



Testimony on [SB 681/HB 836](#)
Transportation and Climate Alignment Act of 2024
[Senate Finance Committee/](#) [House Appropriations Committee](#)

Date: [February 28, 2024/March 6, 2024](#)

Position: SUPPORT

Rails to Trails Conservancy supports [SB 681/HB 836](#).

Transportation is Maryland's #1 source of climate pollution and must be addressed to meet the state's goal of reducing emissions 60% by 2031. The **Transportation and Climate Alignment Act of 2024** will ensure that future transportation projects align with Maryland's goals of reducing climate pollution by expanding transportation options.

[SB 681/HB 836](#) would require the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) and regional transportation planning agencies to measure and mitigate any increases in climate pollution and vehicle travel (measured as VMT: "Vehicle Miles Traveled") caused by planned highway expansion projects over \$10 million. Mitigation options may include improving and expanding public transportation, creating bike and pedestrian infrastructure, expanding broadband access, or other smart growth strategies. This legislation supports the Maryland [Climate Pollution Reduction Plan's](#) finding that a 20% per-capita reduction in VMT by 2050 is necessary for meeting the state's climate goals.

Rails to Trails is invested in creating trail networks that prioritize alternative travel with the growing interest in micromobility that prioritize and provide trails as a means of destination travel. Rails to Trails Conservancy is in favor of this legislation because it provides more opportunities to expand the trail and biking infrastructure in Maryland, creating carbon free alternative modes of travel. The Transportation and Climate Alignment Act of 2024 will directly support the Carbon Reduction Program adopted by Maryland on November 15, 2021.

In addition to reducing climate pollution, [SB 681/HB 836](#) would protect our health, reduce traffic congestion, save consumers money - an average of \$500 to \$800 per year on vehicle costs - and make smart use of limited infrastructure dollars. With Maryland facing a transportation budget crisis, it's critical to prioritize spending the state's scarce dollars on projects that align with its goals to reduce climate pollution, advance equity, and expand transportation choices.

We strongly urge a **favorable** report on [SB 681/HB 836](#).