



February 21, 2023

**Testimony on HB 491 –  
*Transportation – Commission to Study Establishing a Baltimore  
Regional Transit Authority –  
Appropriations***

**Position: Favorable**

The Transform Maryland Transportation Coalition is incredibly pleased to see the General Assembly considering this legislation to take another significant step toward the governance reform that we think is necessary to more effectively meet the needs of current riders and provide reliable service that attracts new riders. We encourage a favorable report.

Despite certain advantages to the current centralized governance structure of the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA), other structural flaws make maintaining and improving transit performance more difficult. Of the 50 largest transit agencies in the United States, MTA is the only one that is part of a state department of transportation without a board of directors and where decision-making lies solely with a governor. The lack of local participation in planning and funding decisions has been a contributing factor to the maintenance problems and lack of significant expansion or improvement in the last two decades. HB 491 is an important step forward in reforming the way the Baltimore region's transit system is governed and financed.

We're glad to see that this bill acknowledges the importance of including the voice of transit riders by reserving a seat for a representative of the "transit-riding community". In that spirit, when choosing members for this commission we encourage the appointing authorities to focus on transit riders, including riders with disabilities and those living in environmental justice communities. We also urge the Commission established by HB 491 to address representation in its recommendations for reforming transit governance.

We're pleased to see that the Commission will be tasked with identifying funding sources and appropriate funding models for a regional authority. In addition to getting properly established as a "direct recipient" of federal funds, we strongly urge any future

Authority to formally request that the Governor recognize it as the “designated recipient” of Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funds for the Baltimore region. Becoming a “designated recipient” will ensure that the region receives its full share of federal formula funds straight from the FTA.

HB 491 builds upon years of serious study and deliberation by state and local stakeholders. In 2020, the Eno Center for Transportation published a report on transit reform in Maryland. The following year the Baltimore Regional Transportation Board released its own extensive report on the topic. And just last year the Baltimore Metropolitan Council established its own work group to continue deliberations and advance the issue. Therefore, we believe the Commission in this bill will be able to expeditiously work through its tasks by capitalizing on that prior work and make implementation of a full Baltimore Regional Transit Authority a reality.

We respectfully request a favorable report for HB 491.

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*The Transform Maryland Transportation Coalition is composed of more than thirty organizations with members throughout the state. Our mission is to create a robust, transformational, equitable and sustainable transportation system that helps meet our climate targets and serves all Marylanders.*

[www.tmtcoalition.org](http://www.tmtcoalition.org)