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January 31, 2024

The Honorable Pamela Beidle  
Chair, Senate Finance Committee  
3 East, Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis MD 21401

***RE: Letter of Information – Senate Bill 70 – Transportation – Change in Bus Service  
Impacts Report***

Dear Chair Beidle and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) offers the following letter of information for the Committee's consideration on Senate Bill 70.

Senate Bill 70 would require the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) to compile a report on the impacts of a proposed service change of an existing bus route, prior to announcing any service reduction or cancellation of that route. The report is to be published at least 30 days prior to holding a public hearing on the change and is to be shared with specific standing committees as well as each member of the General Assembly whose district would be impacted by the proposed service change.

The MTA regularly implements service changes to Core Bus service to ensure the complex system adapts to our passengers' changing travel needs and provides the best possible service with the resources available. The Fall Service Change is when major alignment and schedule changes are done to the network. When considering bus stop and route changes, MTA follows a ten-step process which considers factors such as race, income, and other socioeconomic variables to ensure no inadvertent impacts occur as relates to frequency and duration of service. This process includes an analysis of existing conditions, engagement with advisory groups and the public, and a service equity analysis. MTA develops a Riders Guide describing all proposed changes before public hearings are held. This information is provided on MTA's website and in print.

House Bill 9/Senate Bill 19 (2023) requires that, prior to holding a public hearing on a proposed service change, the MTA publish on its website an evaluation of the demographics of the riders of the routes and the service area; after completing public hearings, MTA is required to publish on its website a transportation equity analysis, cost-benefit analysis, and compile a report on the impacts of the proposed service change. The report is to be made public and submitted to the members of the Board of Public Works, the Attorney General, the Secretary of Transportation, any elected officials whose district would be impacted by the proposed service change, any community leaders consulted during the community outreach process, as well as members of the General Assembly.

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In addition to what MTA is currently required to report on, Senate Bill 70 would require: the schools and types of businesses in the service area, monthly ridership of the route and the effect the service change would have on commutes, a description of the contents of any minutes, records, or documents related to the change, and a brief statement explaining the reason for the change. MTA would be able to compile this additional information, as it pertains to only those service changes that require public hearings, defined under MTA's Title VI Major Service Change Policy. Additionally, the MTA seeks clarification that only public documentation or minutes would be required. For consistency purposes, the MTA requests the Committee consider including the reporting requirements of Senate Bill 70 in Section 7-715 of the Transportation Article. It should be noted that Senate Bill 70 now requires a report prior to public hearings, as well as current law that requires a similar report to be submitted after the public hearing process.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee consider this information during its deliberations of Senate Bill 70.

Respectfully submitted,

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