

Testimony of John Robert Smith, Chair of Transportation for America

Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Kaiser, and members of the Committee – thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

For the record, my name is John Robert Smith, and I am here on behalf of Transportation for America to **testify today in support of House Bill 0230 – the Transportation Investment Priorities Act of 2026**. As a former Republican Mayor, I served for 16 years, and during that time, I prioritized investment in transportation choices in my community.

Transportation for America works at the national level and in states to ensure we are getting the most out of transportation investments, and I can tell you in many places we are falling short. Projects take too long, funding often works against our goals, and real decisions are made behind closed doors. The **Transportation Investments Priorities Act** takes important steps to address these issues by:

- defining the process and criteria by which projects will be considered for feasibility studies;
- clearly articulating the goals by which projects will be judged and relying upon data-driven analysis to score them; and
- mandating a number of transparency provisions

Whether you are a Democrat or a former Republican Mayor like me, I think this is something most people can get behind—having clear goals, using data and analysis to identify high returns, and being transparent is just good government.

Across the country, leading states are adopting similar data-driven, performance-based systems. Minnesota, Virginia, and Kentucky have all adopted similar systems, and California is actively pursuing one now. Adoption of this bill will put Maryland among the leading states in the country.

And, of course, at the national level MD Senator Alsobrooks just introduced last month the Transportation Project Accountability Act of 2026, saying the Act “strengthens public trust and gives everyday Americans the opportunity to know exactly how we are investing in their communities, and whether those investments are delivering real results.”

This is spot on, and this is exactly what the Transportation Investment Priorities Act will do for Maryland. For these reasons, Transportation for America respectfully requests a favorable report. Thank you.