

Bridges HB491 Testimony (1).pdf

Uploaded by: Asia Williams

Position: FAV

TONY BRIDGES
Legislative District 41
Baltimore City

Appropriations Committee



The Maryland House of Delegates
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Annapolis, Maryland 21401
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

To: The Honorable Members of the Appropriations Committee
From: Delegate Tony Bridges, Legislative District 41
Re: **Support** - House Bill 491 - Baltimore Regional Transit Commission - Establishment
Date: February 21, 2023

Good afternoon, Chair Barnes, and members of the Appropriations Committee,
In July 2022, Baltimore Metropolitan Council Board of Directors established the Baltimore Regional Transit Governance and Funding Workgroup with the objective of preparing recommendations regarding the management of transit in the Baltimore region. The Workgroup held four meetings from September to December 2022 and based their work on the Baltimore Regional Transit Board's extensive 2021 analysis of this issue. The Workgroup considered the alternatives from the original study and compared peer state and regional transit entities.

The Workgroup ultimately developed consensus around a set of five recommendations for timely action by our local governments, the Maryland General Assembly, and the Moore-Miller administration. One of those is the formal study of the creation of a Baltimore Regional Transit Authority.

House Bill 491 will establish a two-year legislative commission that will conduct a comprehensive study of a Baltimore Regional Transportation Authority. This Commission (1) will define the purpose and goals of the transit authority in order to better serve communities and support economic development, (2) outline the specific powers and responsibilities of the transit authority, (3) identify potential funding sources, (4) identify impacts to existing labor and service contracts, (5) reflect input from local jurisdiction members, (6) consider impacts on existing transit systems/agencies, and (7) ensure compliance with relevant federal, state, and local laws/regulations.

This study will allow the legislative commission to make an accurate recommendation to Federal, State, and local governments and partners on how/if an authority should be pursued to best serve Baltimore. This commission will be comprised of state and local government and community leaders and would commence on July 1st, 2023, and submit a report of its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly by October 31st of 2024.

I ask the Committee for a favorable report on House Bill 491.

HB0491_IndivisibleHoCoMD_FAV_BarbaraMatheson.pdf

Uploaded by: Barbara Matheson

Position: FAV



HB0491 – Transportation – Commission to Study Establishing a Baltimore Regional Transit Authority

Testimony before Appropriations Committee

February 21, 2023

Position: Favorable

Mr. Chair, Mr. Vice Chair and members of the committee, my name is Barbara Matheson, and I represent the 750+ members of Indivisible Howard County. Indivisible Howard County is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members). We are providing written testimony in **support of HB0491** establishing a commission to conduct a comprehensive study and submit a to the governor a report of findings and recommendations by October 31, 2024.

The city of Baltimore has many assets – a beautiful harbor with access to the remarkable Chesapeake Bay, internationally leading universities and medical centers, an extraordinary sports complex, and a major airport. **It lacks a robust, reliable transportation system.**

The costs have been significant. Baltimore has been at a disadvantage when competing for new businesses; commercial and industrial development has been stifled.

Citizens of Baltimore, 30% of whom do not own cars, do not have dependable service to work, medical facilities, and social activities. Job opportunities are stifled. Safety is compromised. The public transportation system disadvantages many people already challenged by poverty and structural racism. The system needs to be more equitable. Furthermore, transportation produces 28% of greenhouse gas emissions, more than any other sources. There is an unmistakable connection between greenhouse gas emissions and the quality of public transportation.

The creation of a Transit Governance and Funding Commission is the logical solution to the many serious problems of an inadequate and dated public transit system.

We respectfully urge a favorable report.

Barbara Matheson, PhD
Columbia, MD 21044

HB0491 Commission to Study a Baltimore RTA FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Cecilia Plante

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY FOR HB0491

Transportation – Commission to Study Establishing a Baltimore Regional Transit Authority

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Bridges

Committee: Appropriations

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in strong support of HB0491 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

Baltimore needs its own Transportation Authority. The transportation challenges in our largest city do not mirror any of the challenges that we have with the rest of the state. Additionally, Baltimore has been given few resources and little support in trying to resolve its transportation problems. Baltimore has been left with an underfunded, unreliable public transportation system that further disadvantages many users already negatively impacted by poverty and structural racism, discourages ridership growth and puts the region at a competitive disadvantage compared to other metropolitan areas with robust, reliable public transit.

Moreover, the lack of local participation in planning and funding decisions has been a contributing factor to ongoing maintenance problems (MTA buses and trains have some of the highest breakdown rates in the nation) and lack of significant expansion or improvement (last expansion of the system was in 1997). Of the 50 largest transit agencies in the country, the MTA is the only one that is part of a state department of transportation without a board of directors and where decision-making lies solely with a governor.

HB0491 establishes a commission to study the creation of a Baltimore Regional Transportation Authority. The report from the study is due October 31, 2024. Informed by the commission's findings, the General Assembly will then be able to draft authorizing legislation to make that Regional Authority a reality. We believe that reforming the current system and creating that Regional Authority is a critical step for improving and expanding transit service, increasing oversight and accountability, and bringing additional local and federal funds for transit to the region.

