



Committee: Budget and Taxation

Testimony on: SB 59- Transportation - Major Highway Capacity Expansion Projects and Impact Assessments (Transportation and Climate Alignment Act of 2026)

Hearing Date: February 25, 2026

Position: Favorable

Transportation is the [second largest expense](#) for most Americans after housing. Maryland needs to invest in more affordable transportation choices, including public transit, walkable and bikeable communities, and development that bring jobs and amenities closer to where people live. **This would lower household transportation costs, improve people’s access to opportunities, cut tailpipe pollution, and reduce the time people spend sitting in traffic.**

Endless highway expansion doesn’t solve congestion and promotes sprawl development that increases pollution and [the cost of housing and utilities](#). Highway expansion in Maryland contributes to the loss of farmland and has hollowed out historic downtowns and main streets in rural areas by diverting traffic away from local businesses. Instead of building new noisy and expensive highway projects that place further strain on the state’s budget deficit, the state should focus on maintaining our existing highway infrastructure to make it safer while also investing in less polluting and more affordable transportation choices that reduce traffic. **This approach could save the state \$550 million per year** in net construction and maintenance costs, even after accounting for the creation of hundreds of miles of new bus, rail, and active transport networks.

The TCA would require the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) to:

- ❖ **Fund public transit, bike and pedestrian infrastructure**, transit oriented development, and solar energy on MDOT property or other projects to offset pollution from new highway expansion projects over \$100 million. The investments must be prioritized in overburdened and underserved communities impacted by the project. 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.
- ❖ **Create accountability and transparency about projects that increase pollution and commuter costs** by calculating the greenhouse gas emissions from all the major capital transportation projects in the state budget and investing in a greater mix of transit, walking, biking, and other clean transportation projects to offset increased carbon pollution and align the budget with the state’s climate goals.

**Building Smarter: How Investing in More Transportation Choices Cuts Infrastructure Costs. RMI, 2025*

Did you know?

- ❖ [Colorado](#) and [Minnesota](#) passed legislation similar to the Transportation and Climate Alignment Act in 2021 and 2023, respectively. In Colorado, the legislation shifted investment into 5 new Bus Rapid Transit Corridors and other clean transportation choices. The state projects that this policy will [save commuters \\$40 billion](#) by 2050.
- ❖ According to a 2025 poll conducted by [Gonzales Research & Media](#), **68% of Marylanders think having better access to public transit, walking, and biking would help them and their families reduce time sitting in traffic or save money on transportation expenses.**

Benefits of investing in transit, active transportation, and sustainable land use

Saves households time and money. The average Maryland household would save over \$3,000 a year from the build out of new, affordable transportation choices, like more transit, walking, and biking and shorter automobile trips. These new options would save each Maryland resident from 26 hours of traffic per year on average.*

Equitable access to opportunities. Every Marylander should have affordable and reliable access to jobs, housing, education, food, healthcare, and recreation no matter where they live. It is critical that populations with less access to vehicles, especially Black and Brown communities, low-income communities, people with disabilities, students, and seniors have better mobility options. Only 7.5% of jobs in the Baltimore region [are accessible within one hour by public transit](#).

Reduces climate and air pollution. Vehicles make up the largest source of climate and health-damaging air pollution from transportation in Maryland and are a major contributor to ozone pollution. The state's climate plan includes a goal to reduce per capita vehicle miles traveled (VMT) 20% by 2050, which RMI finds would reduce climate pollution by [55 million metric tons](#) (the same as preventing the annual emissions of over 130 methane gas power plants). Governor Moore's executive order on climate change required the state to invest in measures that reduce VMT.

Improves our health. A [report](#) by Rails to Trails Conservancy found that the health savings from increased physical activity due to active transportation (e.g., cycling, walking) is \$20 billion annually.

Increased safety. Traveling by public transportation is [10 times safer per mile](#) than traveling by car. If Maryland were to meet its goals to reduce VMT 20% by 2050, it would reduce automobile crashes in Maryland and prevent on average 171 crash fatalities per year in Maryland.*

Create jobs. Every \$1 billion invested in public transportation supports and creates approximately 50,000 jobs. According to a [study](#) by the Political Economy Research Institute, bicycle-only projects created more jobs compared to road-only projects (11.41 jobs vs. 7.75 jobs per \$1 million invested).

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