

January 28, 2025

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chair, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller, Senate Office Building
Annapolis MD 21401

***RE: Letter of Support – Senate Bill 322 – Vehicle Laws – Obscured or Modified
Registration Plates***

Dear Chair Smith and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) supports Senate Bill 322 and offers the following information for the Committee’s consideration.

SB 322 prohibits a person from obscuring or modifying any vehicle registration plate in a manner that may prevent identification. The bill would alter the “intent” portion of the law. The act of obscuring or modifying a vehicle registration plate is a moving violation regardless of a person’s intent to obscure or modify the plate. With respect to the operations of the MDTA’s *E-ZPass* program, when a vehicle owner obscures or modifies their license plate, these actions can result in lost revenue due to either the notice of tolls due (NOTD) being sent to the incorrect customer or no transaction taking place as no vehicle owner can be identified. The ability to capture license plate details accurately and reliably allows MDTA to price transactions electronically for all road users. For motorists who opt not to open an electronic tolling account and use an on-board transponder (*E-ZPass*), license plate images (i.e., video tolls, Pay-By-Plate) are a means to charge drivers by capturing a license plate image, identifying the vehicle owner, and billing the owner for the toll charge.

The MDTA’s tolling vendor reported 388,295 and 380,491 obstructed license plates in calendar years 2022 and 2023, respectively. For perspective, if the proposed legislation was effective in deterring this behavior, the MDTA would have collected approximately \$2 million in additional revenue in calendar year 2023 (assuming a \$6.16 average toll and an 84% collection rate). The bill helps to ensure that all Maryland motorists traversing State roads pay their fair share.

For these reasons, the Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee issue Senate Bill 322 a favorable report.

Respectfully submitted,

Bradley Ryon
Manager, Government Relations
Maryland Transportation Authority
410-387-5253

Matt Mickler
Director of Government Affairs
Maryland Department of Transportation
410-865-1090