We strongly support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.

CDN HB491 FAVORABLE.pdf

Uploaded by: Claudia Wilson Randall

Position: FAV



Testimony

HB 491

Appropriations Committee

February 21, 2023

Position: FAVORABLE

Dear Chairman Barnes and Members of the Appropriations Committee

The Community Development Network of Maryland (CDN) is the voice for Maryland’s community development sector and serves nearly 200 member organizations. CDN—focuses on small affordable housing developers, housing counseling agencies and community-based non-profits across the state of Maryland. The mission of CDN is to promote, strengthen and advocate for the community development sector throughout Maryland’s urban, suburban and rural communities. CDN envisions a state in which all neighborhoods are thriving and where people of all incomes have abundant opportunities for themselves and their families.

HB 491 - Establishes a Commission to Study the formation of a Baltimore Regional Transit Authority; requiring the Commission to conduct a comprehensive study of establishing a Baltimore Regional Transit Authority; and requiring the Commission to submit a report of its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly by October 31, 2024

According to a study by Johns Hopkins University and the Baltimore Transit Equity Coalition, public transit provides relatively low-cost access to jobs, food, and healthcare, while also reducing pollution and greenhouse gas emissions by taking cars off the roads and increasing physical activity. Despite these benefits, public transit in Baltimore often fails to serve the people. This is especially concerning since low-income people of color represent the majority of transit-users in Baltimore, many of whom during the COVID-19 pandemic were classified as “essential workers”.

For too long, the Baltimore region has ignored the region’s need for a first-class transportation system that serves industry and moves people to work, school, services, and amenities in the region. There has been little regard for the need for the overall health and growth of the region. Instead, the state redesigned the bus system without regard to high concentrations of transit dependent tax paying community members.

Further study of a Baltimore Regional Transit Authority will move us closer to a region with improved economic development. It is long overdue that we work toward a more equitable transit future where community members throughout the region have the opportunity to prosper.

Submitted by Claudia Wilson Randall, Executive Director

HB 491_FAV_TMTCoalition.pdf

Uploaded by: Eric Norton

Position: FAV



February 21, 2023

**Testimony on HB 491 –
*Transportation – Commission to Study Establishing a Baltimore
Regional Transit Authority –
Appropriations***

Position: Favorable

The Transform Maryland Transportation Coalition is incredibly pleased to see the General Assembly considering this legislation to take another significant step toward the governance reform that we think is necessary to more effectively meet the needs of current riders and provide reliable service that attracts new riders. We encourage a favorable report.

Despite certain advantages to the current centralized governance structure of the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA), other structural flaws make maintaining and improving transit performance more difficult. Of the 50 largest transit agencies in the United States, MTA is the only one that is part of a state department of transportation without a board of directors and where decision-making lies solely with a governor. The lack of local participation in planning and funding decisions has been a contributing factor to the maintenance problems and lack of significant expansion or improvement in the last two decades. HB 491 is an important step forward in reforming the way the Baltimore region's transit system is governed and financed.

We're glad to see that this bill acknowledges the importance of including the voice of transit riders by reserving a seat for a representative of the "transit-riding community". In that spirit, when choosing members for this commission we encourage the appointing authorities to focus on transit riders, including riders with disabilities and those living in environmental justice communities. We also urge the Commission established by HB 491 to address representation in its recommendations for reforming transit governance.

We're pleased to see that the Commission will be tasked with identifying funding sources and appropriate funding models for a regional authority. In addition to getting properly established as a "direct recipient" of federal funds, we strongly urge any future

Authority to formally request that the Governor recognize it as the “designated recipient” of Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funds for the Baltimore region. Becoming a “designated recipient” will ensure that the region receives its full share of federal formula funds straight from the FTA.

HB 491 builds upon years of serious study and deliberation by state and local stakeholders. In 2020, the Eno Center for Transportation published a report on transit reform in Maryland. The following year the Baltimore Regional Transportation Board released its own extensive report on the topic. And just last year the Baltimore Metropolitan Council established its own work group to continue deliberations and advance the issue. Therefore, we believe the Commission in this bill will be able to expeditiously work through its tasks by capitalizing on that prior work and make implementation of a full Baltimore Regional Transit Authority a reality.

We respectfully request a favorable report for HB 491.

