



Committee: Appropriations and Environment and Transportation
Testimony on: HB 84- Transportation - Major Highway Capacity Expansion Projects and Impact Assessments (Transportation and Climate Alignment Act of 2025)
Hearing Date: February 4, 2025
Position: Favorable

Transportation is the [second largest expense](#) for most Americans after housing. Maryland needs to invest in more affordable transportation choices, including public transit, walkable and bikeable communities, and development that bring jobs and amenities closer to where people live. **This would reduce car expenses, improve people’s access to opportunities, slash tailpipe pollution, and reduce the time people sit in traffic.**

Endless highway lane expansion doesn’t solve congestion and promotes sprawl development that increases pollution and the [cost of housing and utilities](#). Highway expansion contributes to the loss of farmland and has hollowed out historic downtowns and main streets in rural areas by diverting traffic away from local businesses. Instead of building new noisy and expensive highway projects that place further strain on the state’s budget deficit, the state should focus on maintaining our existing highway infrastructure to make it safer while also investing in less polluting and more affordable transportation choices that provide Marylanders options to skip traffic.

What Would This Bill Do?

- Create accountability and transparency about projects that increase pollution and commuter costs.** The bill would require the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) to measure the greenhouse gas emissions of all major capital transportation projects in the state’s six-year capital transportation budget and determine if the overall budget aligns with the state’s goals to cut climate pollution as required by the Climate Solutions Now Act.
- Invest in public transit, bike and pedestrian infrastructure, and sustainable land use.** The bill would require MDOT to offset greenhouse gas emissions from highway expansion projects over \$100 million by providing clean transportation alternatives to affected residents. In addition, MDOT must ensure the state’s transportation budget aligns with Maryland’s climate goals by investing in new projects that cut pollution. This includes public transit, bike and pedestrian infrastructure, development that reduces vehicle traffic, and solar projects on MDOT property. MDOT must prioritize these investments in overburdened and underserved communities. Highway maintenance projects and highway projects funded for construction or that have a completed environmental review process prior to July 2025 would be exempt from this process.

Did you know?

- [Colorado](#) and [Minnesota](#) passed legislation similar to the Transportation and Climate Alignment Act in 2021 and 2023, respectively. In Colorado, the legislation shifted investment into five new Bus Rapid Transit Corridors and other clean transportation choices. The state projects that this policy will [save commuters \\$40 billion by 2050](#).
- According to a [2023 survey](#) by the National Association of Realtors, 79% of U.S. residents said being within an easy walk of shops, parks, and other destinations is very/somewhat important and 65% said having public transport nearby is very/somewhat important.

Benefits of investing in transit, active transportation, and sustainable land use

Saves households time and money. The average Maryland household would save over \$3,000 a year from the build out of new, affordable transportation choices, like more transit, walking, and biking and shorter automobile trips.* These new options would save each Maryland resident from 26 hours of traffic per year.*

Equitable access to opportunities. Every Marylander should have affordable and reliable access to jobs, housing, education, food, healthcare, and recreation no matter where they live. It is critical that populations with less access to vehicles, especially Black and Brown communities, low-income communities, people with disabilities, students, and seniors have better mobility options. Only 8.5% of jobs in the Baltimore region are [accessible within one hour by public transit](#).

Reduces climate and air pollution. Vehicles make up the largest source of climate pollution from the transportation sector in the state and are a major contributor to unhealthy ozone pollution. Maryland's 2023 [Climate Pollution Reduction Plan](#) indicated that reducing vehicle traffic, measured as vehicle miles traveled (VMT), is necessary for the state to meet its climate targets. The state's climate plan includes a goal to reduce per capita VMT 20% by 2050, which the Rocky Mountain Institute finds would reduce climate pollution by [55 Million Metric Tons](#) (the same as preventing the annual emissions of over 130 methane gas power plants). Governor Moore's 2024 executive order on climate change required the state to invest in measures that reduce VMT.

Improves our health. A [report](#) by Rails to Trails Conservancy found that the health savings from increased physical activity due to active transportation (e.g., cycling, walking) is \$20 billion annually.

Increases safety. Traveling by public transportation is [10 times safer per mile](#) than traveling by car. If Maryland were to meet its goals to reduce VMT 20% by 2050, it would reduce automobile crashes in Maryland and prevent on average 171 crash fatalities per year in Maryland.*

Creates jobs. Every \$1 billion invested in public transportation supports and creates approximately 50,000 jobs. According to a [study](#) by the Political Economy Research Institute, bicycle-only projects created more jobs compared to road-only projects (11.41 jobs vs. 7.75 jobs per \$1 million invested).

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* Smarter MODES Calculator: Maryland results given 20% VMT reduction per capita and 100% EV adoption by 2050, RMI, 2024.

Version 1.20.2025