



# CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

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## House Bill 437

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

**Date:** March 24, 2026  
**To:** Budget & Taxation Committee

**Position:** FAVORABLE W/ AMENDMENT  
**From:** Gussie Maguire,  
MD Staff Scientist

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The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS WITH AMENDMENT House Bill 437** which requires analysis of major highway expansion projects to quantify increases in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and vehicle miles traveled. The Department of Transportation (MDOT) must fund offsets to bring net GHG emissions incurred by highway expansion down to zero. The bill also requires that a multimodal transportation program be developed alongside each major highway expansion project to offset net vehicle miles traveled due to highway expansion.

Maryland's Climate Pathway document identifies the transportation sector as second only to energy as a source of greenhouse gases. Highway expansion projects usually proceed from an analysis of transportation deficiencies such as traffic congestion, travel times, and general environmental impact of the project footprint without consideration of the vehicle miles traveled (VMT) or induced demand from the expanded transportation network. Increased ease of travel by personal vehicle then inadvertently leads to increased harmful emissions. Under this bill, if major highway projects cause a net increase in GHG emissions, the state is required to fund offsetting practices, such as transit and alternative transportation options, alternative energy generation, and land use changes.

Requiring each project plan to include multimodal transport options will strengthen the state's transit network, reduce the number of vehicles on the road, and lessen GHG emissions and other pollutants entering the environment from highway travel. This additional focus will evaluate whether highway expansion is the proper choice for addressing transportation deficiencies. Finally, establishing a baseline of GHG emissions and then an annual declining target for emissions ensures that MDOT will continue to move in a direction consistent with the state's climate goals.

As amended by the House, the bill exempts construction and reconstruction of the William Preston Lane, Jr. Chesapeake Bay Bridge and associated construction along US Route 50 between Interstate 97 and Maryland Route 404 from the planning exercises required in the bill. The potential Bay Bridge replacement is already in the midst of an environmental impacts review under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which may include much of the analysis required under the bill. MDTA reports that the new Bay Crossing, if constructed, will be the largest infrastructure project in Maryland history. As such, it is imperative to ensure that its construction advances Maryland's greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals and transit priorities. CBF respectfully requests the Committee consider removing the exemption for the Bay Bridge replacement project.

**CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENT report on HB 437.**

For more information, please contact Matt Stegman, Maryland Staff Attorney, at [mstegman@cbf.org](mailto:mstegman@cbf.org).

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