The Transform Maryland Transportation Coalition is composed of more than thirty organizations with members throughout the state. Our mission is to create a robust, transformational, equitable and sustainable transportation system that helps meet our climate targets and serves all Marylanders.

www.tmtcoalition.org

HB0491 JOTF FAV - Transportation – Commission to S

Uploaded by: Ioana Stoica

Position: FAV

JOTF JOB OPPORTUNITIES TASK FORCE

Advocating better skills, jobs, and incomes

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 0491: Baltimore Regional Transit Commission - Establishment

TO: Chair Ben Barnes and Members of the House Appropriations Committee

FROM: Ioana Stoica, Policy Advocate

DATE: Friday, February 17, 2023

The Job Opportunities Task Force (JOTF) is an independent, nonprofit organization that develops and advocates policies and programs to increase the skills, job opportunities, and incomes of low-wage workers and job seekers in Maryland. **JOTF strongly supports House Bill 0491 as a means of expanding transit access to low-income communities, particularly to residents of color, by taking the first step towards putting Baltimore City transit under local control.**

Mobility is key in Maryland's regional economy, and the lack of transportation is a significant barrier to employment and to access to critical services such as childcare, healthcare, and grocery stores. And while most Marylanders have some access to a car, research shows that low-income workers, as well as workers of color, are more likely to use public transportation. In Baltimore City, for example, 88% of homeowners have access to a car, but only 57% of renters have access to a car.

Lack of access to public transit by workforce participants that the Job Opportunities Task Force serves has been exacerbated by the redirection of funds from public transportation projects to those prioritizing highway projects serving predominantly white or high-income neighborhoods. The most stark example of this has been the canceling of Red Line work by Governor Hogan in 2015 - a decision that local control of Baltimore City transit may have prevented altogether.

JOTF has been following the work of the Baltimore Regional Transportation Board, submitted letters of support in favor of a Baltimore Regional Transit Authority and has been working closely with members of the Transform Maryland Transportation Coalition on this issue. We imagine a robust, equitable, sustainable transportation system in Maryland, but mounting evidence indicates that the way we govern and finance public transportation in Greater Baltimore is flawed. Riders, educators and employers say that transit is too inefficient and too unreliable. Underinvestment by Maryland's Governors and Department of Transportation has led to equipment breakdowns and worker shortages that undercut service and hurt riders.

The clear answer to us is establishing a Baltimore Regional Transit Authority to govern and finance public transportation in the region, and this bill is a first step in this process. **For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on House Bill 491.**

For more information, contact:

Ioana Stoica / Policy Advocate / ioana@jotf.org / 240-643-0059

Baltimore's Transit Future support for BMC Transit

Uploaded by: John Hillegass

Position: FAV

BALTIMORE'S TRANSIT FUTURE

February 17, 2023

The Honorable Ben Barnes
Chair, House Appropriations Committee

***Re: Support for House Bills 0491, 0794, & 1072 | Senate Bills 0465, 0876, & 0875
The Commission to Study Establishing a Baltimore Regional Transit Authority; The Establishment of
the Baltimore Regional Transit Commission; & The Task Force to Study the Reconstitution of the
Maryland Transportation Commission***

Dear Chair Barnes and Committee Members,

On behalf of the signatories listed below, we are writing to express our support for House Bills 0491, 0794, & 1072 and cross-filed Senate Bills 0465, 0876, & 0875. The package of bills that we support are the recommendations of the Baltimore Metropolitan Council's (BMC) Baltimore Regional Transit Funding and Governance Workgroup (Workgroup) that was tasked with developing strategies to empower and strengthen transit in the Baltimore region – a goal that the Baltimore's Transit Future coalition firmly supports.

The BMC Workgroup met over the second half of 2022 to examine the governance and funding structure of the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) and locally operated transit systems to develop options for increased equity, transparency, and regional decision making in the distribution of funds and transit project prioritization in the Baltimore region. The Workgroup included elected officials, business, public-sector, labor leaders, and technical experts from around the Baltimore metropolitan region. Their work culminated in a [final report](#) and legislative recommendations. The package of bills is outlined below:

- **House Bill 0491 | Senate Bill 0465** would create a commission to study the establishment of a Baltimore Regional Transit Authority (BRTA) as the Baltimore region is the only large metropolitan area in the nation whose transit is operated by a state agency without oversight of any board or commission. The commission would complete its work on or before October 31, 2024.
- **House Bill 0794 | Senate Bill 0876** would establish a Baltimore Regional Transit Commission (BRTC), as a regional authority is being studied, to create a formal mechanism for a state-local collaboration into how the local and regional transit network is planned, built, operated and funded.
- **House Bill 1072 | Senate Bill 0875** would establish a Task Force to study the reconstitution of the Maryland Transportation Commission (MTC) to provide the group the authority to provide oversight and transparency into the state's Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP) development. The intention of this change is to increase engagement and transparency around statewide transportation funding allocations and long-range plans, which is currently opaque. The Task Force would complete its work on or before December 31, 2024.

BALTIMORE'S TRANSIT FUTURE

The lack of collaboration between the state and local leaders into the planning, funding, and operations of the Baltimore region's transit system has hampered the development of a 21st century regional transit system that can adequately support inclusive economic growth, workforce development, and the needs of the region's most disenfranchised communities. Together, these bills would ensure that the governance and funding structure of Greater Baltimore's transit system are designed to be more responsive to the needs of the region's residents, businesses, and institutions.

The undersigned signatories and organizations request favorable reports for the package of bills because of their ability to strengthen regional coordination, decision making, and funding.

