



Committee: Environment and Transportation Committee

Testimony on: SB0395 - "Transportation and Climate Alignment Act"

Position: Support

Hearing Date: January 29th, 2025

Dear Chair Guzzone and Committee Members:

Eastern Shore Land Conservancy (ESLC) supports SB0395, which would invest in public transit, bike and pedestrian infrastructure, and sustainable land use.

Our state faces several crises, including transportation funding, housing, and climate change. Over the past several decades, we have developed almost exclusively single-family detached housing and car-dependent transportation systems. The coupling together of the most expensive and least efficient type of housing with the most expensive and least efficient type of transportation system has led Maryland into these crises. Recent data for the Eastern Shore from the firm Urban3, contracted by ESLC, shows that walkable, mixed-use, and denser communities are far more valuable and have a significantly higher return on investment for our local and state governments than low-dense suburban communities.

Yet, Maryland still prioritizes car-dependent development models that are crushing the state and local governments in infrastructure maintenance. As Maryland's largest land trust, ESLC sees how highway expansion contributes to the loss of farmland and has hollowed out our historic downtowns and main streets in rural areas by diverting traffic away from local businesses. Instead of building expensive highway projects that have an extremely low return on investment that would further strain 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 with options.

SB0395 would require MDOT to offset greenhouse gas emissions from highway expansion projects over \$100 million by providing clean transportation alternatives to affected residents.

ESLC urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report on SB0395.

Respectfully,

Owen Bailey

Owen Bailey
Director of Land Use and Policy

