



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education

Senate Bill 681

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

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| Date: February 28, 2024 | Position: Support with Amendments |
| To: Senate Finance Committee Senate Budget & Taxation Committee | From: Doug Myers Maryland Senior Scientist |

Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS SB 681 with amendments** which requires an impact assessment for transportation projects exceeding \$10 million. Analysis must include quantitative net change in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions for the sixth year after the project is complete as well as the quantification of vehicle miles traveled in the project area both directly and caused by an induced demand created by the project.

Maryland's Climate Pathway document identifies the transportation sector as second only to energy as a source of greenhouse gases. Highway expansion projects usually proceed from an analysis of transportation deficiencies such as traffic congestion, travel times, and general environmental impact of the project footprint without consideration of the vehicle miles traveled (VMT) or induced demand from the expanded transportation network.

The impact assessment required by SB 681 must determine that the project meets the following requirements:

- The project will not increase GHG emissions;
- The project will not increase vehicle miles traveled;
- The project conforms with the GHG emissions reduction targets specified in the Environment Article; and
- Meets vehicle miles traveled target in the 2024 Annual Attainment Report on Transportation System Performance.

There are provisions in the bill related to redesign that help ensure projects that do not adequately address these factors go back and do so. However, mitigation requirements also provided for in the bill for projects not able to be redesigned do not require a proportional reduction in quantified VMT or GHG.

CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report on SB 681 with amendments that would require a project proponent to quantify the benefits of mitigation measures in reductions of vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions.

For more information, please contact Matt Stegman, Maryland Staff Attorney, at mstegman@cbf.org.

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