

**Testimony on SB 674**  
**Transportation – Regional Transportation Authorities**  
**Senate Budget & Taxation Committee and Finance Committee**

**Date: March 2, 2026**

**Position: UNFAVORABLE**

The Coalition for Smarter Growth opposes the proposed **Regional Transportation Authorities**. Our organization advocates for walkable, bikeable, inclusive, and transit-oriented communities as the most sustainable and equitable way for the Washington, DC region to grow and provide opportunities for all. We have worked extensively in the Maryland suburbs of DC, in particular in Prince George's and Montgomery counties, and have supported numerous transit, safe streets, and arterial road investments as well as land use and housing solutions that provide transportation benefits.

Regional Transportation Authorities SB 674 would increase taxes via three new taxing and planning authorities for transportation in portions of the state. **SB 674 structures the proposed funding authorities similar to ones in Virginia that have been problematic and led to calls for reform by some officials and stakeholders.** The Coalition for Smarter Growth has the following concerns from our experience working in Virginia:

**The Authorities would lock in tax revenue sources that once bonded cannot be repurposed by the General Assembly for other needs.** Once the General Assembly gives up these tax streams to the regional authorities and the tax streams are locked into debt service for project bonds, the legislature is unlikely to be able to reclaim these tax revenue streams for other state needs like education, water/sewer infrastructure, or other transportation needs.

**SB 674 would create long-term maintenance costs that will be passed onto the entire state.** Although the bill does not exclude state-of-good repair for use of funds, there is no requirement to include, much less prioritize, maintenance. The proposed authorities include no responsibility to fund long-term maintenance of the new infrastructure they build, leading to future maintenance costs that the state will have to pick up.

**Risk that the revenues become a “slush fund” supporting poor land use decisions.** In practice in Virginia, the increased funding has removed the incentive of local governments to improve land use planning to reduce driving distances, traffic volumes and expensive road widening.

**The SB 674 “congestion reduction” metric is a false promise, because of induced demand.** There are better metrics like accessibility of destinations, demand reduction approaches, safety, and environmental sustainability.

**Creates yet another expensive bureaucracy.** The regional authorities mean another bureaucracy that is redundant to MDOT/MTA, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, and local governments and their transportation staff. The legal, financial and planning requirements are such that it leads to hiring more and more staff, and more and more meetings on top of those already burdening local and state officials. The Northern Virginia Transportation Authority now has over a \$5M annual operating budget, 20 staff, and several committees taking up officials' time.

**Maryland communities need better land use, not throwing more money at the problem.** Walkable, mixed-use, transit-oriented land use is the most effective and affordable long-term solution. Each person who can live and/or work in a walkable, transit-accessible community or Main Street neighborhood helps to reduce driving demand.

**We believe that local jurisdictions and MDOT have better options for jointly addressing transportation needs.** We cannot keep throwing money at the problem and need to use our taxpayer dollars as judiciously as we can, including prioritizing more efficient patterns of development to reduce infrastructure costs while improving accessibility of jobs, services and homes.

We respectfully ask for an **Unfavorable report for SB 674** by the committee. Thank you.

Stewart Schwartz, Executive Director