Sincerely,

Ballard Spahr LLP	Johns Hopkins University and Medicine
Baltimore Collegetown Network	Kaiser Permanente
CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield	Mahogany, Inc.
Central Maryland Transportation Alliance	MedStar Health
EcoMap Technologies	PNC
Greater Baltimore Committee	Tradepoint Atlantic
Greater Washington Partnership	Transit Choices
Howard County Chamber of Commerce	University of Maryland, Baltimore

About the Baltimore's Transit Future Campaign

The [Greater Baltimore Committee](#) and [Greater Washington Partnership](#) launched the Baltimore's Transit Future campaign to call attention to the urgent business imperative and need for the Greater Baltimore region to create a world-class public transit system that helps create shared economic prosperity and catalyzes inclusive growth. Since June 2022, more than 65 business, civic, and non-profit organizations, including many of the largest employers in the State, have joined the campaign encouraging regional focus on six priorities:

1. Address the transit system's repair backlog and operator shortage.
2. Establish frequent, reliable transit service to regional job centers.
3. Support regional coordination, decision making, and funding.
4. Implement a 10-year rapid transit expansion program.
5. Prioritize regional rail investment.
6. Catalyze equitable development at transit and rail stations.

The time for action is now. The residents and businesses of Maryland's largest city and surrounding suburbs deserve a world-class transit system. These six strategic priorities will set the course for a more equitable transportation system, making the Baltimore region a more attractive place to live, work, play, and build a business.

HB0491_Study Baltimore Regional Transit Authority_

Uploaded by: Laurie McGilvray

Position: FAV



Committee: Appropriations
Testimony on: HB0491 - Transportation – Commission to Study
Establishing a Baltimore Regional Transit Authority
Organization: Climate Justice Wing of the Maryland Legislative Coalition
Submitting: Laurie McGilvray, Co-Chair
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: February 21, 2023

Dear Chair and Committee Members:

Thank you for allowing our testimony today in support of HB491. The Maryland Legislative Coalition Climate Justice Wing, a statewide coalition of over 50 grassroots and professional organizations, urges you to vote favorably on HB491.

HB491 will establish a Commission to conduct a study of establishing a Baltimore Regional Transit Authority. The Commission is required to submit a report of its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly by October 31, 2024.

HB491 is a first step in addressing the fact that Baltimore, unlike the Washington Metro Area and most major metropolitan areas in the country, has no regional transportation authority (similar to WMATA). The Maryland Transit Administration makes the decisions about Baltimore’s bus and rail service, without local control or involvement. In the past, decisions made by the Governor about major transit projects, such as cancelling the Red Line, have been detrimental to the City. Transit is particularly critical for Baltimore, because nearly 30% of residents do not own a car. Improving Baltimore transit services in a way that will truly benefit underserved communities, improve access to jobs, and reduce climate impacts from cars, is critically important and requires more local control.

HB491 will take a positive step toward addressing these issues. We urge the Committee to recommend a **FAVORABLE** report for HB491.

CE Ball 2023 - HB 491 Commission to Establish BRTA

Uploaded by: Maureen Evans Arthurs

Position: FAV



HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

3430 Courthouse Drive ■ Ellicott City, Maryland 21043 ■ 410-313-2013 Voice/Relay

Calvin Ball
Howard County Executive
cball@howardcountymd.gov

www.howardcountymd.gov
FAX 410-313-3051

February 21, 2023

Delegate Ben Barnes, Chair
House Appropriations Committee
House Office Building, Room 121
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: **TESTIMONY OF SUPPORT: HB 491** - Commission to Study Establishing a Baltimore Regional Transit Authority

Dear Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, and Members of the Committee,

Howard County SUPPORTS House Bill 491 - Commission to Study Establishing a Baltimore Regional Transit Authority. I commend Delegate Bridges and others in their proposal of this bill that will establish this exploratory body to study establishing a Baltimore Regional Transit Authority in response to the recommendations proposed in a recent report on regional transit governance from a Baltimore Metropolitan Council (BMC) workgroup.

Both HB 491 and HB 794 arise from the work of BMC's Transit Governance and Funding Workgroup. Last year, the General Assembly passed HB1336 which formed a legislative commission to study the governance and funding of MTA. That bill was vetoed by Governor Hogan. BMC formed this workgroup last July to address the issues raised in HB1336. Members were appointed from four of our jurisdictions, as well as the legislature, the business community and labor. The ideas in these bills represent the collective ideas of a cross section of regional leaders and they come from a truly regional and collaborative process. As Chair of the Baltimore Metropolitan Council Board and on behalf Mayor Scott, County Executive Olszewski, and County Executive Pittman I am proud to offer the support of our local governments for this legislation.

All our communities expect bold leadership from elected representatives, but they also expect a voice in deliberative, transparent, and accountable decision-making process. The cancellation of the Red Line blocked funding, growth and opportunity that would have helped firm up the economic foundation of communities in the Baltimore region for decades to come. Our system here in Maryland allowed this decision to go unchecked. The oversight structure outlined in these bills would provide an important guardrail, with stakeholders from communities across the region building consensus on all major transit decisions. Local communities have a seat the table at every successful transit agency in the country. We've fallen behind, but it's not too late. These bills provide a path for setting a new standard in transit governance and finally delivering for our communities on this.

