

**Committee:** Budget and Taxation  
**Testimony on:** SB59– Transportation – Major Highway Capacity Expansion Projects and Impact Assessments (Transportation and Climate Alignment Act of 2026)  
**Submitting:** Deborah A. Cohn  
**Position:** Favorable  
**Hearing Date:** February 25, 2026

Dear Chair Guzzone and Committee Members:

Thank you for allowing my testimony today in support of SB59, the Transportation and Climate Alignment Act (TCA). I have lived in Bethesda for over 40 years and have adult children and pre-school aged grandchildren who also live in Maryland. I am acutely aware of the difficulty many of their peers in Montgomery County face in making ends meet. They face tight budgets. I also recognize that the greatest opportunity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Maryland and protect their health and economic future lies in the transportation sector. Maryland also faces a tight budget, making business development and income growth top priorities.

The Transportation and Climate Alignment Act addresses these concerns. The bill is intended to ensure that the State’s transportation spending is aligned with its climate goals. Maryland spends over \$5 billion on transportation annually. The Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP) calls for spending approximately \$22 billion over six years, yet the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) cannot say whether its projects will increase or decrease greenhouse gases. The reason is clear. Environmental impact is only one several criteria for scoring projects for inclusion in the CTP. These other goals *are* also important and merit consideration. So to ensure that our transportation spending is aligned with our climate goals, we need the TCA.

SB59 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, SB59 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,<sup>1</sup> reduce injuries and death from automobile accidents, reduce health costs and lost workdays due to air pollution<sup>2</sup> and create more affordable transportation options for all residents. It would expand work and educational opportunities for households without

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> <https://rmi.org/states-can-quantify-the-benefits-of-climate-friendly-transportation-options-with-rmis-smarter-modes-calculator/>

vehicles, increase their incomes, help businesses hire the workforce they need to expand, and grow state tax revenues.<sup>3</sup> These benefits would be particularly valuable in the Baltimore region, where only 8.5% of jobs are accessible within one hour by public transit.<sup>4</sup>

### **Benefits for State**

Investing in better bus, rail and cycling infrastructure in urban areas could save the state meaningful funds, while reducing highway congestion.<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup>

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. SB59 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.<sup>7</sup>

Despite these benefits some will oppose SB59 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 higher tax revenues. Accordingly, I urge this committee to issue a FAVORABLE report.

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<sup>3</sup> 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."

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

<sup>5</sup> <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.

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

<sup>7</sup> See Appendix for representative examples.

Transportation and Climate Alignment Act  
Appendix to Testimony of Deborah A. Cohn

