



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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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