
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 794 – Baltimore Regional Transit Commission - Establishment

Dear Chair Barnes and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) takes no position on House Bill 794 but offers the following information for the Committee's consideration. MDOT and the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) look forward to continuing to work with the bill sponsor towards the common goals of this bill which include, increased transparency, collaboration, and strategic planning.

House Bill 794 would establish the Baltimore Regional Transit Commission to review and approve annual budget requests of the MTA, updates to the Central Maryland Regional Transportation Plan, annual reports on the Administration's state of good repair, and to perform other oversight and advocacy duties related to Baltimore region transit services. The Commission would be staffed by the Baltimore Metropolitan Commission (BMC); however, it would also require significant staff resources from MTA.

As drafted, some of the duties and responsibilities of the Commission outlined in House Bill 794 are duplicative of current efforts. For example, BMC staff currently participate in and review many MTA reports and planning efforts of regional significance. MTA regularly presents these efforts to the Baltimore Regional Transit Board (BRTB). The BMC also has an existing technical committee that reviews and coordinates on transit services proposed for the Baltimore region. MDOT, MTA, and BMC regularly convene efforts to gather information from transit riders and stakeholders regarding transit service in the Baltimore region.

Additionally, the draft Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP) is presented annually to each jurisdiction in the State. This is drafted through inclusion of local priority letters, which are submitted beginning in April, and further comments continue to be received throughout the annual CTP Tour meetings in the fall. Lastly, in addition to MDOT submitting the Annual State Report on Transportation to the Legislature, MTA reports to the Legislature each year on its progress in implementing the Capital Needs Inventory, its progress in converting to Zero-Emission Bus, and the Capital Needs Inventory Report describing 10-year state of good repair needs and progress every three years.

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House Bill 794 requires the Commission to review and approve MTA's "annual operating and capital budget request for the Baltimore Region." It is important to note that MTA does not make an annual budget request but the MDOT Secretary establishes the budget for the entirety of the Department, including each transportation mode. The budget referenced in 2-103.1 is the Secretary's budget for the department, which is submitted to the legislature. As noted above, the CTP is currently developed through a process that involves direct jurisdictional engagement. The BRTB currently approves all budget requests for spending federal transportation funds in the Baltimore region through the region's federally required Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

The MTA is actively engaged with the bill sponsor and looks forward to continuing collaboration to address the concerns outlined above. The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee consider this information when deliberating House Bill 794.

Respectfully submitted,

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