



HB 0836

Transportation and Climate Alignment Act of 2024

Testimony before the Appropriations Committee

March 6, 2024

Position: FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, and members of the committee. My name is Barbara Matheson. I represent the 700+ members of Indivisible Howard County. Indivisible Howard County is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members). We are providing written testimony today in support of HB0836. We thank Delegate Edelson and his colleagues for sponsoring this bill.

HB0836 requires the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) to calculate and mitigate any increases in greenhouse gases (GHGs) and Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) caused by planned road expansion projects over \$10 million. Mitigation actions include a variety of projects, including those that benefit biking, public transit, walking, and telework.

The general thrust of this bill is important to meet the net-zero emissions goals put forward by the legislature in the Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022. Vehicles make up the largest source of climate pollution from the state's transportation sector. A critical way to reduce that pollution is for our cars to spend less time on the road thereby reducing total VMT. We are supportive of the direction this bill takes.

Furthermore, this bill doesn't just look at electric vehicles as a panacea but aims to tackle the issue of VMT. While electric vehicles emit no tailpipe GHG emissions, they have been found to produce equivalent or greater levels of particulate matter, thus continuing highly harmful air pollutant emissions. Also, even with the current phaseout of gasoline vehicle sales by 2035 in Maryland, it will take time for existing gasoline vehicles to turn over, augmenting the need to tackle VMT. Reducing VMT lowers GHG emissions and reduces harmful air pollutants. This bill will accomplish both of these important goals.

Unfortunately, the MDOT and the MPOs are well known for finding loopholes in environmental regulations to achieve the goal of building more highways; thereby, adding more vehicles to the road. MDOT in their "23MDoT Climate Action Plan" Mission Statement makes promoting environmental stewardship one of four goals. The report also acknowledges that 36% of major capital investments are not GHG beneficial. Undoubtedly a conservative estimate.

-The Transportation and Climate Alignment Act of 2024 provides the right path forward, but needs strengthening amendments to hold MDOT accountable for ensuring VMT and climate pollution reductions. We need strong legislation that gives MDOT crystal clear, enforceable requirements.

We respectfully urge a favorable report.

Barbara Matheson, Columbia, Maryland