I welcome your support and urge a favorable report on HB 491 and HB 794.

All the Best,

Calvin Ball
Howard County Executive

CE Ball 2023 - HB 491 Commission to Establish BRTA

Uploaded by: Meghan Lynch

Position: FAV



HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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February 21, 2023

Delegate Ben Barnes, Chair
House Appropriations Committee
House Office Building, Room 121
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: **TESTIMONY OF SUPPORT: HB 491** - Commission to Study Establishing a Baltimore Regional Transit Authority

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I welcome your support and urge a favorable report on HB 491 and HB 794.

All the Best,

Calvin Ball
Howard County Executive

HB 491 Transportation – Commission to Study Establ

Uploaded by: Michelle Dietz

Position: FAV

Tuesday, February 21, 2023

TO: Ben Barnes, Chair of House Appropriations Committee; and Committee Members

FROM: Michelle Dietz, The Nature Conservancy, Director of Government Relations; and Caitlin Kerr, The Nature Conservancy, Conservation & Climate Policy Analyst

POSITION: Support HB 491 Transportation – Commission to Study Establishing a Baltimore Regional Transit Authority

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) supports HB 491 offered by Delegate Boyce. TNC is a global conservation organization working to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. In Maryland, our work focuses on delivering science-based, on-the-ground solutions that secure clean water and healthy living environments for our communities, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing resilience in the face of a changing climate. We are dedicated to a future where people and nature thrive together.

HB 491 creates a Commission to study establishing a Baltimore Regional Transit Authority (BRTA). Comprised of members appointed by Baltimore City and County governments, as well as members who represent transit workers, advocates and transportation users, the Commission will be tasked with conducting a comprehensive study to delve into all aspects around establishing the BRTA. The study will look closely into how a BRTA will support communities' needs in the Baltimore region, how the system could be structured and function within the community, and identify specific details related to this new system's economic and labor implications. It will also include ample opportunity for stakeholder groups' input through the Commission's tenure, allowing for advice and guidance from labor unions, community organizations, employers, transit users, and advocates to ensure the BRTA's structure will address and meet community needs.

The transportation sector is the largest contributor to climate change in our country, our region, and in Maryland. It accounts for approximately 40% of greenhouse gas emissions statewide, predominately from on-road sources. Air pollution caused by increased congestion and reliance on personal vehicles harms respiratory health in heavily trafficked areas. These respiratory health problems, including asthma, disproportionately impact Black and brown communities and low-income neighborhoods. A safe, reliable, accessible, and well-connected transit system is crucial to promoting public health, equity, and jobs. The Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022 set state goals to reduce emissions by 60 percent by 2031 and reach net-zero by 2045. In order to meet these ambitious goals, Maryland needs to take immediate actions to mitigate emissions in the state's highest producing sectors. By establishing the BTRA, Maryland would be taking a marked step in improving regional transportation, which will reduce reliance on single use vehicles and expand access to mass transit options in the Baltimore region.

When compared to its peer agencies in other states across the nation, the MTA transit system, including subway, light rail, buses, and MARC commuter trains, each rank among the worst for breakdown rates. Our MTA buses break down approximately twice as frequently as buses in many major Northeast cities. Failures in our paratransit services are particularly burdensome for riders with disabilities. In addition to posing a safety risk to transit workers and riders, maintenance and repair issues cause low reliability and restrict access for those riders who depend on our public transit system to commute to job centers, schools, healthcare facilities, childcare, grocery stores, and recreational activities. More than a third of transit riders in Maryland are essential workers. Lack of reliable transportation can put their jobs at risk.

By establishing the BRTA, transportation decisions can be made by people who live in Baltimore and use these transportation services. Regional governance over the transit system will also allow for more flexibility in applying for federal grant funding as well as in choosing transportation projects that support and address the community's needs. This will increase jobs in public transit, improve safety, reliability, and accessibility when commuting to job centers, and reduce dependence on personal vehicles in Baltimore and the surrounding communities.

TNC commends Delegate Boyce for introducing this bill, which will create the enabling conditions to establish the Baltimore Regional Transit Authority, improving transportation options and availability in the Baltimore region and ultimately leading to increased transit accessibility and reduced carbon emissions from vehicles in Maryland.

Therefore, we urge a favorable report on HB 491.

HB0491 (SB0465) + HB0794 (SB0876)_Workgroup Testim

Uploaded by: Mike Kelly

Position: FAV



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

Anne Arundel County_FAV_HB491.pdf

Uploaded by: Steuart Pittman

Position: FAV



February 21, 2023

House Bill 491

**Transportation – Commission to Study
Establishing a Baltimore Regional Transit Authority**

Appropriations and Environment and Transportation Committees

Position: SUPPORT

This bill establishes a Commission to Study Establishing a Baltimore Regional Transit Authority, requires the Commission to conduct a comprehensive study of establishing a Baltimore Regional Transit Authority, and requires the Commission to submit a report of its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly by October 31, 2024.

