

Committee: Environment and Transportation
Testimony: Maryland Toll Rate Reform Act of 2024 (HB 1070)
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: March 1, 2024

Ernesto Villasenor, Jr., J.D
Chesapeake Climate Action Network Action Fund

On behalf of the Chesapeake Climate Action Network Action Fund, we strongly support the Maryland Toll Rate Reform Act of 2024 (HB 1070). This legislation provides a thorough strategy for managing toll rates and distributing revenue, aimed at ensuring the effective use of transportation funds. It prioritizes the needs of Maryland residents by establishing sustainable revenue sources for transportation, which will enable us to address our transportation needs and invest in infrastructure aligned with our climate goals.

One of the key provisions of this bill is the allocation of funds in the Transportation Facilities Overage Account for critical transportation infrastructure projects. By directing these funds towards the construction and maintenance of state highways that feed vehicular traffic to Maryland Transportation Authority (MDTA) facilities, as well as projects aimed at relieving traffic congestion and providing alternative transportation options, the legislation addresses pressing transportation challenges in our state.

Furthermore, the establishment of the Transportation Facilities Overage Account within the Transportation Trust Fund ensures that revenue collected above the required amounts is directed towards essential transportation initiatives. This proactive approach to revenue distribution will enable the completion of vital infrastructure projects that enhance connectivity and promote economic growth across Maryland.

The Maryland Toll Rate Reform Act also emphasizes the importance of setting toll rates at near-optimal levels. By considering market forces and implementing varying toll rates based on time of day, seasonality, and anticipated travel patterns, the legislation seeks to optimize toll revenue while minimizing the financial burden on commuters and residents. Additionally, the inclusion of discount rates for seniors, daily commuters, low-income state residents, Maryland E-ZPass holders, and residents living near transportation facilities underscores the commitment to equity and accessibility in toll pricing.

In conclusion, we urge the Committee to support the Maryland Toll Rate Reform Act of 2024, representing a forward-thinking approach to toll management, revenue allocation, and equitable access to essential infrastructure in line with the state's transportation priorities.