



FREDERICK COUNTY GOVERNMENT

TRANSIT SERVICES DIVISION

Jessica Fitzwater
County Executive

Roman Steichen, Director

Senate Bill 20: Maryland Transit Administration - Locally Operated Transit Systems - Mandatory Funding

DATE: January 24, 2025
COMMITTEE: Budget and Taxation Committee
POSITION: SUPPORT
FROM: Roman Steichen, Director, Transit, Frederick County Government

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

I write on behalf of Transit Services of Frederick County in support of Senate Bill 20, which would increase funding for Locally Operated Transit Systems (LOTS) throughout our state.

Transit Services of Frederick County operates fixed route and paratransit services in Maryland's largest land mass county, as well as coordination of commuter benefits and employer outreach. Our team has overseen the innovative expansion of our services to a fast-growing area, without any significant additional state funding.. During COVID, Transit moved 370,000 trips in FY21, supporting residents, visitors, employees, and essential personnel. Transit is now bursting at the seams, transporting more than 840,000 trips in FY24 and projecting 950,000 trips in FY25. The quantitative data and the anecdotal evidence show that Transit is driving the future of Frederick County and residents expect reliable and efficient service throughout our community. However, the need is especially significant in our areas of persistent poverty, which span communities rural and urban. Additionally, our population is growing and graying; we are the fastest growing county in Maryland and our 55 years and older population is our fastest growing cohort. Statewide Specialized Transportation Program (paratransit) funding has not kept up with rising costs, and inflation and population shifts present us challenges beyond the budget.

We make mobility a reality for our customers. Unfortunately, funding for these programs have already been cut in the aftermath of COVID-19. As we recover from the pandemic, we are being called upon to provide more responsive service to more people while also beginning the transition to low and zero emissions technology.

State support for local transit is critical to ensure our goals of quality service, environmental protection, and equity are reached. As state funding has stagnated or decreased, our local matches for state and federal funding have taken on a greater and greater proportion of funding. Inflation has particularly hit our industry hard, with prices for small buses increasing from approximately \$80,000 in FY22 to over \$125,000 in FY25, and the need for increased driver salaries to remain regionally competitive. We need predictability in state funding streams to plan how to best serve the customers in our communities.

We fully support Senate Bill 20's efforts to increase support for all Frederick County residents.

Sincerely,

Roman Steichen
Director, Transit Services of Frederick County

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