



Testimony Presented to the House Appropriations Committee

HB0491 - Transportation – Commission to Study Establishing a Baltimore Regional Transit Authority; and HB0794 - Baltimore Regional Transit Commission – Establishment

Sponsor: Delegate Bridges

Position: Favorable

This testimony is submitted by the members of the Baltimore Metropolitan Council’s Transit Governance and Funding Workgroup (TGFW). The TGFW was appointed by the Baltimore Metropolitan Council’s Board of Directors to identify meaningful recommendations to develop a more effective and inclusive regional transit system in the Baltimore region.

The TGFW met from August through December, 2022. We are pleased to support HB0491 and HB0794, which reflect two of the recommendations from our report published in January 2023.

The Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) is the nation’s only large transit agency that is not governed by a board, commission or council. Over time, this structure has allowed for little accountability; fostered disinvestment in the system; and allowed for the cancellation of the Red Line with no input from the residents and local governments of the Baltimore region.

Further, the lack of coordination between state and local government plans regarding transit, land use, economic development - and even traffic operations - have resulted in a system that is not aligned with providing convenient and equitable connections for riders to regional job centers, schools, recreational activities and healthcare facilities.

These bills, intended to work in concert, will establish a working partnership between State and Local government and help our region develop a world-class system that best serves the needs of current and future transit riders.

HB0491 is the definitive study of whether the Baltimore region should have an independent transit authority. This question has been the subject of conversation since the cancellation of the Red Line. While an authority offers many benefits, there are complex questions that must be answered before undertaking such a substantial step. Issues such as financial considerations, current labor and service contracts, ownership of physical assets, board structure must be considered before determining whether any gained benefits are worth the potential risks and costs. Commencing this study now, within the term of the new administration, provides an opportunity to act on any recommendations and next steps resulting from this study.



HB0794 would create an immediate partnership between State and Local government and provide much needed public accountability by creating a targeted and limited governing structure over MTA. The BRTC will have two limited, but specifically targeted powers. (1) Approval of the MTA's budget for Baltimore's core service area, to ensure necessary and appropriate funding. (2) Approval of the Central Maryland Regional Transit Plan implementation and updates - to make sure we are maintaining the system and planning for the future. The BRTC gives local government a formal voice in transit, as a partner to MTA, for the first time in over 50 years.

Together, these bills would provide a transformational opportunity to include local voices, coordinate transit and land use decisions, and better meet the needs of current and future riders throughout the greater Baltimore region.

We strongly encourage **FAVORABLE** reports for **HB0794** and **HB0491**. Thank you for your consideration.

BMC TRANSIT GOVERNANCE AND FUNDING WORKGROUP MEMBERS

Tony Bridges, Maryland State Delegate, Baltimore City, District 41

Dr. Celeste Chavis, Associate Professor of Transportation and Urban Infrastructure Studies, Morgan State University

Andrew Gena, Director of Strategic Research, Amalgamated Transit Union AFL-CIO/CLC

Tasha Gresham-James, Executive Director, Dundalk Renaissance

Ron Hartman, Adjunct Lecturer, Georgetown University

Jon Laria, Managing Partner, Ballard Spahr

Michael McMillan, President & Business Agent, Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1300

Tony Scott, Associate Director for Project Management, Baltimore Mayor's Office of Infrastructure

Samuel Snead, Director, Anne Arundel County Department of Transportation

Aaron Tomarchio, Executive Vice President of Corporate Affairs, Tradepoint Atlantic

D'Andrea Walker, Acting Director, Baltimore County Department of Public Works & Transportation

Mary Washington, Maryland State Senator, Baltimore City, District 43