



SB681

Major Highway Capacity Expansion Projects - Impact Assessments and Mitigation Plans (Transportation and Climate Alignment Act of 2024)

Testimony before the Finance Committee

Hearing February 28, 2024

Position: Favorable

Dear Chair Beidle, Vice-Chair Klausmeier, and members of the committee, my name is Peter Alexander, and 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 SB681**. We appreciate the leadership of Senators Lam and Gile for sponsoring this legislation.

Transportation remains the #1 source of climate pollution in Maryland. Maryland has agreed upon goals to reduce statewide emissions by 60% before 2031, but climate is not currently a criterion for prioritizing transportation projects. The **Transportation and Climate Alignment (TCA) Act of 2024** will ensure that future transportation projects align with Maryland's goals of reducing GHG emissions and vehicle miles travelled (VMT).

The bill would require the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) and regional transportation planning agencies to measure and mitigate any increases in climate pollution and Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) caused by planned highway expansion projects over \$10 million. Mitigation actions could include improving and expanding public transit, creating protected bike infrastructure, expanding broadband access to allow for more telecommuting, and locating jobs and amenities near where people live and near transit. This will help expand transportation choices while reducing climate pollution and VMT.

Colorado and Minnesota have recently passed similar legislation. Maryland can serve as a national leader by building off their best practices and bringing transportation planning into alignment with our climate goals. **Maryland's new Climate Pollution Reduction Plan** indicates that reducing VMT is necessary for the state to meet its climate targets. The plan includes a goal to reduce per capita VMT 20% by 2050, which the Rocky Mountain Institute finds would reduce climate pollution by 59 Million Metric Tons, which is the same as preventing the annual emissions of over 120 natural gas power plants. The bill would also help Maryland comply with the Federal Highway Administration's new greenhouse gas performance standard.

SB681 will reduce GHG emissions and air pollution, use infrastructure spending more efficient, save consumers money, improve citizen's health, create jobs, and improve commuter safety. These are things everyone in Maryland should support.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

We respectfully urge a favorable report.

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