

**Committee:** Budget and Taxation  
**Testimony on:** HB0084 – Transportation – Major Highway Capacity Expansion Projects and Impact Assessments (Transportation and Climate Alignment Act of 2025)  
**Submitting:** Deborah A. Cohn  
**Position:** Favorable  
**Hearing Date:** March 27, 2025

Dear Chair Guzzone, Vice-Chair Rosapepe and Committee Members:

Thank you for allowing my testimony today in support of HB0084. I have lived in Montgomery County since 1986. I am concerned about increasing traffic congestion on highways and in densely developed urban areas. I am also concerned about air pollution as our county, like many in Maryland, is consistently a non-attainment area due to ozone induced smog. HB0084 addresses these concerns by ensuring increased support of transit and safe pedestrian and biking options and more transit-oriented development that will reduce trips by personal vehicles and increase use of transit, walking and biking.

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. HB0084 reflects those discussions. The bill is much stronger and effective and MDOT and advocates are all on board.

HB0084 requires MDOT, as part of most major (*i.e.*, over \$100 million) highway expansion projects, to model a project's impact on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and either concurrently fund a multimodal transportation program to ensure that the net GHG emissions are zero or negative or defer the project until it meets the offsetting requirements for the multimodal program.

Second, starting in the FY2027-2032 Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP) and thereafter, HB0084 requires MDOT annually to evaluate all major capital projects in the CTP for their combined impact on GHG emissions and VMT and requires MDOT, to the extent practicable and subject to state appropriations, to fund offsetting multimodal projects to ensure progress toward the State's GHG emissions reduction goals and set annual statewide and regional declining GHG emission reduction targets.

Mitigating multimodal transportation projects include, *inter alia*, investments in transit, transit oriented development, telecommuting, biking, walking, vehicle charging infrastructure, and solar energy generation on MDOT controlled property. HB0084 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.

As a result of requiring MDOT to include regional targets and mitigation strategies, the bill implicitly encourages such transit solutions as expanding MARC lines into Western Maryland and through Central Maryland into D.C. and Virginia, light rail for residents in Baltimore City and County, and transit options on the Eastern Shore and Southern Maryland. HB84 accordingly received bipartisan support in the House in both urban and rural areas around the state. It deserves similar bipartisan and urban and rural support in the Senate.

State budgets are tight. The fiscal note reflects the terms of the pre-filed bill. It does not take into account subsequent discussions and decisions among MDOT, advocates and the bill sponsor which significantly improve the fiscal implications. MDOT's Climate Pollution Reduction Plan already includes costs to decarbonize the transportation sector. HB0084 should not introduce meaningful long-term costs. It merely reallocates existing costs. By requiring that major highway capital expansion projects not increase GHG emissions, the bill effectively requires redesign of future projects, addressing their scope and redirecting the savings to multimodal projects which would reduce transportation costs for Maryland residents and improve access to jobs, education and amenities. MDOT has indicated it wants to create a new assessment tool in any event to allow it to update its travel demand model, which has not been updated since 2008 and which it uses for overall transportation planning. So even the short term costs raised in the Fiscal Note would be incurred anyway.

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. A recent [poll](#) of Maryland residents shows that [over 88 percent](#) of respondents support the state's investing in projects to give people more choices to get to work, school and other destinations, [over 78 percent](#) support the state's investing in more public transit, walking and biking infrastructure to offset pollution caused by highway expansion projects that increase driving, and [over 68 percent](#) said that having access to better transit and safer and more convenient walking and biking would help them and their family reduce time sitting in traffic and save money on transportation expenses.

HB0084 can address these concerns effectively. 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 costs and air pollution and improves health.<sup>1</sup>

HB0084 provides MDOT flexibility in reducing GHG emissions and includes significant MDOT commitments beyond last year's bill. While the Maryland Transportation Authority's concerns were not resolved in time to allow it to be included in HB0084, it is broadly supportive and anticipates its concerns can be resolved in time to cover its FY2027 projects.

For these reasons, I support HB0084 and request a FAVORABLE report in committee.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://rmi.org/states-can-quantify-the-benefits-of-climate-friendly-transportation-options-with-rmis-smarter-modes-calculator/>; 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 GHG-e emissions savings from 2024-2050 of 16 million metric tons CO<sub>2</sub>-e.