

**Committee: Budget and Taxation****Testimony on: SB 59- Transportation - Major Highway Capacity Expansion Projects and Impact Assessments (Transportation and Climate Alignment Act of 2026)****Position: Support****Hearing Date: February 25, 2026**

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club strongly supports SB 59. The Transportation and Climate Alignment Act of 2026 is a **priority bill** for Maryland Sierra Club for this legislative session. The bill would encourage state investment in public transit, pedestrian, and biking infrastructure to reduce tailpipe pollution and give Marylanders more safe and affordable options to get to work, school, healthcare, and other locations. Transportation is the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions and the [second largest expense](#) for most Americans after housing.

The Transportation and Climate Alignment Act would create more accountability and transparency about the state's six year capital transportation budget, the Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP) which currently totals over \$22 billion. The bill would require MDOT to evaluate the climate pollution from major capital projects in the budget and develop additional clean transportation projects, based on available funding, to align the budget with the state's targets to cut climate pollution. The legislation would also encourage a multimodal approach to transportation planning by requiring that new major highway expansion projects over \$100 million are designed from the beginning to offset pollution by funding public transit, bike and pedestrian infrastructure, and other projects that reduce pollution. These investments would need to be prioritized in overburdened and underserved communities.

The requirements of this bill are focused on future proposed highway expansion projects. Highway maintenance projects and highway projects funded for construction or that have a completed environmental review process prior to July 2026 would be exempt from this process.

[Colorado](#) and [Minnesota](#) passed legislation similar to the Transportation and Climate Alignment Act in the last few years. Colorado projects that their policy will [save commuters \\$40 billion](#) by 2050.

**Polling shows strong support for transit, pedestrian, and biking investments**

Marylanders want more investment in public transit, walking, and biking to cut pollution. Gonzales Research and Media Services, Inc. [conducted a poll](#) commissioned by Maryland Sierra Club that interviewed 811 registered voters in Maryland between December 27, 2024 and January 4, 2025. The poll indicates that:

- 78% of Marylanders say they support investing in more public transit, plus walking and biking infrastructure, to offset pollution caused by highway expansion projects that increase driving.
- 88% of Marylanders say they support the state investing more in projects that give people additional choices to get to work, school, healthcare and other locations by taking public transit, walking and biking.
- Among Maryland voters, **68% agree having access to better public transit, and safer and more convenient walking and biking, would help them and their families reduce time sitting in traffic or save money on transportation expenses.**

Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America's oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.

## **Advancing safety, protecting our climate and health**

Transportation is the largest source of climate pollution in Maryland. The Maryland Department of Environment (MDE)'s [new greenhouse gas inventory](#) indicated that the **transportation sector had the biggest reversal in emissions reductions**. In 2023, there was a 13% increase in emissions from on-road gasoline sources compared to 2020. In addition, vehicles are responsible for over 40% of Maryland's NOx emissions that contribute to ozone pollution. Currently, the Baltimore region and Cecil County are **in serious non-attainment of these ozone standards**. Residential neighborhoods located near major roads and highways face disproportionate burdens from transportation pollution and traffic. These neighborhoods are far more often communities of color due to decades of residential segregation, and bear a burden of unsafe pedestrian conditions, higher rates of asthma and other health conditions, and unremitting noise pollution. When the state plans new capacity expansion projects it is important that the impacts on our climate and public health are addressed.

Maryland's 2023 [Climate Pollution Reduction Plan](#) indicated that reducing vehicle traffic, measured as vehicle miles traveled (VMT), by investing in public transit, transit oriented development, bike and pedestrian infrastructure is necessary for the state to meet its climate targets. The Plan includes a goal to reduce per capita VMT 20% by 2050, which the Rocky Mountain Institute finds would reduce climate pollution by [55 million metric tons](#) (the same as preventing the annual emissions of over 130 methane gas power plants). This legislation would also implement components of Governor Moore's 2024 executive order that called on MDOT to conduct a process for evaluating and reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the CTP, invest in new infrastructure to reduce VMT, and establish annual greenhouse gas reduction targets for the transportation sector.

For these reasons we urge a favorable report on SB 59.

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