



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education

House Bill 1052

Transportation – Consolidated Transportation Program – Scoring

Date: March 3, 2023

To: House Appropriations Committee

Position: Support

From: Erik Fisher

Interim Executive Director

Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS** HB 1052 which develops a project-based scoring system for major transportation projects by factoring in criteria like equitable access to transportation, climate change mitigation, and adherence to smart growth design principles. These criteria will produce projects that benefit multiple spheres, such as resident quality of life, environmental health, and economic vitality.

Equity, climate, and smart growth are important criteria for prioritizing projects.

Throughout Maryland, residents are facing the consequences of underinvested transit projects, from bus delays and trains that never arrive, to increased frustrations with low staffing at transit agencies that contribute to the systems' unreliability.¹

We support this bill's commitment to addressing these issues by moving three specific criteria forward:

- **Equity:** An increase of biking/walking/transit opportunities 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.² Healthier residents result in more thriving communities, with more opportunities for physical mobility (such as improved transit options for people with disabilities), economic well-being (such as increased career options and reduced commute times), and social engagement (such as improved abilities to connect with groups and attend events.) Our state thrives when our communities are healthy and connected, and we support efforts to address deep-rooted equity problems that have fragmented neighborhoods and left them underserved.
- **Climate:** Transit projects are key factors in reducing air pollution throughout the state, particularly in urban areas. It is important to use environmental criteria that prioritize projects based on their potential to improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, advance state environmental

¹ DePuyt, Bruce. "Report Finds Maryland Transit Agency Suffers from under-Staffing and High Vacancy Rate." *Maryland Matters*, 9 Dec. 2022, <https://www.marylandmatters.org/2022/12/09/report-finds-maryland-transit-agency-suffers-from-low-staffing-and-high-vacancy-rate/>.

² "Transit Equity & Environmental Health in Baltimore." *Bloomberg American Health Initiative*, 21 Sept. 2021, <https://americanhealth.jhu.edu/news/transit-equity-environmental-health-baltimore>.

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goals, and avoid impact on environmentally sensitive and protected lands. When vehicles burn fossil fuels, they produce air pollutants such as nitrogen oxides and particulate matter, that not only affect residents, but also are absorbed by the Chesapeake Bay, causing changes in the acidity and vitality of the ecosystem. Nitrogen oxides, for example, can fuel the growth of algae blooms, which can block sunlight from reaching underwater grasses and create low-oxygen “dead zones” that suffocate marine life.³

Transit projects can also advance state environmental goals. Maryland has set the most aggressive greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals in the nation. Under the Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022, a new target has been established at 60% (over 2006 level) by 2031 and net-zero emissions by 2045.⁴ The transportation sector generates the largest share of greenhouse gas emissions, releasing 27% of nationwide emissions⁵, so equitable and effective transit projects hold a key role in attaining these statewide goals.

- Smart growth: Transit-oriented development can also benefit communities by attracting more investment from businesses, developers, and residents. This diversity contributes to neighborhood vibrancy and connectivity and leads to more equitable communities that provide opportunities for all residents.⁶

CBF urges the Committee’s FAVORABLE report on HB 1052.

For more information, please contact Matt Stegman, Maryland Staff Attorney, at mstegman@cbf.org.

³ “The Dead Zone.” *Chesapeake Bay Program*, <https://www.chesapeakebay.net/issues/threats-to-the-bay/dead-zone>.

⁴ Casey, Susan. “Climate Change Program.” *Maryland Department of the Environment*, <https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/Air/ClimateChange/Pages/index.aspx#:~:text=Maryland%20has%20set%20the%20most,he%20end%20of%20June%202023>.

⁵ “Sources of Greenhouse Gas Emissions.” *EPA*, Environmental Protection Agency, 5 Aug. 2022, <https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/sources-greenhouse-gas-emissions>.

⁶ “Transit-Oriented Development.” *Federal Transit Administration*, United States Department of Transportation, 17 Nov. 2022, <https://www.transit.dot.gov/TOD#:~:text=Dense%2C%20walkable%2C%20mixed%2Duse,leads%20to%20more%20equitable%20communities>.