

**Testimony on SB 681  
Transportation and Climate Alignment Act of 2024  
Senate Finance Committee**

**Date: February 28, 2024**

**Position: SUPPORT**

The Coalition for Smarter Growth (CSG) supports SB 681. Our organization advocates for walkable, bikeable, inclusive, and transit-oriented communities as the most sustainable and equitable way for the Washington, DC region to grow and provide opportunities for all. The Transportation and Climate Alignment Act will ensure Maryland's transportation investments are aligned with its climate change mitigation goals and provide numerous benefits to the state's residents, workers and communities.

Maryland proved itself a national leader on climate policy by passing the Climate Solutions Now Act. Transportation is the number one source of the state's greenhouse gas emissions, accounting for 35% of its climate warming pollution, and most of it (82%) is from cars and trucks. Rapidly tackling transportation emissions is key to meet the state's goals of reducing emissions 60% by 2031 and reaching net-zero emissions by 2045.

The TCA would advance equity and accessibility, and make smart use of our limited public dollars while reducing climate pollution. SB 681 provides a toolkit to evaluate highway projects and, if needed, make improvements to them by giving communities more options to connect residents to jobs and services, while providing accountability on the state's climate goals.

Maryland's Climate Pollution Reduction Plan estimates that the state must invest \$1 billion per year to meet its climate targets. For this reason, we can't afford to invest public money in projects that take us backwards and cancel out the climate progress of the state's other investments. Climate-oriented transportation investments have the additional benefits of providing more transportation options, increasing safety, and saving families money.

In addition to fostering travel options, the TCA encourages the linking of jobs, housing, services and infrastructure investments to provide more compact, attractive, and competitive communities for doing business and creating a home. This approach has been key to attracting and retaining Fortune 500 firms like Marriott and Choice Hotels, not to mention the FBI, to transit-oriented locations. These walkable, accessible places also lower the combined cost of housing plus transportation – a better indicator of affordability than housing costs alone.

Prince George's County has focused its economic development strategy along the Metro Blue Line, and Montgomery County has made its bus rapid transit, Metro and Purple Line corridors focus areas for economic development. The TCA ensures Maryland designs and selects projects that support these climate-friendly, competitive economic centers.

We ask for a favorable report for SB 681 by the committee. Thank you.