In July 2022, the Baltimore Metropolitan Council (BMC) established the Baltimore Regional Transit Governance and Funding Workgroup. HB 491 is the result of a recommendation of the workgroup. While the workgroup believes a Regional Transit Authority is the right step forward, it recognized the complexity and challenges of creating an authority.

HB 491 is the appropriate step forward. By studying the issue closely, we will answer two critical questions: First, is an authority the right thing? The State, local governments and key partners will formally weigh the pros and cons and make this decision. And, if creating an authority is the right for the future direction of the state, what steps are needed to establish an authority? This second question is critical. If the study commission decides to recommend an authority, the legislation requires the commission to develop strategies for many complex issues, including the transfer of assets, labor agreements, federal designation, board structure, and funding. If the study commission calls for an authority, the legislation will be ready for the 2025 session.

Maryland deserves a world class transit system that spurs economic growth and improves the quality of life of our residents. This bill is a responsible step forward as we make decisions that will impact Marylanders ability to get around our great state. For those reasons please give a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 491.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Stuart Pittman".

Stuart Pittman
County Executive

BaltimoreCounty_FAV_HB0491.pdf

Uploaded by: Twana Allen

Position: FAV



JOHN A. OLSZEWSKI, JR.
County Executive

JENNIFER AIOSA
Director of Government Affairs

AMANDA KONTZ CARR
Legislative Officer

JOSHUA M. GREENBERG
Associate Director of Government Affairs

BILL NO.: **HB 491 / 794**

TITLE: **Transportation – Commission to Study Establishing a Baltimore
Regional Transit Authority**

Baltimore Regional Transit Commission - Establishment

SPONSOR: **Delegate Bridges**

COMMITTEE: **Appropriations**

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

DATE: **February 21, 2023**

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** House Bill 491 – Transportation – Commission to Study Establishing a Baltimore Regional Transit Authority, as well HB 794. House Bill 491 would establish a Commission to Study Establishing a Baltimore Regional Transit Authority. House Bill 794 Would establish the Baltimore Regional Transit Commission to perform oversight and advocacy duties related to Baltimore region transit services.

Baltimore County is the third most populous jurisdiction in Maryland, home to more than 850,000 residents. Many of our residents work elsewhere in the region, and many rely on safe, efficient, and reliable regional transit. Unfortunately, Baltimore County, like other local jurisdictions in the Baltimore Region have limited control on how State transit serves our residents. For example, roughly 40% of the Maryland Transit Administration's (MTA) local bus lines serve Baltimore County, but the County has no input in what those routes look like.

The local jurisdictions of the Baltimore Region need to be part of the discussions regarding how regional transit needs are met. HBs 491 and 794 would afford Baltimore County and neighboring jurisdictions a seat at the table. HB 491 would create a commission to undertake a comprehensive evaluation of establishing a Baltimore Regional Transit Authority. This group would be tasked with studying a full range of considerations related to formally changing the operations, planning, governance, and financing of a regional authority, and find answers to legitimate questions regarding the creation of such an authority. Last year, HB 1336, a similar bill to create a commission to evaluate the findings of the 2021 Baltimore Regional Transit Governance and Funding Study, was a Baltimore County priority.

HB 794 is a complimentary bill that would establish a Baltimore Regional Transit Commission, staffed by the existing Baltimore Metropolitan Committee (BMC) to review and provide feedback on State transit planning and engage transit stakeholders and residents who rely on transit services in such feedback to the State. This Commission could begin its cross-jurisdictional efforts in 2023, and formally give our jurisdictions a role in planning and operation of the transit that serves our residents, while the longer-term issues related to potentially changing the governance authority is thoroughly investigated.

The Baltimore Region is a hub of economic activity, cultural resources, and recreational offerings and is home to and visited by millions. Our residents, businesses, and visitors deserve high quality, safe and efficient transit now and into the future.

Accordingly, Baltimore County requests a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 491/HB 794. For more information, please contact Jenn Aiosa, Director of Government Affairs at jaiosa@baltimorecountymd.gov.

HB491_MDSierraClub_fwa 21Feb2023.pdf

Uploaded by: Brian Ditzler

Position: FWA



P.O. Box 278
Riverdale MD 20738

Committee: Appropriations

Testimony on: HB491 – “Transportation – Commission to Study Establishing a Baltimore Regional Transit Authority”

Position: Favorable with amendments

Hearing Date: February 21, 2023

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club supports HB491. The bill would create a commission to study establishing a Baltimore Regional Transit Authority (BRTA) that could acquire and operate transit systems, levy taxes or fees and enter into contracts with other entities. The BRTA also would identify potential impacts to existing labor and service contracts with the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) and locally-operated transit systems (LOTS). The BRTA could also identify potential funding sources for the transit authority, including eligibility for federal and state grants.

