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February 28th, 2023

Ben Barnes, Chair
Mark S. Chang, Vice-Chair
Appropriations Committee
House Office Building, Room 121
6 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Letter of Support for House Bill 673 Stance: **Support**

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Vice Chairman and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

On behalf of the Baltimore Collegetown Network, thank you for the opportunity to support House Bill 673, which repeals the mandated fare price increase within the Maryland Transit Administration that would impact many of the services our stakeholders take advantage of — such as the MARC trains, light rail, and local bus lines.

Our organization is a coalition of the vast majority of higher educational institutions within the Baltimore Metropolitan Region, from community colleges and small private colleges to half our state’s historically black universities and world-renowned research institutions and professional schools.

It is widely understood that Baltimore’s transit system does not meet the needs of residents, visitors, and, most importantly for Baltimore Collegetown, university students, staff, and faculty. The Baltimore Collegetown Network includes nearly 120,000 students. Every three years we conduct a survey of those college students, which includes the question, “How likely are you to stay in Baltimore after you graduate?” In the 2018 results, only 36% of students responded they were “definitely likely” to stay after graduation. Students reported that “better public transportation” is the top item missing from Baltimore.

College Members

- Community College of Baltimore County
- Coppin State University
- Goucher College
- Johns Hopkins University
- Loyola University Maryland
- Maryland Institute College of Art
- Morgan State University
- Notre Dame of Maryland University
- Stevenson University
- Towson University
- University of Baltimore
- University of Maryland, Baltimore
- UMBC

Affiliate Members

- Baltimore City
- Baltimore County
- Baltimore Development Corporation
- Maryland Transit Administration
- Visit Baltimore

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Collegetown Network
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COLLEGETOWN →

Transportation is a key factor in whether a college student finds a city or region to be livable, affordable, and accessible, and as mentioned before, students do not find Baltimore's transportation meeting their needs.

In 1999, several of our member institutions came together to create the Baltimore Collegetown shuttle as an option that connected universities to desirable destinations in a reliable and affordable way. The shuttle also connects students, faculty, and staff to local public transit. Collegetown Shuttle riders tend to be underrepresented students, predominantly Black/African American (46%) and female (61%). Most riders use our shuttle 2-3 times per week, and their chief complaint is that it does not come often enough. The Collegetown Shuttle, plus the other privately run university shuttles and free shuttles in the region, offer affordable, stop-gap solutions available to students, faculty, and staff. While these services are important, they do not provide a solution to the rising cost of public transportation in the region.

With the passing of this legislation, we can make progress towards the affordability of public transportation for our students, faculty, and staff.

Kindest regards,



Toni St. John, Executive Director
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