



HB141 – Equity in Transportation Sector - Guidelines and Analyses

Testimony before

House Environment and Transportation Committee

January 27, 2022

Position: Favorable

Mr. Chair, Mr. Vice Chair and members of the committee, my name is Richard Deutschmann, and I represent the 750+ members of Indivisible Howard County. We are providing written testimony today in support of **HB141 (Transit Equity Act)**, which will bring equity into the core of our transportation planning. Indivisible Howard County is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members). We appreciate the leadership of Delegate Ruth for sponsoring this important legislation.

Transportation systems in Maryland have long had a history of disparate impacts on poor and predominantly black neighborhoods. One only needs to look at the intersection of transit outcomes and traditionally redlined neighborhoods beginning many decades ago. This pattern continued through the cancellation of the Red Line in Baltimore. The result has been a series of disproportionate effects on impacted neighborhoods, including lack of economic opportunity, health effects such as higher rates of asthma and other serious illnesses, and negative impacts on education outcomes for generations of people.

The Transit Equity Act begins to right these wrongs. It will accomplish this by putting equity at the center of our transportation planning process. As of today, equity is an afterthought, and is only considered largely after transportation plans are settled. The legislation will require cross-model analysis, for the many folks that take multiple forms of transit to get to their places of work or to school. It brings people representing effected communities and their allies into committees and commissions making transit decisions in the state. Finally, it requires that MDOT report annually on data regarding transit and disparate impacts on racial disparities.

On a personal note, my aunt and uncle, the Reverend Robert & Jeanie Graetz, were core figures in the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955. This was all about the transit inequities of the day, and how to bring just a shred of dignity into this space. For that, their family home was firebombed, and they nearly paid with their lives. Bob & Jeanie both passed away during the pandemic. I would personally like to honor their legacies by bringing transit equity to Maryland.

For these reasons, we support the goals of HB141, as a way to help right the deeply embedded wrongs in our transportation systems from the past many decades. Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

We respectfully urge a favorable committee report.

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