

SB0059_RichardKaplowitz_FAV
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TESTIMONY ON SB#/0059 – FAVORABLE
Transportation - Major Highway Capacity Expansion Projects and Impact Assessments (Transportation and Climate Alignment Act of 2026)

TO: Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, and members of the Budget & Taxation Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard K. Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#0059, **Transportation - Major Highway Capacity Expansion Projects and Impact Assessments (Transportation and Climate Alignment Act of 2026)**

The Maryland Department of the Environment will, under this bill, be required, as part of the planning and implementation of certain major highway expansion projects, to perform an impact assessment of the project and develop and implement a corresponding multimodal transportation program; requiring the Department, beginning with a certain Consolidated Transportation Program, to evaluate certain major capital projects for their impact on greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle miles traveled; etc.

The strength of this bill is the inclusion of a metropolitan planning organization with DOT to work together to perform impact assessments. Based on that assessment the bill will mandate throughout a project's development an understanding how populations will be affected in any project of any type with a discernable environmental impact. The generation of the mitigation plan will follow and become an additional element for decision making on whether a project proceeds. It will create constraints on the conduct of and implementation of major highway expansion projects.

The transportation sector continues to be the largest source of climate pollution in the state, and Maryland has the second worst average commuting time in the nation. Among the benefits this act would confer for Maryland is the reduction of car expenses, and the improvement of people's access to opportunities. slashing tailpipe pollution and reducing the time people sit in traffic. Passage of this bill will give Maryland residents more affordable options to get to work, school, and other destinations while curbing harmful pollution from our highways.

When Maryland plans future transportation projects, they should align with the state's goals to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 60% by 2031 and the total miles cars and trucks travel on our roads (known as Vehicle Miles Traveled) to protect our environment, mitigate traffic congestion, and improve mobility.

A summary of the benefits from implementing the provisions of this bill include:

- Reduces climate and air pollution
- Make smart use of limited infrastructure dollars
- Saves consumers money
- Improves our health
- Create jobs
- Increased safety

There are multiple organizations supporting this bill, I write as a member of the Sierra Club but submit this as an individual. Passage of this bill will ensure climate change and climate effects from these types of projects is added to the planning and implementation phases.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB#/0059.