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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.