

February 27, 2024

Re: SUPPORT For SB 681 - Transportation and Climate Alignment Act

Dear Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

My name is Michael Larkin, and I am a resident of Silver Spring. I strongly encourage the committee to support SB618, which requires the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) and local transportation planning departments to measure and mitigate any increases in climate pollution and Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) caused by planned highway expansion projects over \$10 million. Projects that could mitigate harmful highway expansions could include improving and expanding public transit, building walking and biking infrastructure, and locating jobs and amenities near where people live and near transit. This legislation is a necessary catalyst for achieving the goals Maryland has already set for itself to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transportation and encourage smarter growth.

Maryland's Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022 requires the state to develop a strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 60% by 2031 and achieve net zero emissions by 2045. Transportation is Maryland's [single largest source of greenhouse gas emissions](#) at 35% statewide. This is [higher than the national average](#) according to the Environmental Protection Agency. However, funding for planning and constructing highways continues, while transit projects face cuts that are counterproductive to the state's climate and transit equity goals. Maryland simply cannot meet the standards it proclaims to support unless we prioritize more public transit, more and safer pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure, and more transit-oriented development.

More vehicles on the road means more vehicle miles traveled, carbon emissions, and soot in the air. More cars on the road means more congestion and more crashes that endanger pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers. Investing in additional highways incentivizes car ownership, which is the most expensive form of transportation for individuals. With multimodal transportation options and transit-oriented development, the state can get more for the money it spends by connecting people to jobs and amenities that are built more closely together. [This compact development generates revenue from the economic activity it generates.](#) This legislation is also beneficial for improving health outcomes because it will encourage more active transportation options.

In conclusion, the Transportation and Climate Alignment Act could be renamed Taking What We Already Said Seriously. Maryland's leaders have clearly stated ambitious climate goals. Other states such as [Colorado have passed a version of this legislation.](#) This bill means the state government is serious and will take action. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Michael Larkin  
Silver Spring, MD  
Email: [MichaelJLarkin@gmail.com](mailto:MichaelJLarkin@gmail.com)