Maryland Office
2901 E. Baltimore St
Baltimore, MD 21214

February 23, 2026

To: Chair Guzonne, Vice-Chair Rosapepe and members of the Maryland Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

From: Jim Brown, Policy Director, Audubon Mid-Atlantic

Subject: Favorable Testimony for Maryland SB 59 - The Transportation and Climate Alignment Act of 2026

Audubon Mid-Atlantic submits this testimony in support of Senate Bill 59. Audubon Mid-Atlantic is the regional office of National Audubon Society, representing over 35,000 Marylanders who advocate for the protection of birds, bird habitat, and policies aiming to protect both birds and human communities in the face of increasing environmental challenges, habitat loss, pollution, and climate change.

Science tells us birds are in decline due to habitat loss and pollution induced climate change. 1/3 of all Maryland bird species experienced significant population declines in the past 50 years. SB 59 will help Maryland to slow this habitat loss while also protecting the natural climate solutions and habitat provided by Maryland's landscapes. Transportation is Maryland's #1 source of climate pollution. Unmitigated highway expansion promotes a development typology which is harmful to bird habitat and the natural climate solutions that these habitats offer all of us. To meet the state's *Climate Solutions Now* targets, Maryland must change the way we plan and implement transportation projects.

Investments in active transportation, and mass transit like those in SB 59 promote land-use policies and development patterns which preserve open space, conserve habitat, and allow the landscape to provide natural climate solutions, all while promoting an increased quality of life and better mobility for all of our residents and visitors. Including these investments as part of large-scale highway projects is a practical and important transportation and environmental policy.

Audubon believes the provisions within the bill will protect birds by enabling transportation and land-use planners to address the state's most pressing environmental, transportation, economic, and climate challenges by:

- Investing in mass transit and active transportation to create more livable communities while reducing pressure on our natural resources and important bird habitat.
- Articulating the potential costs to Maryland's climate and our collective public health due to highway expansion, while offering avenues to mitigate those costs.
- Help Maryland achieve the goals laid out in the Climate Solutions Now act of 2022 and the newly adopted Sustainable Growth Principles enacted through legislation in 2025.
- Creating a realistic path to reduce harmful transportation related emissions.
- Considering environmental protection of land and water resources; conservation and restoration of natural systems, waterways and living resources in planning processes.

- And provide for public spaces that encourage social interaction and promote the value of cultural, historical and natural resources.

SB 59 will lay the framework for creating more climate-resilient communities for our residents and visitors. It will also continue to hold Maryland up as a leader in climate action, inclusive growth, ecosystem preservation, and the protection of birds now and in the future.

Audubon Mid-Atlantic respectfully urges a favorable review of this legislation.

Thank You,

Jim Brown

Policy Director
Audubon Mid-Atlantic