

Testimony on HB 517
Maryland Area Rail Commuter Rail Authority - Establishment
(MARC Rail Authority Act of 2025)
House Environment & Transportation Committee

Date: February 12, 2025

Position: SUPPORT

The Coalition for Smarter Growth supports **HB 517**. Our organization advocates for walkable, bikeable, inclusive, and transit-oriented communities as the most sustainable and equitable way for the Washington, DC region to grow and provide opportunities for all.

The **MARC Rail Authority Act of 2025** will create a separate authority from the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA). HB 517 would also allow the MARC Authority to issue revenue bonds to finance capital projects. A separate MARC authority would help ensure a focus on modernization and improved operations for Maryland's commuter railroad, while freeing up MTA to focus on local transit and commuter bus services.

Given crowded corridors like the BW Parkway and I-270, enhanced MARC service has the potential to cost-effectively provide more reliable, sustainable and affordable travel options. New direct rail service to major job centers like L'Enfant Plaza and National Landing in Virginia is also in early planning stages.

By focusing on MARC facility and service improvements a dedicated Authority would also help unleash the railroad's transit-oriented development potential. MARC Penn Line sites could generate \$800 million in new state and local revenue.

A nearby example of the benefits of a separate authority structure is the Virginia Railway Express (VRE) serving Northern Virginia. With focused, dedicated boards of regional officials, the VRE commuter railroad has been able to implement a full program of station, maintenance facility, and track improvements, with more on the way.

We ask for a **favorable report for HB 517** by the committee. Thank you.