

Testimony by Citizens Against Beltway Expansion
In Support of the Transportation and Climate Alignment Act of 2024 (SB 681)
Senate Finance Committee
February 28, 2024
Barbara Coufal, Chair
P.O. Box 3593, Silver Spring, MD 20918

On behalf of Citizens Against Beltway Expansion (CABE), a grassroots community organization, thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement in support of the Transportation and Climate Alignment Act of 2024 (SB 681). DontWiden270.org joins CABE in submitting this statement.

The requirements of SB 681 are necessary to enable the State to achieve its climate goals. By focusing on the transportation sector, the bill sets out to tackle the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions. According to Maryland’s Climate Pollution Reduction Plan, transportation accounts for 35% of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, with 82% of these emissions coming from on-road vehicles powered by gasoline or diesel. As stated in the plan, “Reducing projected traffic on Maryland’s roads is crucial to reducing GHG emissions from the transportation sector.” To address this need, the plan sets a goal of reducing Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) per capita by 20% by 2050.

Decades of studies show that widening roads induces more driving. Requiring that changes in GHG emissions and VMT be measured for proposed major highway expansions and that these impacts be mitigated are steps necessary to translate the State’s climate goals into results.

SB 681 includes a comprehensive list of mitigation measures to address the impact of highway expansions. In particular, transit expansion and improved transit service are options that would address the needs of underserved communities. Latino and Asian workers are twice as likely as white workers not to have a vehicle at home. Black workers are three times as likely.¹ Expanding transit and improving transit services provides more options for all workers.

Including telework programs and the expansion of broadband access as mitigation measures would reduce climate pollution while effectively addressing traffic congestion. Based on the experience during the pandemic, the Maryland Transportation Institute testified that just a 5% reduction in vehicles reduced congestion by 32% to 58% on local

¹ Demos. (2017) [To Move is to Thrive: Public Transit and Economic Opportunity for People of Color](#), page 6.

freeways. A 15% reduction eliminated nearly all bottlenecks.² Increasing telework would be an effective component of a mitigation plan.

SB 681 is critical to enabling the State to meet its climate goals. We urge the Committee to report it favorably.

² DePuyt, B. (August 4, 2020). [Analysts: More Telework, Change in Habits Could Dramatically Ease Congestion](#). *Maryland Matters*.