

Testimony of Delegate Jazz Lewis
Equitable and Inclusive Transit-Oriented Development Enhancement Act
Before the Environment and Transportation Committee

To Chair Barve, Vice-Chair Stein, and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

I present this testimony in strong support of House Bill 710, the Equitable and Inclusive Transit-Oriented Development Enhancement Act. With this bill, we will help promote targeted growth and development in areas of the state with access to transit stations. Better leveraging the state's transportation assets, focusing development and dollars where they can be put to the best use.

Our state has a long history of investing in mass transit, and putting funding towards our transit system, which is why we have the sixth-highest share of transit commuters across the country, with DC being the highest. Though our transit numbers have taken a hard hit through the COVID-19 pandemic, mass transit continues to be essential to so many Marylanders and communities around the state. We have already seen riders returning to transit as we emerge from the pandemic, and this bill will help the state create a more transit-oriented and healthier state. Investing in our transit infrastructure makes sense economically, and environmentally, leveraging the state's dollars to their fullest potential.

In 2008, the General Assembly enacted an official Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) designation process by which the state allows projects within a half-mile of designated TOD stations to be eligible to receive state support to advance transit-oriented development around the station. However, this statute did not work in the incentives necessary to promote this development. As of January 2022, there are 17 state-designated TOD sites throughout Maryland. We can create a more inclusive, accessible Maryland by encouraging more development at each of these 17-locations already served by the state's transit system..

With this legislation, we leverage the More Jobs for Marylanders program to provide the same tax credits and benefits to businesses who create new jobs in opportunity zones as for TOD designated sites, incentivizing the creation of jobs where people can access them through mass transit options. This will directly benefit Marylanders who may not have access to a car, and thus are cut off from many job opportunities by encouraging businesses to locate near the state's designated TOD sites.

Further, this bill will create a \$10 million Transit-Oriented Development Capital Grant and Revolving Loan Fund, that the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) will administer yearly to create competitive grant and loan programs that provide financial assistance to local jurisdictions for design, planning, construction, or gap funding for public or private development within a state-designated TOD site. This fund will help us target development where it can be supported by transit access and encourage more people to use the transportation infrastructure

we have. This small pot of money will accelerate targeted growth in TOD areas, enhance our transit capacity, build new infrastructure, and create more economic opportunities accessible to Marylanders across the state.

For these reasons, I urge a favorable report from the Environment and Transportation Committee and the Ways and Means Committee.