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Committee: Finance

Testimony on: SB19 – “Equity in Transportation Sector - Guidelines and Analyses”

Position: Support

Hearing Date: February 1, 2023

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club supports the principles and intent of SB19, which would require that the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) make achieving equity in the transportation sector a primary goal in its planning and decision making.

Specifically, MDOT would be required to complete transit equity and cost-benefit analyses before announcing any significant service change, and compliance would be required with the Federal Transit Administration’s Title VI Requirements and Guidelines for Federal Transit Administration recipients. When the analyses reveal a proposed service change would create a disparate impact or disproportionate burden on racial minority or low-income communities, disabled, senior or transit-reliant riders, the alternative that has no adverse impact or causes the least disparate impact or disproportionate burden should be implemented if the proposed service change is necessary.

We believe it is critical that MDOT develop policies and performance measures to ensure that the state transportation system is equitable, and that it specifically evaluate how the transportation system can address climate change, environmental justice, the needs of persons with disabilities, and racial disparities in employment, education, housing, and health.

We strongly support transportation policies that take steps to dismantle systemic racism and reverse practices that place a disproportionate burden on the disabled, low-income or minority communities. The building of highways through Black and Brown communities and the cancellation of Baltimore’s Red Line represent government policies that perpetuated racial and income inequities.

A change of direction is needed, and SB19 could help bring about the equity in transportation that has sorely been lacking. We urge a favorable report on this bill.

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Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America’s oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.