



January 24, 2022

Testimony on HB0141 – The Transportation Equity Act of 2022

The Fund for Educational Excellence supports HB141, the Transportation Equity Act of 2022.

The State of Maryland's current investments in transportation disproportionately benefit white residents, most of whom drive private vehicles, and disadvantage low-income and Black and brown residents, who rely on public transit in greater numbers. Eighty-six percent (86%) of MTA's core bus riders are Black or Hispanic. Most riders are low-income, and 83% do not have access to a private vehicle. One in three Baltimore commuters is an essential worker.

Examples of policy and practice that demonstrate the inequitable condition of transportation investment include:

- Cancellation of the Red Line
- The 15-month exposure of subway riders to conditions conducive to derailment, finally revealed to the public in February 2018.
- The proposed permanent cuts to MTA core bus service in September 2020 that would have had bus riders, 86% of whom are Black or Hispanic residents, shoulder the greatest burden of the cuts, while no cuts were proposed for the seaport, airport, or state highway system and only modest, temporary cuts were proposed for the MARC commuter rail system whose riders are majority white.
- Baltimore City Public Schools students, 90% of whom are Black and Hispanic, rely on MTA public transit to travel to and from school in a choice district where there are no zoned high schools. Critical routes for them would have been upended by these proposed cuts, with nearly a third of students seeing service drastically reduced on their routes or having their routes entirely eliminated.
- MDOT's testimony against the Transit Safety and Investment Act of 2021, designed to address a \$2 billion maintenance backlog and bring core service in the Baltimore region to a standard of adequate safety and reliability. Despite MDOT's testimony against funding basic safety for public transit users, the bill was passed by Maryland's General Assembly, then vetoed by Governor Hogan. The General Assembly overrode the governor's veto in December during a special session.

The Transportation Equity Act of 2022 will preempt harmful policy and practice by MDOT and the MTA by requiring these agencies to conduct an equity analysis of any major change before implementation. It recognizes MDOT MTA's failure to act in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act that guarantees equal access and equity in public transportation and requires the agency to act in anticipation in order to operate in compliance with the statute going forward.

We encourage a FAVORABLE report for this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Kwane Wyatt

Kwane Wyatt
Program Director
Fund for Educational Excellence