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Written Testimony
Maryland House of Delegates
Appropriations Committee

RE: Support of HB0020 Transportation Investment Priorities Act of 2025

Chairman Barnes, Vice Chairman Chang, Members of the Committee,

My name is Justin Towles and I am the current Chair of the Maryland Transportation Commission. I write today to offer my full support of House Bill 0020, the Transportation Investment Priorities Act of 2025. I am a lifelong Marylander and have had the privilege of serving in numerous roles throughout my career that give me a high degree of insight into how this legislation can help improve the fairness and efficiency of the process for funding critical transportation projects that benefit our great state. I have served two Members of Congress, in the Office of Governor Martin O'Malley, as a staff member of the Maryland Aviation Administration, as Vice President at the American Association of Airport Executives, and currently as a federal and state aviation/transportation consultant.

This bill directly addresses and greatly improves two of the critical initiatives that ensure a thoughtful, effective, and transparent statewide transportation investment strategy; The Consolidated Transportation Plan and the Maryland Transportation Plan. While I fully support and endorse all provisions within this legislation, which provides much needed structure and clarity around the funding prioritization process, I will direct my comments to the substantive changes to the Maryland Transportation Commission (MTC). Having previously worked in the Governor's Appointments Office, I am keenly aware of the value a well-organized, prioritized, and executed Board or Commission can provide to the state. When I joined the MTC and was thereafter designated Chair, it became apparent to me that the Commission had great potential to be a beneficial discussion forum and an effective advisory group for the Department, providing diverse and informed perspectives on various issues to the Secretary and senior staff. However, it was clear that the Commission had not been fully utilized in the recent past. In discussions with MDOT and other key stakeholders the Commission emerged as a potential key tool in the revamping and enhancement of funding prioritization activities throughout the Department.

The bill reconstitutes the Transportation Commission with specific duties and functions, centered around the Consolidated Transportation Plan, thereby elevating the function of the body and utilizing the forum of informed citizens from both the urban and non-urban areas around the state to provide maximum value to MDOT and the public. The legislation also gives both the House and Senate leaders appointments to the Commission, in addition to the Governor, and it elevates the Chair role to be help by the Secretary of Transportation. I could not be happier to see this level of utilization and prioritization of a Commission with such a long and rich history in the state.

Without reservation, I offer my strong support and encourage a favorable report from the Committee.

Sincerely

