



TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

SB 681 - Major Highway Capacity Expansion Projects - Impact Assessments and Mitigation Plans (Transportation and Climate Alignment Act of 2024)

POSITION: Support

By: Linda T. Kohn, President

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Since the emergence of the environmental movement in the 1970's, the League of Women Voters has advocated for policies that protect our planet, promote public health, and advance equity. The League believes that advancing efficient, safe, clean, and accessible integrated transportation systems is critical for achieving these outcomes.

The League of Women Voters of Maryland **supports SB 681, the Transportation and Climate Alignment Act (TCA)**, which would require the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) and regional transportation planning agencies to measure and mitigate increases in climate pollution and Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) caused by planned highway expansion projects over \$10 million. Mitigation options may include expanding public transit, investing in bike and walk infrastructure, expanding broadband access, or other sustainable land-use improvements.

The TCA would ensure that future transportation projects align with Maryland's goals to reduce climate pollution and expand transportation options. Transportation is the state's #1 source of climate pollution, and **Maryland is currently not on track to meet its climate targets.** The Maryland Department of Environment and MDOT have both acknowledged the need to reduce VMT 20% per-capita by 2050 in order to meet Maryland's climate pollution reduction goals.¹ **SB 681 provides a pathway for the state to achieve these goals.**

SB 681 would not only protect our environment by reducing climate pollution, but would tangibly benefit Maryland's communities. **Community benefits of the TCA include:**

- **Saving Consumer Money:** The average household would save more than \$3,000 annually on vehicle costs with a 20% reduction in per-capita VMT.† This puts money back in the pockets of Marylanders.
- **Connecting Communities:** Expanding transportation options **connects communities** and increases socioeconomic opportunities by improving access to jobs, amenities, and housing options. This would particularly benefit low-income households and communities of color who disproportionately lack access to these opportunities.
- **Increasing Safety:** A 20% per-capita reduction in VMT would prevent an average of 171 automobile crash fatalities and 2,572 crash injuries each year.†

The League of Women Voters of Maryland strongly urges a **favorable report on SB 681.**

¹ "Maryland's Climate Pollution Reduction Plan." *Maryland Department of the Environment*, 28 Dec. 2023. ; "2050 Maryland Transportation Plan." *Maryland Department of Transportation*, 1 Jan. 2024.

† Warsing, Ryan, et al. "States Can Quantify the Benefits of Climate-Friendly Transportation Options with RMI's Smarter Modes Calculator." *Rocky Mountain Institute*, 20 Feb. 2024.