



February 27, 2023

Position: SUPPORT

Natural Resources Defense Council supports SB 681

Transportation is Maryland's #1 source of climate pollution and must be addressed to meet the state's goal of reducing emissions 60% by 2031. The **Transportation and Climate Alignment Act of 2024** will ensure that future transportation projects align with Maryland's goals of reducing climate pollution by expanding transportation options.

SB 681 would require the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) and regional transportation planning agencies to measure and mitigate any increases in climate pollution and vehicle travel (measured as VMT: "Vehicle Miles Traveled") caused by planned highway expansion projects over \$10 million. Mitigation options may include improving and expanding public transportation, creating bike and pedestrian infrastructure, expanding broadband access, or other smart growth strategies. This legislation supports the Maryland [Climate Pollution Reduction Plan's](#) finding that a 20% per-capita reduction in VMT by 2050 is necessary for meeting the state's climate goals.

SB 681 will make Maryland a national leader in ensuring that their transportation investments align with their goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, alongside states like California, Colorado, and Minnesota, who have each enacted laws to better align transportation investments with climate goals and community priorities. Highway expansions lead to an increase in congestion, which only makes it more difficult for Maryland to meet its 20% per capita reduction in VMT. Such expansions also mean less funding for state investments in projects that will provide Maryland residents with safe, affordable, and clean transportation choices such as public transportation, sidewalks, protected bike lanes, and publicly accessible EV charging infrastructure.

In addition to reducing climate pollution, **SB 681** would protect our health, reduce traffic congestion, save consumers money - [an average of \\$3,271 per household each year on vehicle costs](#) - and make smart use of limited infrastructure dollars. With Maryland facing a transportation budget crisis, it's

critical to prioritize spending the state's scarce dollars on projects that align with its goals to reduce climate pollution, advance equity, and expand transportation choices.

We strongly urge a **favorable** report on **SB 681/HB 836**.

