

Committee: Finance

Testimony on: SB 681 – “Transportation and Climate Alignment Act of 2024”

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: February 28, 2024

Recognizing the large volume of written testimony on proposed legislation that legislators are expected to read, this testimony is presented in bullet form to highlight key points that support approval of SB681.

- “The transportation sector accounted for 35% of Maryland’s GHG emissions in 2020 with most emissions (82%) in this sector coming from on-road vehicles powered by gasoline or diesel.” **
- “Reducing projected traffic on Maryland’s roads is crucial to reducing GHG emissions from the transportation sector.” **
- “Public transportation and mobility alternatives must be enhanced, with an emphasis on promoting sustainable growth and other transit and mobility-oriented development.” **
- MDOT and the Maryland Commission on Climate Change readily acknowledge that increased use of zero-emission vehicles alone will not get the needed reductions in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.
- Expanded highways attract more drivers who believe they will be able to commute faster. The increase in drivers on expanded highways inevitably increases GHG emissions and vehicle travel (measured as VMT: Vehicle Miles Traveled). Those increases are a problem that must be addressed.
- Highway expansion could continue if the Transportation and Climate Alignment Act, SB681, were approved. Any projected increase in GHG or VMT from a proposed highway expansion project whose total costs exceeds \$10 million would be offset by mitigation actions that would reduce any increase in GHG or VMT from the highway project.
- Mitigation actions could include expanding broadband access, teleworking programs, improving and expanding public transportation, creating bike and pedestrian infrastructure, transit-oriented development, and a number of other smart growth improvements that would reduce pollution and benefit residents in locales where the highway would be expanded.
- With Maryland facing a transportation budget crisis, SB 681 would help prioritize spending the state’s scarce dollars on projects that align with the Governor’s goals to advance sustainable growth, reduce climate pollution, advance equity and expand transportation choices.
- Washington, Colorado and Minnesota have transportation policies comparable to those in this bill.
- The bill would help the state comply with the Federal Highway Administration’s new GHG performance standard which requires state and regional transportation agencies to set goals to reduce GHG emissions from the transportation sector.

** Quotes excerpted from Maryland’s Climate Pollution Reduction Plan released December 2023.

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