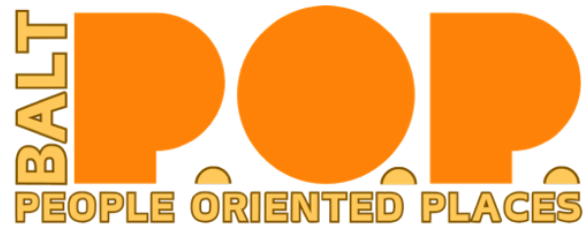


Bill: SB0062

Bill Title: Transportation - Consolidated
Transportation Program - Prioritization
(Transportation Investment Priorities Act of 2026)

Position: **Favorable with amendments**



Members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee,

As a group which recognizes the pervasive ways our transportation network impacts the livability, appeal, and productivity of our communities, we are happy to see SB0062 being requested by the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT).

The project scoring program pursuant to Chapter 30 of the Code of Maryland has been in need of reform ever since it was first implemented in 2017. Satisfaction with the program, among both elected officials and ordinary citizens, is minimal if nonexistent.

The manner in which MDOT goes about determining the projects it chooses to include in its annual Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP) is essentially a black box. Stakeholders are repeatedly left wondering how they are to properly engage with the process, especially with regards to the priority letters. What ends up coming out the other side in each year's draft CTP seems to always be met with frustration and surprise.

Given that, we applaud MDOT for their willingness to take a step back and re-envision the program. We have attended one of the stakeholder briefings that MDOT has used to present their proposed changes to the program. Overall, we are pleased. However, we do have a few concerns.

It would appear that MDOT wants to see funds flowing from federal programs such as the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ), Transportation Alternatives (TA), Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation Program (PROTECT), and the Carbon Reduction Program (CRP) made exempt from this new prioritization process. Given that CMAQ, CRP, and TA are rather restrictive federal sources that tend to favor public transit (which we favor over highways), this seems agreeable. But, given MDOT's ability to flex funds from these programs into other programs, this exemption makes us leery. As such, we'd prefer to see projects funded with these federal funds included in the scoring process.

As part of the current CTP process, there is no real opportunity for citizens to make direct, substantive comments on the draft CTP. As residents hailing primarily from Baltimore City and Baltimore County, these are our opportunities to provide input on the CTP:

1. Comments are accepted during Capital Improvement Program (CIP) citizen input meetings held by local planning departments each Winter. The hope is that comments made during these meetings are somehow reflected in the priority letters submitted come the following April.
2. Oral comments from the public, which typically must be limited to 1 to 2 minutes in length, may **sometimes** be allowed at the CTP “tour” meetings held each Fall. Each CTP document is hundreds of pages long. Providing nuanced and constructive feedback on such a substantive document in such a brief format is frequently impossible.

These comment opportunities pale in comparison to those provided for related and/or peer documents such as MDOT’s long-range Maryland Transportation Plan (MTP) and the Baltimore Regional Transportation Board’s long-range Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and short-range Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). For the MTP, LRTP, and TIP, ample opportunity is provided to submit at-length written comments on the draft documents. A similar opportunity should be provided for the public to submit the same depth and quality of comments on the CTP - directly to MDOT.

Furthermore, this expanded comment opportunity needs to be structured to allow for comments on the project-based scoring system and methodology. The Baltimore Regional Transportation Board allows for this and MDOT needs to follow its lead.

This new prioritization process includes a revamp of the evaluation criteria. Two of those criteria give us pause. **If MDOT fails to regularly allow for comments on their project-based scoring system and methodology**, we feel the need to have them adjusted now:

1. The safety criterion needs to be subdivided - between safety for motorists and safety for vulnerable road users. Roadway geometries that make the transportation system **more** safe for motorists frequently make it **less** safe for non-motorists. A larger number of wider lanes on straight, level roadways with unobstructed clear zones to the sides that encourage consistent, uniform automobile speeds enhances the safety of motorists. But these same features drastically diminish the safety of non-motorists. For these vulnerable road users, fewer lanes on narrow, complex, twisting roadways with street trees to the sides that naturally foster cautious driving and slower speeds is the recipe that enhances their safety.
2. The sustainable land use and transportation demand management (TDM) criterion intrigues us. We aren’t sure what it will look like, but given that we are a group that advocates for better transportation and land use options, it sounds promising. We hope that it will be a measure (at least partially) of the degree to which a project will foster induced demand and financially draining low-density development (i.e., “sprawl”). We suspect that we would favor seeing this criterion subdivided, as well - between sustainable land use and TDM.

The reimplemention of the Chapter 30 project scoring process that MDOT has proposed with this bill holds tremendous promise. The amendments we'd like to see made to this bill are as follows:

1. Include projects funded with federal funds in the scoring process.
2. Provide a full-fledged public comment opportunity on both the draft CTP and project-based scoring system and methodology.
3. Subdivide the "safety" and "sustainable land use and transportation demand management" evaluation criteria.

With these changes included, we feel that what we'll end up with is a much-improved prioritization and CTP process that we can all be proud of.

We hope the committee finds these points helpful and convincing and we urge its members to **vote in favor of SB0062, with our suggested amendments**. Thank you for your efforts and the opportunity for us to testify on this legislation.

[BaltPOP - Baltimoreans for People-Oriented Places](#)