

**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)**

**Position: Support**

**Hearing Date: February 4, 2025**

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club strongly supports HB 84. The Transportation and Climate Alignment Act of 2025 is a **priority bill** for Maryland Sierra Club in the 2025 legislative session. The bill would encourage state investment in public transit, walking, and biking infrastructure to reduce tailpipe pollution and give Marylanders more safe and affordable options to get to work, school, healthcare, and other locations.

**Polling shows strong support for transit, walking, and biking investments**

Marylanders want more investment in public transit, walking, and biking to cut pollution. New polling conducted by Gonzales Research and Media Services, Inc. commissioned by Maryland Sierra Club polled 811 registered voters between December 27 and January 4th. The poll indicates that:

- **78% of Marylanders** say they **support investing in more public transit, plus walking and biking infrastructure, to offset pollution caused by highway expansion projects that increase driving.**
- 88% of Marylanders say they support the state investing more in projects that give people additional choices to get to work, school, healthcare and other locations by taking public transit, walking and biking.
- Among Maryland voters, 68% agree having access to better public transit, and safer and more convenient walking and biking, would help them and their families reduce time sitting in traffic or save money on transportation expenses.

**Advancing safety, protecting our climate and health**

Transportation is the largest source of climate pollution in Maryland. It is also the [second largest expense](#) for most Americans after housing. In addition, vehicles are responsible for over 40% of Maryland's NOx emissions that contribute to ozone pollution. Over 80% of Marylanders live in areas [designated as being in nonattainment](#) of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for ozone, with the Baltimore region and Cecil County being in serious non-attainment. Residential neighborhoods located near major roads and highways face disproportionate burdens from transportation pollution and traffic. These neighborhoods are far more often communities of color due to decades of residential segregation, and bear a burden of unsafe pedestrian conditions, higher rates of asthma and other health conditions, and unremitting noise pollution. When the state plans new capacity expansion projects it is important that the impacts on our climate and public health are addressed.

The Transportation and Climate Alignment Act would create more accountability and transparency about the state's six year capital transportation budget, the Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP). The bill would require MDOT to evaluate the climate pollution from all major capital projects in the budget and develop additional clean transportation projects, if necessary, to align the budget with the state's targets to cut climate pollution. The legislation would also encourage a multimodal approach to transportation planning by

Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America's oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.

requiring that new major highway expansion projects over \$100 million are designed from the beginning to offset pollution by funding public transit, bike and pedestrian infrastructure, and other projects that reduce pollution. These investments must be prioritized in overburdened and underserved communities.

Maryland's 2023 [Climate Pollution Reduction Plan](#) indicated that reducing vehicle traffic, measured as vehicle miles traveled (VMT), by investing in public transit, transit oriented development, bike and pedestrian infrastructure is necessary for the state to meet its climate targets. The 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). This legislation would also implement components of Governor Moore's 2024 executive order that called on MDOT to implement a process for evaluating and reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the CTP, invest in new infrastructure to reduce VMT, and establish annual greenhouse gas reduction targets for the transportation sector.

The requirements of this bill are focused on future proposed highway expansion projects. 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.

[Colorado](#) and [Minnesota](#) passed legislation similar to the Transportation and Climate Alignment Act in the last two years. Colorado projects that their policy will [save commuters \\$40 billion](#) by 2050.

For these reasons we urge a favorable report on HB 84.

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