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**Committee: Appropriations**

**Testimony on: HB341 – “Transportation – Statewide Transportation Improvement Programs and Transportation Improvement Programs – Equity Impacts”**

**Position: Support**

**Hearing Date: February 21, 2023**

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club supports HB341, which would require the Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) in the state to include an equity analysis of each project in their respective transportation improvement program (TIP).

TIPs are prioritized listings of transportation projects developed by the DOT and each MPO as part of their planning process for the next four years to receive funding under the Federal Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act. The funding for projects listed in each TIP will go towards maintaining, operating, and expanding the transportation system either at the state level if the project is in DOT’s TIP, or in the respective area for which each MPO is responsible. Maryland has a seven federally-designated MPOs: the Baltimore Regional Transportation Board, Calvert–St. Mary’s MPO, Cumberland MPO, Hagerstown–Eastern Panhandle MPO, Salisbury/Wicomico Area MPO, and two MPOs for metropolitan areas that include a one or more counties in Maryland. Those MPOs are the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) and the Wilmington Metropolitan Planning and Coordinating Council.

Highways, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian projects are all eligible for funding in each TIP, but in the past, the overwhelming bulk of the funding the state and each MPO requested went toward highway maintenance, operations, and expansion. By requiring DOT and each MPO to include an equity analysis of each transportation project listed in their respective TIP, HB 341 would inevitably encourage more funding for transportation projects that serve all populations, including those who rely on public transit and don’t own a car or truck. In addition, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure likely would receive more funding than in the past.

HB 341 also specifies that each equity analysis address how each project might impact low-income and minority communities. Not only would this likely encourage more funding for transit, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, it should also discourage highways from being built or expanded that would divide or otherwise adversely impact low-income and minority communities.

In summary, more equitable spending on transportation is needed in our state, and HB341 could help make that happen. We urge a favorable report on this bill.

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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.

