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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Sponsor Testimony

HB 846 – Transportation Access and Revenue Act

Ways & Means Committee

18 February 2025

Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and members of the Ways & Means Committee, I am Delegate Robbyn Lewis here on behalf of HB 846 - Transportation Access and Revenue Act.

In Maryland, the gap between our transportation needs and our transportation dollars has never been greater. The gap didn't just appear; it's been building for decades. The Transportation Trust Fund relies on gas tax revenues, which are disappearing as we transition to an electric car economy. The Great Recession of 2009 led to Highway User Revenue (HUR) cliff that we're still crawling up. This longstanding pattern of deprivation has hit every jurisdiction with hundreds of millions of dollars in deferred maintenance for streets, curbs, sidewalks. As is so often the case, Baltimore city – the only place responsible for repairing and maintaining its own streets and roads – was hit hardest by HUR cuts. And we haven't even begun to address capital transportation needs.

We've faced headwinds before. Last year, the General Assembly looked at the transportation funding gap square on and said, nope! With hard work,

commitment, and in partnership with Governor Moore, the House and Senate forged a transportation revenue package that restored HUR, shored up operational funding, maintained planning dollars for the Red Line Light Rail project and demonstrated to the people of Maryland that we will keep our promises. We will deliver the modern, sustainable, economically catalytic transportation system we need and deserve.

Last year's transportation revenue package was just the first step. It did a lot, but we still don't have capital funding to pay the state's share of important infrastructure needs like constructing the Red Line, or Southern Maryland Rapid Transit or daily, frequent MARC service on all three lines, and much more. We Need dedicated funding beyond the Final Consolidated Funding Plan that was issued a few weeks ago. We need HB 846.

This bill establishes a mechanism to ensure the necessary resources to create a sustainable, equitable, and necessary funding source for Maryland's transportation infrastructure. It works by expanding the sales and use tax to include certain transportation-related services, such as air transportation, limousine services, towing, auto repair, parking, and courier services. These industries rely on and benefit from our transportation infrastructure, yet they currently do not contribute to its dedicated funding source. HB846 is projected to **increase revenue for the Transportation Trust Fund by \$546 million in FY 2026 and \$819 million by FY 2030.**

While some stakeholders here have legitimate concerns, and sincere opposition to this bill, it turns out the people of Marylander are ready to raise revenue for the transportation system they demand.

Public opinion polls prove this. A recent Sierra Club poll asked Marylanders if access to better public transit and safer and more convenient walking and biking would save money on transportation expenses, 68.2% of respondents said yes. At the City for All Forum on Transportation, hosted by the Baltimore City House Delegation on January 25th, the majority of participants said they are ready to pay more in fees or taxes if it means building a better, faster transit system.

It's time for the General Assembly to catch this vibe, and act with boldness and vision. We've kicked the can about as far down the road as we can. It's time to create a new funding model. It's time to build the transportation system with mode options that the people have told us they want.

These funds will be dedicated solely to improving Maryland's transportation system, ensuring that we can maintain, expand, and modernize our infrastructure without increasing gas taxes or tolls. Importantly, this revenue will not be diverted to the Gasoline and Motor Vehicle Revenue Account, ensuring that it directly supports transportation projects across the state.

HB846 is a smart, forward-thinking solution to Maryland's growing transportation funding crisis. It ensures that those who use and profit from our transportation infrastructure contribute to its maintenance and improvement, all while securing long-term revenue stability for the state.

I respectfully request a favorable report on HB846. Thank you for your consideration.