



CLIMATE COALITION Montgomery County, MD

Testimony on: SB0059 – Transportation – Major Highway Capacity Expansion Projects and Impact Assessments (Transportation and Climate Alignment Act of 2026)
Committee: Budget and Tax
Organization: Climate Coalition Montgomery County
Submitting: Karl Held
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: February 25, 2026

Dear Chair Guzzone and Committee Members:

Thank you for allowing our testimony today in support of SB0059, the Transportation and Climate Alignment Act. The Maryland Legislative Coalition Climate Justice Wing, a statewide coalition of 32 grassroots and professional organizations, urges you to vote favorably on SB0059 and thanks you for your support of this legislation in prior years.

MD residents are concerned about the high cost of living, and Maryland faces a tight budget, making business development and income growth top priorities. The Transportation and Climate Alignment Act addresses both concerns.

SB0059 calls for more investments in public transit, safe pedestrian and bike infrastructure and transit oriented development to ensure that major highway expansion projects costing over \$100 million and the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT)'s Consolidated Transportation Program are consistent with the Governor's [executive order](#) to advance [Maryland's Climate Pollution Reduction Plan](#). *As a result, SB0059 could shift the allocation of state transportation spending without a significant increase in total spending. It could also more quickly and with lower overall costs increase affordable transportation options for cash-strapped residents, businesses and governments than could new highway construction and maintenance.*

Benefits for Residents and Businesses

Increased transit, biking and walking options would save an average Maryland household \$3,000 per year in fuel, maintenance and depreciation costs,¹ reduce injuries and death from automobile accidents, reduce health costs and lost workdays due to air pollution² and create more affordable transportation options for all residents. It would expand work and educational opportunities for households without vehicles, increase their incomes, help businesses hire the workforce they

¹ Transportation is the [second largest expense](#) for most people after housing, with low-income households that own or lease a car spending roughly 40 percent of their income on transportation.
<https://data.bts.gov/stories/s/Transportation-Economic-Trends-Transportation-Spen/ida7-k95k/>, See "Types of Transportation Expenditures by Income Quintile, 2024", the most recent available data.

²

<https://rmi.org/states-can-quantify-the-benefits-of-climate-friendly-transportation-options-with-rmis-smarter-modes-calculator/>

need to expand, and grow state tax revenues.³ These benefits would be particularly valuable in the Baltimore region, where only 8.5% of jobs are accessible within one hour by public transit.⁴

Benefits for State

Investing in better bus, rail and cycling infrastructure in urban areas could save the state meaningful funds while reducing highway congestion.⁵ Maryland could realize *net savings* of \$550 million per year (roughly 8% of state transportation expenditures) by 2050 if by then the state built 400 miles of bus rapid transit, 2,900 miles of protected bike lanes and 51 miles of passenger rail.⁶

Nearly every district delegation in Maryland--urban, suburban and rural--included transit, commuter rail, segregated bike lanes, sidewalks, and similar initiatives in its list of FY2027 priorities submitted to MDOT. SB0059 would allow these types of projects to be funded so that communities would not need to wait multiple years to see safety improvements on busy state highways, increased funding for local buses, more frequent rail service, bus rapid transit or transit-oriented development.⁷ (See appendix below for projects.)

Despite these benefits some will oppose SB0059 due to a concern about highway congestion in suburbs and exurbs. Investing in highways, however, does not eliminate congestion. Rather, it provides a short-term fix but ultimately encourages more driving and results in additional sprawl, increased pollution, loss of farmland, and loss of locally owned small businesses.

The Transportation and Climate Alignment Act allows us to shift gears. Without increasing the overall transportation budget, we can invest a higher percentage of existing transportation dollars in transit, commuter rail, safe bicycle and pedestrian lanes and transit-oriented development to create more affordable and safer transportation options for Marylanders, improved results for businesses and residents' incomes, and increase tax revenues.

Accordingly, we urge this committee to issue a FAVORABLE re

³ Nationally, 13% percent of households have no vehicles, including 32% of households in the lowest quintile and higher amounts in urban areas. *Ibid.* See "Average Household Transportation Expenditures by Income Quintile."

⁴ <https://bniajfi.org/indicators/Sustainability/novhcl/>; Percentages vary from 5.9% to 58.5%.

⁵ <https://rmi.org/building-smarter-how-investing-in-more-transportation-choices-cuts-infrastructure-costs/> See Exhibit 1 which shows \$1 trillion net savings *nationally* compared with current urban investment patterns primarily resulting from reduced highway construction and maintenance costs, while increasing spending on bus, rail and bicycle infrastructure.

⁶ *Ibid* at Exhibit 2; <https://ssti.us/know-your-state/#funding> which shows 16.2% of roads not in good repair

⁷ See Appendix for representative examples.