



## **Letter of Information to the Senate Budget & Taxation Committee**

**Hearing Date – March 5, 2025**

### **Senate Bill 881: Transportation – Regional Transportation Authorities**

Chair Guzzone, Vice-Chair Rosapepe, and members of the Committee, I am Jon Laria, Chair of the Baltimore Regional Transit Commission (BRTC), submitting this Letter of Information as to SB 881 on behalf of the BRTC.

The BRTC was created by the Maryland General Assembly to provide oversight and advocacy for the Baltimore regional transit system, operated by the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA), and to ensure that diverse stakeholder perspectives are represented in agency decisions. The BRTC includes representatives from local government, transportation, industry, business, transit riders, transit advocates, labor, and the Moore-Miller Administration.

In the context of SB 881, I am writing today to draw your attention to a [study](#) recently conducted for the BRTC titled “**Alternative Transit Governance and Funding Structures for the Baltimore Region**”. The BRTC commissioned this study because of increasing statewide interest in the viability of regional transit authorities, including by the 2022 Baltimore Metropolitan Council's Transit Governance and Funding Workgroup and the State’s Transportation Revenue and Infrastructure Needs (TRAIN) Commission. The study is intended to provide a resource to decision-makers, including the Governor and General Assembly, as the State continues to evaluate alternative structures for transit governance and funding.

The BRTC-commissioned study is focused on the Baltimore regional transit system, whose current structure is highly unusual nationally, with MTA’s status as a modal administration entirely within the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT). The MTA has no budget or operating independence, and also no governing board. Although the BRTC has been statutorily charged since 2023 with providing advocacy for MTA and limited oversight of the agency, it has no independent powers or direct authority over MTA’s budget.

The BRTC-commissioned study identifies three alternative models for a new Baltimore regional transit authority and assesses the basic advantages and potential disadvantages of each. The study is necessarily a first step and not the final word on the merits of a new structure for delivery of transit services, let alone one for all regional transportation assets including but not limited to transit. As you know, SB 881 would immediately enact a bold new governing structure by creating three regional transportation authorities, for each of the Baltimore, Capital, and Southern Maryland regions. The BRTC believes this extremely complicated issue -- how we should fund and run major transportation and transit assets -- requires detailed and deliberate study. Therefore, it respectfully cautions against major restructuring without such prior study to identify and address myriad issues which need to be addressed.



Accordingly, the BRTC respectfully suggests that given the ongoing and intensifying interest in this topic, a formal workgroup should be formed to fully assess the potential for the bill's proposed restructure, before making the type of major structural changes it would effect.

Nonetheless, we strongly commend the sponsors for the introduction of a bill which puts this overdue issue squarely on the General Assembly's agenda, and especially for including potential additional sources of revenue for a badly-underfunded transportation system. Whether these mechanisms or alternatives are ultimately adopted, we applaud and appreciate the opportunity for a full and actionable discussion of a governance and funding structure other than our current one.

The BRTC welcomes the more comprehensive discussion that SB 881 is sure to provoke and provide, and hopes the BRTC-commissioned study can contribute to that discussion.

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