County and State	Project
Anne Arundel	<b>Parole Transportation Center</b> and locally operated transit system (LOTS) funds
Baltimore City	<b>Red Line Project</b> (east-west transit to connect Baltimore City and County residents to jobs and health care and promote economic growth); <b>BMORE Bus Plan</b> (expand service frequency and reliability, including weekend and late night service, connecting residents to jobs and school); <b>Vision Zero</b> (Baltimore City has the highest rates of pedestrian and cyclist-involved crashes in the state.)
Baltimore County	<b>Red Line Project</b> ; <b>Eastern Baltimore County Access Study</b> (to connect Essex, Dundalk and Turner’s Station to Red Line and jobs, and build long-term transit corridors with safe bike and pedestrian access); Reinstated <b>MTA LocalLink 35</b> to support economic growth by providing a single route to access new jobs in White Marsh and Tradepoint Atlantic; <b>Old Court Road Complete Streets Project</b> (design 3.3 miles of safety improvements from Liberty Road to Reisterstown Road including sidewalks, cross walks and bike lanes)
Calvert	<b>Calvert Transit Transfer Station</b> (a central transit hub to improve local bus connections and strengthen regional transit access)
Charles	<b>Southern Maryland Rapid Transit</b> (running from Branch Avenue Metro Station to White Plains, it connects Prince George’s and Charles Counties to expand access to jobs, fuel economic growth and reduce congestion)
Howard	<b>MARC Camden Line and Commuter Bus Service Expansion</b> to improve daily commutes to D.C. area; <b>US29 Corridor to Flash Bus Rapid Transit</b> (integrating Montgomery County’s BRT service with US29 transit to ease commuter traffic along this heavy commuter corridor); <b>US1 Safety Improvements</b> (targeted safety upgrades to reduce serious crashes and protect pedestrians and cyclists); <b>Support LOTS and safer pedestrian and biking routes</b> (supports low cost alternatives for access to local businesses)
Montgomery	<b>Bus rapid transit</b> along Viers Mill Road, MD 355 and New Hampshire Ave; <b>Expand UpCounty Bus Service</b> (extend Route 101 ExtRa service to Clarksburg, provide weekend service on Ride On Route 90 and more frequent service on Ride On Route 55); Expand East County <b>Purple Line Safe Access</b> (fund five Bicycle and Pedestrian Priority Area (BiPPA) upgrades to create safe access to the Purple Line and support surrounding local businesses and residents); <b>Vision Zero Upgrades</b> (Reduce the time it takes to fund road and intersection safety improvements to reduce high rates of death and life-changing injuries of pedestrians and bicyclists; MD28/MD198 Burtonsville business district pedestrian and biking safety improvements to connect neighborhoods and schools); <b>Expand Bi-Directional MARC Brunswick Line Service</b> (accelerate build-out of service turnaround at Silver Spring to enable mid-day and weekend service to reduce I-270 congestion)
Frederick	<b>LOTS expansion</b> (to increase capital and operating funds to provide 30 minute service frequency, longer Saturday service and new Sunday service); <b>Complete Streets</b> (add safety features, including segregated bike lanes, sidewalks and other design features along MD26 and MD 75 to connect Libertytown Elementary School and Libertytown Park); <b>MARC Brunswick Line Service</b> (to expand off-peak and weekend service to reflect commuting patterns and connect to Montgomery County); <b>Commuter Bus Service</b> (to connect with jobs in Frederick and Montgomery County to accelerate commuter service improvements).
Garrett	<b>Expanded public transportation</b> (funds to implement the county’s first fixed-route transit service); <b>Sidewalk Extension and Maintenance</b> (Grantsville Sidewalk Extension on Alt US 40 to River Road to improve pedestrian safety and economic development between the Town of Grantsville, Grantsville Elementary and key destinations in the Arts and Entertainment District; Crellin Sidewalk Replacement to enhance pedestrian safety near an elementary school); <b>MD 135 Shared Use Pathways</b> (to connect towns and neighborhoods with safe bike and pedestrian greenways on local roads); <b>Recreational Opportunities and Tourism</b> : Loch Lynn Trail Accessibility Enhancement to retrofit existing boardwalks to ensure ADA compliance on a recreational trail; Broadford Park Bike System Skills Park to allow bikers of all levels develop mountain bike skills and develop the county’s tourism workforce; Meadow Mountain Trail Enhancements to support economic development and outdoor recreational opportunities as part of the Eastern Continental Divide Loop Initiative.
Harford	<b>A shared use path along US 40 from Aberdeen Train Station to Erie Street</b> ; <b>LOTS funding for Harford Transit Operations Facility in Aberdeen</b> ; <b>Sidewalk Program</b> (several projects to connect neighborhoods and local destinations and support safe pedestrian routes); <b>Aberdeen MARC Train Station Improvements</b> (create safe underground ADA compliant pedestrian access)
Prince George’s	<b>Southern Maryland Rapid Transit</b> ; <b>Vision Zero</b> (Prince George’s County has the highest traffic fatality rate in Maryland. Safety upgrades for pedestrians and cyclists, including pedestrian refuge islands, lighting, sidewalks and segregated bike lanes can address this); <b>Martin Luther King Jr.</b> , <b>Highway Urban Reconstruction</b> (to improve safety along a high-injury corridor in Glenarden and Seat Pleasant by adding sidewalks, bike lanes and lighting); <b>MARC Service Expansion</b> (Expanding the Camden and Penn Lines, including upgrades at New Carrollton, Laurel and Bowie, increases access to jobs and improve regional connectivity); <b>Bus Rapid Transit</b> (Projects like the Silver Hill Road tactical bus lanes increase reliable, affordable transit); <b>Vision Zero Upgrades</b> at the intersection of US301 with MD197 and MD5, including bike and pedestrian infrastructure