

Committee: Appropriations
Testimony on: HB0084 – Transportation – Major Highway Capacity Expansion Projects and Impact Assessments (Transportation and Climate Alignment Act of 2025)
Submitting: Deborah A. Cohn
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: February 11, 2025

Dear Chair Barnes and Committee Members:

Thank you for allowing my testimony today in support of HB0084. I have lived in Montgomery County since 1986. I am concerned about increasing traffic congestions on highways and in densely developed urban areas. HB0084 addresses these concerns by ensuring increased support of transit, pedestrian and biking options that will reduce trips by personal vehicles and increase use of transit, walking and biking on congested major roads and in urban areas.

Last Session’s Transportation and Climate Alignment Act was designed to align the state’s transportation plan with its climate goals. For nearly six months Del. Edelson, transit and environmental advocates, and the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) worked to integrate those goals into MDOT’s process for developing its Consolidated Transportation Plan. HB0084 reflects those discussions. The bill is much stronger and effective and MDOT and advocates all on board.

HB0084 requires MDOT, as part of most major (*i.e.*, over \$100 million) highway expansion projects, to model a project’s increases in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and concurrently implement a multimodal transportation program which would ensure that net GHG emissions are zero or negative.

Second, starting in the FY2027-2032 Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP) and thereafter, HB0084 requires MDOT annually to evaluate all major capital projects in the CTP for their combined impact on GHG emissions and VMT and require MDOT to fund offsetting multimodal projects to ensure that net GHG emissions are zero or negative.

In its 2023 Climate Pollution Reduction Plan MDOT recognized it could not achieve its GHG reduction goals in the transportation sector by vehicle electrification alone. That would also require a 20% reduction in VMT. HB0084 requires that subject to practical limitations and appropriations, the CTP must include mitigating activities to all MDOT to achieve its GHG reduction goals. To that end, the bill requires MDOT to set annual state and regional declining GHG emissions targets that, along with greater numbers of zero emissions vehicles, would achieve the State’s Pollution Reduction Plan goals in the road subcategory.

Mitigating multimodal transportation projects include, *inter alia*, investments in transit, transit oriented development, parking reductions, telecommuting, biking, walking and solar energy generation on MDOT controlled property. HB0084 prioritizes locating multimodal projects in areas in or near communities impacted by the project, particularly overburdened or underserved communities. Thus, the multimodal projects are designed both to divert traffic off of highly congested roadways and increase more affordable transportation options to reduce

the burden on Maryland residents most adversely impacted by air and noise pollution from major highways in their neighborhoods.

State budgets are tight. The fiscal note reflects the terms of the pre-filed bill. It does not take into account subsequent discussions and decisions among MDOT, advocates and the bill sponsor which should significantly improve the fiscal implications. MDOT's Climate Pollution Reduction Plan already includes costs to decarbonize the transportation sector. HB0084 should not introduce meaningful costs. It merely reallocates existing costs. By requiring that major highway capital expansion projects not increase GHG emissions, the bill effectively requires redesign of these projects, reducing their scope and redirecting the savings to multimodal projects which would save transportation costs for Maryland residents.

Moreover, HB0084 does not prescribe any particular modeling tool. The federal Department of Transportation (DOT) and others have free or low cost modeling tools with user support, and MDOT has already agreed to use DOT's best practices for modeling GHG emissions and VMT.

Transportation is the second largest expense for most Americans after housing. Marylanders are looking to government to lower their monthly bills and give them more low cost transportation options. A recent [poll](#) of Maryland residents shows that over 88 percent of respondents support the state's investing in projects to give people more choices to get to work, school and other destinations, over 78 percent support the state's investing in more public transit, walking and biking infrastructure to offset pollution caused by highway expansion projects that increase driving, and over 68 percent said that having access to better transit and safer and more convenient walking and biking would help them and their family reduce time sitting in traffic and save money on transportation expenses.

HB0084 can address these concerns effectively. Based on results from bills enacted in Colorado and Minnesota in 2021 and 2023, respectively, a bill that gives states flexibility to determine how best to use investments in multimodal programs to eliminate net increases in GHG emissions from state major highway capacity expansion projects works. Expanding affordable transportation options reduces congestion and time stalled in traffic by taking more vehicles off roads, and reduces vehicle costs¹ and air pollution and improve health.²

HB0084 provides MDOT flexibility in reducing GHG emissions and includes significant MDOT commitments beyond last year's bill. While the Maryland Transportation Authority's concerns were not resolved in time to allow it to be included in HB0084, it is broadly supportive and anticipates its concerns can be resolved in time to cover its FY2027 projects.

For these reasons, I support HB0084 and request a FAVORABLE report in committee.

Thank you.

¹ <https://rmi.org/states-can-quantify-the-benefits-of-climate-friendly-transportation-options-with-rmis-smarter-modes-calculator/>

² Id., Map shows that by achieving the 20% reduction in VMT included in MDOT's Climate Reduction Plan, average household savings would decrease by \$3,271 per year, with 171 fewer annual crash fatalities, 1,251 fewer annual deaths resulting from improved air quality and physical activity and total GHGe emissions savings from 2024-2050 of 16 million metric tons CO2-e.