



Committee: Budget and Taxation
Testimony on: SB0395 – Transportation – Major Highway Capacity Expansion Projects and Impact Assessments (Transportation and Climate Alignment Act of 2025)
Organization: Maryland Legislative Coalition Climate Justice Wing
Submitting: Deborah A. Cohn
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: February 29, 2025

Dear Chair and Committee Members:

Thank you for allowing our testimony today in support of SB0395. The Maryland Legislative Coalition Climate Justice Wing, a statewide coalition of nearly 30 grassroots and professional organizations, urges you to vote favorably on SB0395.

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. SB0395 reflects those discussions to bring the bill sponsors, MDOT and advocates on board, thus making it a stronger and more compelling bill this year.

HB0395 would require 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. The bill prioritizes locating GHG emission offsetting projects in communities most affected by the project.

Second, starting in FY 2027-2032 Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP) and thereafter, HB0395 requires MDOT to annually evaluate all major capital projects in the CTP for their combined impact on GHG emissions and vehicle miles traveled (VMT). If the net impact of these projects increases GHG emissions, MDOT would be required to fund offsetting multimodal projects to ensure that net GHG emissions are zero or negative.

Importantly, *to the maximum extent practicable and subject to appropriations*, the CTP must fund mitigating activities to make the overall plan *more* consistent with MDOT’s GHG reduction goals under its 2023 Climate Pollution Reduction Plan. That plan recognized that state goals could not be met by vehicle electrification alone but would also require a 20% reduction in VMT. 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. SB0395 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. MDOT's Climate Pollution Reduction Plan already includes costs to decarbonize the transportation sector and made clear that reducing VMT by 20% was necessary to achieve its carbon reduction goals. SB0395 does not introduce additional costs. It merely reallocates those 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.

Moreover, SB0395 does not prescribe any particular modeling tool, the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) has offered a free or low-cost modeling tool 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. In a recent poll of Maryland residents, 88 percent of respondents throughout said they would support the state investing in more projects to give people more choices to get to work, school and other destinations. SB095 addresses those needs. 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

The Transportation and Climate Alignment Act may provide MDOT more flexibility in reducing GHG emissions than some would prefer, but taken as a whole, SB0395 includes significant MDOT commitments beyond last year's bill. And while concerns were not resolved in time to allow SB0395 to cover major Maryland Transportation Authority (MDTA) projects, these can be addressed next year in time to cover FY2027 projects.

For these reasons, we support SB0395 and request a FAVORABLE report in committee.

350MoCo
Adat Shalom Climate Action
Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church Environmental Justice Ministry
Chesapeake Earth Holders

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.

Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility
Climate Parents of Prince George's
Climate Reality Project
ClimateXChange – Rebuild Maryland Coalition
Coming Clean Network, Union of Concerned Scientists
DoTheMostGood Montgomery County
Echotopia
Elders Climate Action
Fix Maryland Rail
Glen Echo Heights Mobilization
Greenbelt Climate Action Network
HoCoClimateAction
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