



SB0059 - SUPPORT
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HB0437, Transportation and Climate Alignment Act

Meeting of the Budget and Tax Committee

March 24, 2026

Dear Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, and Members of the Budget and Tax Committee, on behalf of Elders Climate Action Maryland, I urge a favorable report on HB0437, the Transportation and Climate Alignment Act.

Elders Climate Action is a nationwide organization devoted to ensuring that our children, grandchildren, and future generations have a world in which they can thrive. The Maryland Chapter has members across the state.

Climate change is one of the greatest threats to our health. The health effects include more vector-borne diseases, more heat-related illnesses such as heat stroke, injuries from wildfires and extreme weather events such as hurricanes and floods, and mental health problems. These issues threaten the lives and health of all Maryland residents, particularly children and residents of overburdened communities.

One thing that is less often recognized is the close tie between air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. 88% of Maryland residents live in areas that do not meet EPA air quality standards. Air pollution is a major contributor to absences from work and school, increased healthcare costs, and premature deaths. This can be seen clearly in the high rates of hospitalization for asthma in Maryland, especially in Baltimore. Research shows that reductions in air pollution lead to

significant, rapid decreases in asthma hospitalizations. Improvements in health, especially in children and people living in overburdened communities, will be the first benefit we see from decreasing the use of fossil fuels.

HB0437 would require the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) and regional transportation planning agencies to measure and mitigate any increases in climate pollution and vehicle travel (VMT: “Vehicle Miles Traveled”) caused by planned highway expansion projects over \$100 million. Mitigation options would include improving and expanding public transportation, creating bike and pedestrian infrastructure, expanding broadband access, and implementing other smart-growth strategies. As [Maryland’s Climate Pollution Reduction Plan](#) made clear, a 20% per-capita reduction in VMT by 2050 is needed to meet the state’s climate goals. The measures spelled out in HB0437 are essential steps toward those goals.

The bill would also reduce traffic congestion, give people more transportation choices, and make wise use of limited infrastructure dollars. With Maryland facing a transportation budget crisis, it’s critical to prioritize spending the state’s scarce dollars on projects that align with its goals to reduce climate pollution, advance equity, and expand transportation choices.

Transportation is the second largest expense for most households. This bill saves consumers money, including [an average of \\$3,271 per household each year on vehicle costs](#).

It is crucial that the bill retain its focus on project level highway expansion. It only applies to a small number of highway expansion projects that cost over \$100 million. This has been effective in other states and will work in Maryland.

Transportation is Maryland’s #1 source of climate pollution and must be addressed to meet the state’s critical goal of reducing emissions 60% by 2031. The **Transportation and Climate Alignment Act** will ensure that future transportation projects align with Maryland’s goals of reducing climate pollution by expanding transportation options. For all of these reasons, we strongly urge a favorable report on HB0437.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