Among the 35 largest metropolitan transit agencies in this country, the transit “agency” serving the Baltimore region is the only one governed by a state agency, the Maryland Transit Administration, that receives no oversight from a board of locally-elected city or regional officials or their designees. The current approach has proven to be ineffective, unreliable, and unresponsive to public demands, and it should be changed.

The concept of a fully independent, Baltimore-based, regional transit authority to incorporate local and regional perspectives in the planning, design, funding, and potentially operation of transit services in the Baltimore region has been publicly endorsed by the Mayor of Baltimore and County Executives of Anne Arundel, Baltimore, and Howard Counties. Governor Moore’s stated commitment to improving the transit system serving the Baltimore region, as well as to consult with locally elected officials to decide on future directions, suggests that a commission to study establishing a Baltimore Regional Transit Authority deserves our support.

We have a number of amendments that we think would improve this bill. First, we recommend that membership on the commission should include more individuals who ride transit regularly, a representative of environmental justice communities, and a representative of riders with disabilities or a disability rights advocacy organization.

A second amendment would require the commission to actively consult with the Baltimore Regional Transportation Board – the federally-designated Metropolitan Planning Organization responsible for developing the 4-year transportation improvement plan for the region – to receive funding from the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act). Similarly, the BRTA needs to get established with the Federal Transit Administration as a designated recipient of public transportation formula funds for the service area it oversees.

Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America’s oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.

A third amendment would stipulate that the BRTA would not privatize public-sector transit jobs that now reside in the MTA and LOTS, and would protect the wages, working conditions and collective bargaining rights of its workers.

Our fourth and final amendment would stipulate that the commission complete its study by December 1, 2023, so that enabling legislation to create the BRTA could be introduced in the 2024 legislative session. The Baltimore Metropolitan Council and Baltimore Regional Transportation Board have already been studying the issue for several years, so reaching conclusions regarding the BRTA structure, powers, responsibilities, and funding should not take the Commission until October 31, 2024.

The Baltimore region has suffered too long from inadequate and unreliable transit services from the MTA and LOTS. A major change of direction is needed, and the study called for in HB491 should resolve important issues that must be decided to create and implement a well-functioning BRTA that meets the needs of the region. We urge a favorable report on this bill.

Brian Ditzler
Transportation Chair
Brian.Ditzler@MDSierra.org

Josh Tulkin
Chapter Director
Josh.Tulkin@MDSierra.org

HB 491 - Transportation - Commission to Study Esta

Uploaded by: Donna Edwards

Position: FWA



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Gerald W. Jackson

**HB 491 - Transportation - Commission to Study Establishing a
Baltimore Regional Transit Authority
House Appropriations Committee
February 21, 2023**

SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

Donna S. Edwards

President

Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO

Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 491 with amendments. My name is Donna S. Edwards, and I am the President of the Maryland State and District of Columbia AFL-CIO. On behalf of Maryland's 300,000 union members, I offer the following comments.

HB 491 creates a commission that will study and make recommendations on the creation of a new Baltimore Regional Transit Authority. The composition of study commissions have long term effects on their recommendations. We applaud the inclusion of transit labor representatives on the study commission but do not understand why their seat is non-voting. The decisions of this study group will have a massive impact on the thousands of members of ATU Local 1300. It seems unnecessary to downgrade the seat of the very people with the day to day expertise of how MTA works in Baltimore to a non-voting member of the commission. Last year's HB 1336, passed by both the House of Delegates and Senate, included a full voting seat for ATU Local 1300. Two transit worker representatives fully participated in the Baltimore Metropolitan Council's Transit Governance and Funding Workgroup that was initiated after Governor Hogan's veto of HB 1336.

Transit system re-organizations are complicated and labor organizations, like ATU Local 1300, can provide essential expertise and institutional knowledge. Simple changes or proposals that may seem innocent can have disastrous effects for the working conditions, pension obligations, or federal funding eligibility of a new transit system. Transit workers deserve a full voice and vote at the table, especially when it is their future careers this commission is discussing.

We propose striking, "*As a nonvoting member,*" from Line 3 of Page 2 of HB 491. If amended, we urge the committee to issue a favorable report.

HB 491 Economic Action Maryland.pdf

Uploaded by: Marceline White

Position: FWA



Testimony to the House Appropriations Committee
HB 491 Transportation-Commission to Study a Baltimore Regional Transit
Authority (BRTA)
Position: Favorable

February 21, 2023

The Honorable Ben Barnes, Chair
House Appropriations Committee
Room 121, House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
Cc: Members, House Appropriations Committee

Honorable Chair Barnes and Members of the Committee:

Economic Action Maryland (formerly the Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition) is a people-centered movement to expand economic rights, housing justice, and community reinvestment for working families, low-income communities, and communities of color. Economic Action Maryland provides direct assistance today while passing legislation and regulations to create systemic change in the future.

We are here in strong support of HB 491.

The legislation establishes a commission to study the creation of a Baltimore Regional Transit Authority (BRTA). Our organization works with low-income homeowners and tenants throughout the Baltimore area region. Access to affordable, reliable transportation impacts every facet of the lives of many low-income Maryland families.

