

SHELLY HETTLEMAN  
Legislative District 11  
Baltimore County

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Capital Budget  
Health and Human Services  
Chair, Pensions

*Joint Committees*  
Senate Chair, Audit and Evaluation  
Senate Chair, Pensions



James Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street, Room 220  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3131  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3131  
Shelly.Hettleman@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**TESTIMONY OF SENATOR SHELLY HETTLEMAN**  
**SB 395 - TRANSPORTATION - MAJOR HIGHWAY CAPACITY EXPANSION**  
**PROJECTS AND IMPACT ASSESSMENTS**  
**(Transportation and Climate Alignment Act of 2025)**

According to the US Bureau of Transportation Statistics, transportation is the second highest expense for most Americans after housing. From car purchases to gas prices to maintenance and repair costs, people across the country are struggling to economically navigate our car-dependent infrastructure.

Maryland is no different. A recent study found that **88%** of Marylanders support the state expanding public transportation and multimodal transportation options, thereby giving people new ways to travel, whether by train, bus, biking, or walking. Additionally, of the respondents from rural Maryland communities, **83%** supported investing in the expansion of transportation choices. In short, Marylanders want more transit options—options that save time and money, and, in the cases of walking and biking, promote public health.

On top of transportation's costs, it is the **largest** source of greenhouse gas emissions, which are the driving force behind anthropocentric climate change. Avoiding the worst effects of climate change—from extreme weather to sea-level rise to crop failures and animal extinctions—requires swift and significant reductions of our carbon footprints.

Therefore, Senate Bill 395 has two aims. First, this bill encourages better state investment in multimodal transit so that Marylanders have more affordable and accessible transportation options and spend less time in traffic. Second, by encouraging low-emission public transportation, biking, and walking, the bill offers a meaningful step toward accomplishing our state's Climate Pollution Reduction Plan, which calls for a **60%** reduction in greenhouse gas emissions (from 2006 levels) by 2031, **100%** clean energy by 2035, and “net-zero” emissions by 2045.

SB 395, which is prospective rather than retrospective, has two components respective to its aims. First, it increases accountability and transparency regarding the state's six-year capital transportation budget by requiring the Maryland Department of Transportation (“MDOT”) to measure the climate pollution from all major capital projects in the budget. These are projects with total costs exceeding \$100 million. However, projects that have been reviewed under the guidelines of the Environmental Policy Act before July 1, 2025, are exempt from this bill's required greenhouse gas emission measurements.

Second, the bill requires MDOT to allocate available funding toward additional public transit, bike, and pedestrian infrastructure projects that support Maryland's climate targets. The people of Maryland want to achieve these climate goals. Indeed, the above study also found that **78%** of Marylanders support our state investing in public transportation and multimodal transit infrastructure that offset the greenhouse pollution arising from increased driving.

To be clear, Senate Bill 395 is not about eliminating highway expansion projects. Rather, the bill endorses ***ecologically conscious*** planning of new highway projects. As such, the bill requires that emissions arising from new major highway projects are offset by concurrent developments in multimodal infrastructure, including bus and train lines, bikeways and walkways, and telecommuting infrastructure. Moreover, SB 395 mandates that MDOT prioritize multimodal developments in marginalized and underserved communities—especially those impacted by major highway projects.

As this committee is aware, the Transportation and Climate Alignment Act came extremely close to passing last year. The bill passed this committee, passed the House, and passed a second reading on the Senate floor but did not reach final passage in time on Sine Die. MDOT also expressed concerns about the Act's terms last year. As we reintroduce the Transportation and Climate Alignment Act, we want to thank MDOT for working with us and SB 395's advocates to update the bill's terms. There is now consensus that SB 395 is a vital step toward increasing affordable transportation for all Marylanders while mitigating the worsening risks of climate change. Thank you for considering Senate Bill 395.