

Committee: Budget and Taxation
Testimony on: HB437– 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:

As a longstanding Montgomery County resident concerned about congestion on the American Legion Bridge and I-270, including feeder roads, I urge a favorable report on HB437, the Transportation and Climate Alignment Act (TCA), with no weakening amendments.

Maryland needs simultaneously to (i) grow its economy to address chronic, systemic budget shortfalls and (ii) cut everyday costs for Maryland’s residents and businesses. The Transportation and Climate Alignment Act supports both goals. **Please pass TCA without any weakening amendments. In particular, retaining the requirement of project level evaluations is critical. It applies only to the very few highway projects that cost over \$100 million, but it’s the guts of the bill.**

What TCA Does: TCA requires assessing the greenhouse gas (GHG) and congestion impacts of major (over \$100 million) highway expansion projects in MDOT’s Consolidated Transportation Plan to ensure they are consistent with the Governor’s executive order to advance Maryland’s Climate Pollution Reduction Plan. The TCA has three goals:

- Avoid waste of scarce transportation dollars through better design of major highway expansion projects to move the same number of people at lower immediate and long-term cost to the state.
- Give people more transportation choices so they can save time and money, reduce stress and hassle, increase personal safety and clean up the air they breathe by avoiding congested highways.
- Reduce highway congestion by diverting drivers off major highways.

Misconceptions: Bill opponents have many [misconceptions that bill sponsors have addressed](#). Importantly, TCA does not make major highway expansion projects more expensive. And major highways will still get built. They just will be better designed to reduce congestion and GHG emissions over the long term with reduced initial construction and long-term maintenance costs. These savings can be used to invest in transportation alternatives, creating a virtuous circle. **But to achieve these goals requires retaining the requirement that MDOT take into account project level evaluations,** which MDOT in its supportive testimony characterized as “core to the bill.”

What Can Be Accomplished this Session: Some legislators may think the 2026 General Assembly does not have the space to enact both the TCA (HB437) and SB052, MDOT’s Transportation Investment Priorities Act (SB052). The two bills are complementary and mutually consistent and both should be passed. But if legislators feel constrained to choose, **please prioritize HB437.** HB437 will provide short- and long-term savings for individuals, businesses and the state. Critically, it offers additionality. SB052 merely codifies what MDOT is already doing under its Chapter 30 project prioritization program to

improve the quality of major surface transportation project proposals that would cost at least \$5 million and increase highway capacity, transit or rail systems.

Growing Maryland's Economy: Highway congestion is a major economic cost and annoyance for Maryland residents and businesses. Congestion wastes time, fuel and electricity, reduces highway safety and increases pollutants that damage health. Studies consistently show that expanding highways does not reduce congestion long term. Within a few years, congestion returns to pre-expansion levels due to induced demand. Diverting drivers off highways with safe, reliable and frequently accessible transportation alternatives, including (i) HOT+3 lanes for bus rapid transit and commuter vans, (ii) bus, subway and commuter rail, (iii) safe, segregated pedestrian and bike lanes, and (iv) transit-oriented development addresses congestion long-term. Savings under TCA would enable MDOT to apply more of its funds to these types of projects.

Reducing MDOT Costs: TCA will conserve scarce MDOT funds by redesigning major projects to use less expensive means to meet travel demand. Long term, reinvesting some of the savings in construction and highway maintenance costs envisaged under TCA in transit could enable Maryland to see net savings of \$550 million per year. In Minnesota, which enacted a similar bill a few years ago, not a single major project has been cancelled. Rather, projects are being redesigned to meet the same travel demand while conserving highway fund resources.

Lowering Daily Transportation Costs: 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. By offering consumers choices, TCA could save consumers money – an average of more than \$3,000 per household each year.

So for all of these reasons, please pass HB437, the Transportation and Climate Alignment Act, without any weakening amendments. In particular, please retain **project level evaluations -- the core of the bill**.

Thank you.

Deborah A. Cohn (D16)

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

County and State	Project
Anne Arundel	Parole Transportation Center and locally operated transit system (LOTS) funds
Baltimore City	Red Line Project (east-west transit to connect Baltimore City and County residents to jobs and health care and promote economic growth); BMORE Bus Plan (expand service frequency and reliability, including weekend and late night service, connecting residents to jobs and school); Vision Zero (Baltimore City has the highest rates of pedestrian and cyclist-involved crashes in the state.)
Baltimore County	Red Line Project ; Eastern Baltimore County Access Study (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 MTA LocalLink 35 to support economic growth by providing a single route to access new jobs in White Marsh and Tradepoint Atlantic; Old Court Road Complete Streets Project (design 3.3 miles of safety improvements from Liberty Road to Reisterstown Road including sidewalks, cross walks and bike lanes)
Calvert	Calvert Transit Transfer Station (a central transit hub to improve local bus connections and strengthen regional transit access)
Charles	Southern Maryland Rapid Transit (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	MARC Camden Line and Commuter Bus Service Expansion to improve daily commutes to D.C. area; US29 Corridor to Flash Bus Rapid Transit (integrating Montgomery County’s BRT service with US29 transit to ease commuter traffic along this heavy commuter corridor); US1 Safety Improvements (targeted safety upgrades to reduce serious crashes and protect pedestrians and cyclists); Support LOTS and safer pedestrian and biking routes (supports low cost alternatives for access to local businesses)
Montgomery	Bus rapid transit along Viers Mill Road, MD 355 and New Hampshire Ave; Expand UpCounty Bus Service (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 Purple Line Safe Access (fund five Bicycle and Pedestrian Priority Area (BiPPA) upgrades to create safe access to the Purple Line and support surrounding local businesses and residents); Vision Zero Upgrades (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); Expand Bi-Directional MARC Brunswick Line Service (accelerate build-out of service turnaround at Silver Spring to enable mid-day and weekend service to reduce I-270 congestion)
Frederick	LOTS expansion (to increase capital and operating funds to provide 30 minute service frequency, longer Saturday service and new Sunday service); Complete Streets (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); MARC Brunswick Line Service (to expand off-peak and weekend service to reflect commuting patterns and connect to Montgomery County); Commuter Bus Service (to connect with jobs in Frederick and Montgomery County to accelerate commuter service improvements).
Garrett	Expanded public transportation (funds to implement the county’s first fixed-route transit service); Sidewalk Extension and Maintenance (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); MD 135 Shared Use Pathways (to connect towns and neighborhoods with safe bike and pedestrian greenways on local roads); Recreational Opportunities and Tourism : 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	A shared use path along US 40 from Aberdeen Train Station to Erie Street ; LOTS funding for Harford Transit Operations Facility in Aberdeen ; Sidewalk Program (several projects to connect neighborhoods and local destinations and support safe pedestrian routes); Aberdeen MARC Train Station Improvements (create safe underground ADA compliant pedestrian access)
Prince George’s	Southern Maryland Rapid Transit ; Vision Zero (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); Martin Luther King Jr. , Highway Urban Reconstruction (to improve safety along a high-injury corridor in Glenarden and Seat Pleasant by adding sidewalks, bike lanes and lighting); MARC Service Expansion (Expanding the Camden and Penn Lines, including upgrades at New Carrollton, Laurel and Bowie, increases access to jobs and improve regional connectivity); Bus Rapid Transit (Projects like the Silver Hill Road tactical bus lanes increase reliable, affordable transit); Vision Zero Upgrades at the intersection of US301 with MD197 and MD5, including bike and pedestrian infrastructure