

SB0059 - SUPPORT

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SB0059 – Transportation - Major Highway Capacity Expansion Projects and Impact Assessments (Transportation and Climate Alignment Act of 2026)

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
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Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, and Members of the Committee:

My name is William Mascioli. I have lived in Silver Spring, Maryland, for more than 40 years. I raised my children here. Retired now, I worked for over 35 years as an attorney for the federal government protecting the collective-bargaining rights of workers under the National Labor Relations Act, an edifice of rights built on the foundation of “concerted activity for mutual aid and protection.” I was dedicated to that work because that notion of mutual aid and protection is deeply personal for me. I have tried to conduct my life guided by principles of compassion, empathy, and recognition that we are all tied together by threads of obligation and responsibility – to each other as humans, to future generations, and to the natural world that sustains us. For decades now, I have lived with growing anxiety and despair over our reckless and irresponsible failure to deal with the ongoing climate crisis with anything approaching adequacy.

With the federal government actually standing in the way of progress in dealing with this crisis, it is all the more essential that states do all they can. Maryland established laudable goals in the Climate Solutions Now Act but has to keep making the legislative choices necessary to meet those goals. Supporting the Transportation and Climate Alignment Act, SB0059, is one such choice and I therefore urge that you issue a favorable report.

These days, with the immediate crisis of masked, unidentified government agents terrorizing our communities and trashing the essential values embedded in our Constitution, it may be difficult to bear in mind the fearsome existential threat to our well-being posed by the climate crisis. Yet that threat is real, it is immediate, and it demands proactive solutions just to keep it from getting worse. I have been pleased, proud, and impressed by this legislature’s efforts to rein in ICE’s abuses. The climate crisis is every bit as threatening to our democracy as Trump’s depredations against our national morals. Indeed, the suffering and injustices that it threatens--and the political disruptions that those will entail--cannot be overstated. It warrants *at least* the same level of attention.

Put simply, Maryland needs to act quickly to do its part to combat the climate crisis by moving away from fossil fuels. Transportation is a key area in which progress must be made. SB0059 will advance sustainable transportation alternatives throughout the state. Under SB0059, every major highway capacity expansion

project over \$100 million¹ must entail a corresponding program that funds what has come to be called multimodal transportation: public transit, bike and pedestrian infrastructure, transit-oriented development, and solar energy on Maryland Department of Transportation property—sufficient to *at least* offset the increase in greenhouse gas emissions associated with the project. That is to say, the net greenhouse gas emissions from the project *must be zero or negative*.

According to the Maryland Department of the Environment, transportation is the largest single source (35-36%) of greenhouse gas pollution in Maryland, with vehicles being the largest component (83-85%) of that pollution. Maryland's climate plan includes a goal of reducing per capita vehicle miles traveled (VMT) 20% by 2050. The Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI) finds that such a reduction in VMT would reduce climate pollution by 78 million metric tons by 2050, equal to the annual emissions of over 130 gas power plants. (RMI also calculates that a 20% reduction in VMT would save the average Maryland household over \$3,000 per year, and would result in over 170 fewer deaths from car crashes per year, over 1,200 fewer deaths due to poor air quality per year, and 21 TWh less energy consumed (i.e., 21,000 GWh of less energy) between now and 2050.)²

These are undeniable benefits to the citizens of Maryland; SB0059 maps out the transportation future that will make these benefits obtainable while also doing serious work in Maryland's fight to combat global warming. Accordingly, I urge a favorable report and thank you for your consideration.

¹ Highway maintenance projects and highway projects funded for construction or that have a completed environmental review process prior to July 2025 would be exempt from this process

² RMI, Smarter MODES Calculator: Smarter Mobility Options for Decarbonization, Equity, and Safety. <https://rmi.org/insight/smarter-modes-calculator-smarter-mobility-options-for-decarbonization-equity-and-safety/>