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Subject: Favorable Testimony – HB0932

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To: House Appropriations Committee

The members of the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland urge the House Appropriations Committee to give a favorable report to HB00932. This bill requires the Maryland Transit Administration to develop a plan and complete construction on the “Fifth” Terminal by June 30, 2032. While this proposal concerns infrastructure that the public will never see, its impact on Marylanders who are blind, low vision, and deaf-blind will be significant.

Blind Marylanders disproportionately rely on fixed-route public transit to travel to work, attend school, access medical care, participate in civic life, and live independently. For many of us, the bus system is not optional. It is essential infrastructure that determines whether we can participate fully in our communities.

Reliability is not a convenience issue for blind riders — it is a civil rights issue. When buses fail to arrive, when trips are canceled due to maintenance shortages, or when routes are reduced because divisions lack capacity, blind riders are left stranded. Unlike sighted riders, we cannot visually scan traffic for alternate buses, quickly pivot to ride-hailing services in unfamiliar areas, or easily identify detours without advance notice. Unpredictable service can mean missed work, missed medical appointments, and unsafe waiting conditions.

A fifth bus division facility directly supports improved reliability, maintenance capacity, and service expansion. When buses are properly stored, serviced, and dispatched, accessibility features such as automated stop announcements, exterior route identification systems, and communication equipment are more likely to function consistently. Those systems are not luxuries; they are the mechanisms by which blind riders navigate independently and safely.

Moreover, increasing system capacity enables more frequent service. Shorter distances and more buses properly stored and maintained reduce long waits at bus stops, which improves safety and reduces isolation. More frequent buses also reduce the consequences of a missed trip — something that can happen when audible information is unclear, or when a bus fails to properly announce itself.

Investment in operational infrastructure is foundational to equity. Maryland cannot meaningfully expand access to opportunity if the underlying transit system lacks the physical capacity to support growth. HB0932 takes a responsible, forward-looking approach by requiring planning and prioritization now, rather than waiting for crisis conditions to force reactive measures later.

For blind Marylanders, a reliable and well-maintained bus system is a gateway to employment, education, health care, and independence.

For those reasons, we respectfully ask for a favorable report on HB0932. For questions, please contact me at President@nfbmd.org or at 443-426-4110.