



HB 1336 Greater Baltimore Transit Governance and Funding Commission

Testimony before Senate Finance Committee

March 31, 2022

Position: Favorable

Madam Chair, Mr. Vice Chair and members of the committee, my name is Barbara Matheson, and I represent the 750+ members of Indivisible Howard County. We are providing written testimony today in **support of HB 1336**. Indivisible Howard County is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members). We appreciate the efforts of Delegate Bridges on this bill.

The purpose of HB 1336 is to create a Transit Governance and Funding Commission to review findings of the Baltimore Regional Transit Governance and Funding Study concluded in August 2021. The charge is to study, analyze, and make recommendations to improve public transit in the Greater Baltimore region.

The Maryland Transit Authority (MTA) is one of the few urban regions that relies on state government to run its transit system. The centralized governance structure is not delivering the service riders need. Citizens of Baltimore, 30% of whom do not own cars, cannot find dependable transportation to work, medical facilities, and social activities. Job opportunities are stifled. Safety is compromised. University officials report students find the city a difficult place to live, and this results in loss of enrollment. The public transportation system disadvantages far too many people already disadvantaged by poverty and structural racism. The system needs to be more equitable.

Greater Baltimore is at a competitive disadvantage compared to other metropolitan areas with robust, reliable public transit. New governance would not only improve accountability and oversight at the local level, but also empower commercial development of the greater Baltimore/DC area.

The transportation sector is the largest and fastest-growing source of climate disrupting pollution in Maryland. The vehicle emissions - which include cars, buses, trucks, planes, trains, ships, and freight—produce approximately 38 percent of all greenhouse gas emissions in the state. Tailpipe emissions from gas and diesel-powered vehicles are the largest source of health damaging pollution, responsible for 1 in 5 childhood asthma cases and are linked to various cancers, heart disease, emphysema and other respiratory diseases that may lead to premature death. Reductions in ridership is contributing to climate crisis.

The creation of a Transit Governance and Funding Commission is the next logical step toward solving the many serious problems of an inadequate and dated public transit system.

We respectfully urge the committee to issue a favorable report on HB 1336.

Barbara Matheson.
Columbia, Maryland