



Testimony on SB 681
Transportation and Climate Alignment Act of 2024
Senate Finance Committee

Date: February 28th, 2024

Position: SUPPORT

\

Ceres supports SB681

Dear Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Klausmeier, and members of the Senate Finance Committee,

I write today on behalf of Ceres to urge a favorable report from the Committee on SB 681 - the Transportation and Climate Alignment Act (TCA). Ceres advances leadership among investors, companies, and capital market influencers to drive solutions and take action on the most pressing sustainability solutions. We organize the Business for Innovative Climate and Energy Policy Network (BICEP), a coalition of more than 85 major employers – including several with operations or business interests in Maryland - committed to advocating for stronger climate and clean energy policies at the state and federal levels.

By adopting SB 681, the Maryland General Assembly can ensure highway expansion projects align with the state’s climate commitments and support increased access to transit and employee commute programs that will reduce congestion and unlock economic benefits for businesses and consumers. Highway expansion is a short-term solution to roadway congestion, and expansion projects have historically resulted in more traffic and vehicle emissions over time. SB681 is a critical opportunity to promote more energy efficient clean transportation mobility choices which improve access to jobs, employees, and goods and services—all while cutting costs and emissions from the transportation sector.

The companies we work with recognize that climate change poses a significant risk to their long-term success. They are already seeing the negative economic impacts of extreme weather events across their supply and value chain chains and are making plans to reduce emissions across their operations accordingly. Because transportation is a major source of emissions for both the business community and the state, many of the companies we partner with have made commitments to decarbonize their vehicle fleets over time by transitioning to zero-emission vehicles (ZEVs). However, while ramping up ZEV deployment is an important decarbonization strategy, it is not enough on its own to reduce emissions in alignment with the most ambitious corporate climate commitments or meet the state’s emissions limits codified by the Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022.

In addition to driving up transportation sector emissions, highway expansion results in higher operating costs and lower productivity resulting from increased sprawl and added congestion. It

also undermines investment in sustainable, compact and cost-effective transportation infrastructure. In 2022, congested roads and highways cost Marylanders [\\$5.8 billion](#) in the form of auto delay, truck delay, and wasted fuel and emissions. Increasing transit, active transportation modes, and a wide range of employee commute options will be critical to alleviating congestion. Importantly, the benefits of doing so extend beyond businesses to employees and residents. In the Baltimore-Columbia-Towson metro Area, [83.7% of commuters](#) use single-occupancy vehicles. The resulting congestion costs the average Baltimore driver [\\$1,371 annually](#) in lost time and wasted fuel. In recognition of its negative economic impacts, Maryland policymakers should take urgent action to reduce congestion.

The Transportation and Climate Alignment Act would require the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) and regional transportation planning agencies to measure and mitigate any increases in climate pollution and Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) caused by planned highway expansion projects over \$10 million. Mitigation actions could include improving and expanding access to public transit, constructing active transportation or traffic operations infrastructure, and implementing transportation demand management solutions. By supporting solutions that will reduce the number of single passenger vehicles clogging the state's roads, this legislation provides a critical lever to ensure the state maintains a balanced approach investing in transportation infrastructure – one that will benefit our climate and the economy.

We strongly urge a favorable report on SB 681. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jeff Mauk
Director, State Policy, East
Ceres