest breakdown rates in the nation) and lack of significant expansion or improvement (last expansion of the system was in 1997). 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 2020 the Transportation Alliance co-commissioned, along with the Greater Washington Partnership, the *Transit Reform for Maryland Report* by the Eno Center for Transportation, a national expert on transportation policy. The Eno report laid out three models for transit governance reform and funding alternatives. The following year a separate report from the Baltimore Regional Transportation Board (BRTB) laid out six models. Both reports address high-level questions such as, who operates the transit service, does the state contribute funding, do local governments contribute money, what are potential sources for revenue, and who is the governing body responsible and accountable for policy and funding decisions.

However, the reports did not address some critical considerations, such as what are the exact geographic boundaries, which transportation modes should be included, how should the state's annual financial commitment be determined, what additional revenue sources should be utilized, and what would be the makeup of a governance board, among others. Additionally, neither report recommends a specific model and the specific steps needed to make that a reality.

HB 1336 creates a governance and funding commission representative of key regional and state stakeholders to answer those questions and recommend a path forward. 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.