

Committee: Environment and Transportation**Testimony on: HB 80, Land Use – Transit-Oriented Development – Alterations****Position: Support****Hearing Date: January 30, 2025**

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club supports HB 80, Land Use – Transit-Oriented Development – Alterations. This bill would authorize the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) to establish transit-oriented development (TOD) funds financed by revenue from county special taxing districts to benefit TOD. It would also alter the authority of local legislative bodies to regulate land use planning on certain land that is located within 0.5 miles of, or under certain circumstances, adjacent to, certain transit stations.

This legislation will help to implement the vision outlined in MDOT's 2024 *Penn Line Transit-Oriented Development Strategy Plan* to develop 170 acres of undeveloped state-owned land around Penn Line stations and unlock more than \$800 million in tax revenue for the state over three decades.¹ Other projected benefits include \$1.7 billion in annual retail sales, at least 2,600 new housing units, and over half a million new MARC trips – and this is only for the Penn Line stations. A full TOD buildout of rail stations across the state will provide significant economic, climate, and quality of life benefits to the state.

Climate change, land use, affordability, equity, and transportation are all inextricably entwined. As Sierra Club's Urban Infill Guidance states, how we build cities and towns has a profound effect on the causes and impacts of climate change. By focusing dense, multi-family, and mixed-use development near transit stations and other public infrastructure, Maryland can reduce carbon emissions from the transportation sector.²

We also support the provision to remove minimum off-street parking requirements within 0.5 miles of rail stations. This will help to make units more affordable, due to the high cost of building parking spaces which gets added to housing prices, and will allow projects to “right-size” the amount of parking to the transit-oriented location and financing conditions.

Maryland makes massive investments in its rail transportation infrastructure. It makes sense that the state would play an active role in enabling as many Marylanders as possible to enjoy living, working, or visiting places near those investments. This bill also works hand-in-hand with other state efforts to increase the supply of affordable housing and create more just communities.

In conclusion, we urge you to submit a favorable report for HB 80.

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¹ <https://www.mdot.maryland.gov/tso/pages/newsroomdetails.aspx?newsId=852&PageId=38>

² https://www.sierraclub.org/sites/www.sierraclub.org/files/Infill%20Policy_5.18.2019.pdf