



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education

House Bill 632

Baltimore East-West Corridor – Transit Study – Requirements

Date: March 29, 2022

Position: **Support**

To: Budget & Taxation Committee

From: Erik Fisher, AICP, MD Land Use Planner

Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS** HB 632, which would resolve planning, preliminary engineering, and environmental study for the Red Line and a MARC rail extension in Baltimore City. These facilities would expand access to transportation choice and reduce an inequitable burden of air and water pollution in urban neighborhoods across the region. The bill does not commit the state beyond the availability of federal matching funds.

While auto travel can be an important transportation option, it also pollutes the air and water of communities along the route. These vehicles emit particulates that can cause or worsen asthma and other diseases. Chemical compounds such as nitrous oxides are also deposited into waterways, degrading water quality. Fully one-third of the nitrogen pollution in tidal Chesapeake Bay rivers like the Patapsco comes from the air – with vehicles a major contributor. Baltimore's East-West Corridor, which includes a number of lower income and minority-majority neighborhoods, is faced with levels of these pollutants in the 80th to 100th percentile due in part to the concentration of auto travel and lack of cleaner transportation mode choices along this route.¹ Meanwhile, residents can struggle with the high cost of owning and maintaining a personal vehicle. As a result, these communities end up burdened with the environmental impact of regional travel patterns without an equitable level of access to work, school, and play.

Providing accessible and affordable transit would help reduce auto dependence and its associated pollution burden. Fixed-rail systems like the Red Line and MARC represent a lasting commitment to clean and equitable transportation access, enabling residents to live healthier lives and businesses to invest in their communities with confidence. The Baltimore City Department of Transportation notes that the Red Line can be expected to serve more than 40,000 riders per day.² While estimates vary, the reduction in particulate and NOx emissions from electrified transportation in this area would be significant, and help to reduce current disparities in air and water quality. Based on prior route planning, these riders would also have direct access to natural areas like Leakin Park and the Patapsco River, which can further improve physical and mental health outcomes.

CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report on HB 632. For more information, please contact Robin Jessica Clark, Maryland Staff Attorney at rclark@cbf.org and 443.995.8753.

¹ EPA. [EJSCREEN: EJ Indexes for Particulate Matter 2.5, Ozone, and Diesel PM](#). Accessed 2/15/22.

² Baltimore City Department of Transportation. [Red Line Project Overview](#). Accessed 2/15/22.

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