Baltimore Transit Equity Coalition Testimony HB 1221 March 1, 2023

Committee on Environmental and Transportation

Chairman Barve and Committee, greetings and thank you. I am Samuel Jordan, President of the Baltimore Transit Equity Coalition (BTEC). We urge you to issue an unfavorable report on HB 1221.

BTEC has advocated for completion of the Red Line light rail project since within hours of its cancellation by Governor Hogan in 2015.

We have conducted a public education campaign apprising stakeholders, including residents of the most directly affected communities that the Red Line is a long-needed community and economic development project.

The Red Line is not a Highway to Nowhere. Care has been taken to avoid destruction, appropriation, and displacement of residential properties along the project's right of way.

HB 1221 is written without a supporting rationale for its passage. The bill does not state that acquisition or destruction is a real threat to residents along the Red Line corridor.

What are the dimensions of the problem the bill seeks to resolve? Our participation in the thirteen-year planning and approval process has revealed no such threat.

BTEC has articulated a ground rule that should serve to let us reason together no matter the preference for a bill or policy. The ground rule that we propose is that no one, particularly those in positions of legislative and policy-making authority, make statements or speculations about the Red Line without independently verifiable data.

Displacement, cracked basements, noise, pollution, loss of crosswalks, and gushing underground streams constitute just a short list of undocumented, but improbable impacts attributed to the Red Line project.

Where is the data for HB 1221? A verifiable factual basis for advocacy should be adopted as a ground rule before bills are drafted and decisions are made.

Chairman Barve and Committee, without verifiable data that provides dimensions of the problem to be resolved, HB 1221 should be issued an unfavorable report. Thank you.