



HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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Delegate Korman, Chair
Environment and Transportation Committee
250 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: **Support with Amendment:** HB1370 Transportation – Regional Transportation Authorities

Dear Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and Members of the Committee,

I am pleased to write in support of House Bill 1370, and I commend Delegates Spiegel, Amprey, Boaf, Fair, and Foley for sponsoring this legislation. A Baltimore Regional Transportation Authority would strengthen regional public transportation services for our residents and businesses. HB1370 calls for the establishment of Regional Transportation Authorities in the Baltimore, Capital, and Southern Maryland regions, enabling these authorities to plan, allocate funding, and oversee transportation projects. Additionally, this proposed legislation would implement several new revenue streams to fund the authorities.

As a member of the Baltimore Regional Transportation Board, I am aware of the important work the Baltimore Regional Transit Commission is doing to support the growth and sustainability of the regional transit system. This includes identifying models for funding and governance reform that will enhance public transportation and identify potential funding sources. We know that the transportation needs for our region are great, and future economic growth hinges on strong transportation investments that create jobs, connect our workforce, and spur economic development opportunities. In Howard County, we have continued to invest in local bus service through the Regional Transportation Agency of Central Maryland, recently initiating new connections to Baltimore County while striving to enhance existing service. Despite these improvements, Howard County and other jurisdictions in the Baltimore region have a great need for better regional connectivity.

This legislation is a strong starting point for advancing regional public transportation connections and access in the Baltimore region. Developing the framework for a regional transportation authority should be the first step in this process, as it will allow the authorities to create planning and organizational structures best suited to advancing public transportation. This includes developing an authority structure that is flexible and responsive to the rapidly shifting funding landscape at the local, state, and federal levels.

In the current fiscal climate, I am concerned about this bill's broad mandate to implement new taxes and fees, which may not be fully aligned with the State and local governments' efforts to balance budgets and the inflationary challenges faced by our constituents.



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As the Maryland General Assembly considers a path forward for regional transportation planning, I encourage the General Assembly to consider a phased approach to establishing regional transportation authorities, first focusing on establishing the structure and governance model needed to create a successful authority.

An amendment to replace the mandatory revenue enhancements with a requirement for the newly established authorities to develop a revenue plan for consideration by the General Assembly would strengthen this legislation. HB1370 is an important first step in implementing and advancing regional transit projects, but this path is best approached with structure and a deliberate strategy to ensure success.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony and for your continued service to the State of Maryland.

Sincerely,

Calvin Ball
Howard County Executive