Today in Baltimore City, 80,000 families do not have access to a car and must rely on limited public transit options. A survey by Vehicles for Change found that workers in the Baltimore-area neighborhoods where most of its clients live can only reach 54% of the region's jobs within 90 minutes on public transit and that the low- and middle-skill jobs they can reach in 90 minutes comprise only 25% of the region's jobs. These long commutes to and from work are common for low-income families, creating time-consuming burdens and a barrier to jobs that pay a family-sustaining wage. There are many concrete examples of this, many detailed in the Maryland Auto Insurance 2020 report *The Uninsured Motorist Problem in Maryland*. For example, in Baltimore County, officials at BWI airport note

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ID 52-2266235

that second-shift workers can take the light rail to work but the rail closes before their shift ends. Similarly, other employers in Baltimore County noted that the bus lines close before workers' second shift ends, and still others lament the fact that the bus stop closest to the workplace is still a mile away

As you can see in Table 1, the latest Vital Signs report documents the large percentage of majority Black communities in Baltimore City that rely on public transport and/or do not have a vehicle in their households.

Table 1: Public Transport and Neighborhood Demographics, Baltimore City

	% of Pop that Uses Public Transportation	% of Households with No Vehicles	% of residents Black/ African-American (non-Hispanic)
Sandtown Winchester	38.5	62.3	92.5
Greenmount East	26.8	47.8	93.2
Southern Park Heights	32	49.5	90.5
Southwest Baltimore	36.5	53	75.2
Madison/East End	29.9	45.1	77.5
Oldtown	29.9	58.6	77.5
Upton	27	48	88

Source: [Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance, Vital Signs 2020](#)

HB491 will require a report with recommendations to establish BRTA which we believe is critically needed in this region.

For all these reasons, we support HB 491 and ask for a favorable report.

Best,

Marceline White
Executive Director

ATU 1300 HB 491.pdf

Uploaded by: Michael McMillan

Position: FWA

**Statement of Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 1300
HB 491
House Appropriations Committee
February 21, 2023**

ATU Local 1300 in Baltimore, representing more than 2,600 transit workers at the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA), supports the study of the potential regionalization of transit in the Baltimore area as proposed in HB 491 with two amendments to the legislation.

ATU has participated in the Baltimore Regional Transit Governance and Funding Workgroup throughout the past year. The reorganization of MTA is a complicated process involving funding, governance and other matters that would have a direct impact on workforce issues, including bargaining units, pensions, and many other matters that the labor organization representing the workers at MTA has expertise in.

We therefore call for this bill to be amended to ensure voting representation from ATU on the Commission to Study Establishing a Baltimore Regional Transit Authority established by this legislation.

Amending Section 1(b)(5)(i) to read “~~as a non-voting member,~~ *One representative from Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1300*” is preferred but “~~as a non-voting member,~~ *One representative from the labor union representing the plurality of transit workers in the Baltimore metropolitan region*” is also suitable.

If the State of Maryland is going to go through the effort to study the creation of a new transit agency in Baltimore, we should ensure that the agency we design is truly cohesive and regional and serves the whole Baltimore metro area. To this end, we also propose that HB 491 be amended include language to ensure that the commission considers absorbing the regional LOTS into the RTA. If we do not take this step, the process will be a half measure which leaves the Baltimore region with a disjointed transit system.

HB0491 - MTA - Commission to Study Authority - LOI

Uploaded by: Pilar Helm

Position: INFO



Wes Moore
Governor
Aruna Miller
Lieutenant Governor
Paul J. Wiedefeld
Acting Secretary

February 21, 2023

The Honorable Ben Barnes
Chair, House Appropriations Committee
Room 121, House Office Building
Annapolis MD 21401

***RE: Letter of Information – House Bill 491 – Transportation – Commission to Study
Establishing a Baltimore Regional Transit Authority***

Dear Chair Barnes and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) takes no position on House Bill 491 but offers the following information for the Committee’s consideration.

House Bill 491 would establish a Commission to complete a comprehensive study and submit a report of its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly by October 31, 2024, on the establishment of a Baltimore Regional Transit Authority.

While MDOT and MDOT Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) appreciate being named to the Commission, the body is tasked with analyzing a wide variety of subjects in a relatively short period of time. Additionally, the legislation is unclear as to which agency or body will provide staff assistance. For the purposes of this review, MDOT assumes that it would be tasked with providing the necessary staff and resources.

Staffing this Commission and providing the necessary supporting resources will have a substantial fiscal impact on MDOT. The estimated cost to MDOT would be approximately \$1,181,000 in FY 2024 and \$745,000 in FY 2025. These costs are associated with conducting the studies and analysis required in the bill, as well as general administration to support the Commission’s work. Any expenditures resulting from this legislation will come from the Transportation Trust Fund.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee consider this information when deliberating House Bill 491.

Respectfully submitted,

David Myers
Director of Governmental Affairs
Maryland Transit Administration
410-767-0820

Pilar Helm
Director of Government Affairs
Maryland Department of Transportation
410-865-1090