



HB 530: Great Maryland Trails Act
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Capital Trails Coalition - Favorable

February 29, 2024

Greetings Chair and Members of the Committee:

The Capital Trails Coalition was founded by the National Park Service (NPS), Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, and Washington Area Bicyclist Association nearly a decade ago to bring together the broad, diverse set of decision-makers, stakeholders, and agency officials who are responsible for our region's trail system. The CTC's goal is to coordinate, communicate and collaborate as a singular entity advocating for the completion of a network of more than 1,000 miles of trails across Prince George's and Montgomery Counties in Maryland, the District of Columbia, and Northern Virginia.

Today, the Coalition is made up of more than 80 member organizations¹, including government agencies, businesses, and community groups working on realizing this vision of an equitable, connected, and low-stress multi-use trail network that will transform public life by providing access to open space and reliable transportation for people of all ages and abilities.

HB 530, the Great Maryland Trails Act, would:

- Advance trails for transportation, recreation, and tourism,
- Increase collaboration across jurisdictions and to better create a state-wide network,
- Facilitate more federal funding for Maryland's trail-development and building efforts, and
- Support local jurisdiction's planning, design, and construction efforts.

Maryland has the potential to be a top-tier state in the nation with multi-use trails for walking, biking, running, rolling, scooting, and more, that support activities that contribute to our economy, environment, and quality of life. However, we need coordination, strategic oversight, and increased investments in trails. Although we have many exceptional and diverse trails, communities and advocates have identified a large backlog of maintenance projects and new trail projects that need attention. Other states, including neighboring Virginia, plus Florida, Massachusetts, and Connecticut have established state trails offices.

Despite the potential beneficial impacts of completing trails across the state, the current levels of local, state, federal, and private funding are insufficient to make Maryland a nationally recognized destination for trails. A trails office will facilitate increased funding, including through federal grants such as federal active transportation opportunities.

¹Government agencies and other organizational members, including members of the Steering Committee, serve as Advisory Members. Advisory members do not advocate or participate in advocacy efforts, and recuse themselves from any decision in which there is a conflict of interest.



The Maryland Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan update calls for a vision to provide safe and convenient active transportation that supports equitable access for all. The new trails and connected networks supported through the Great Maryland Trails Act will advance active transportation and recreation, leverage economic impacts, reduce dependence on fossil fuels, and meet increasing demand from residents.

Amendment: We recognize that this is a challenging fiscal year and recommend amending the bill so that it aligns with the resource capacity of participating agencies, especially in MDOT, DNR and MDP. We do not envision any transfer of positions but prefer collaboration among the agencies named in the bill.

As staff to the Capital Trails Coalition, I support a Favorable HB 530 committee report and House floor vote with amendment.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this legislation.

Kalli Krumpos | Trails Coalition Manager