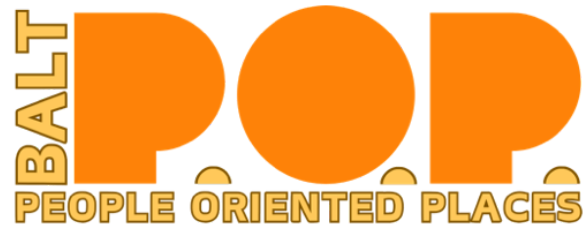


Bill: HB0437

Bill Title: Transportation - Major Highway Capacity Expansion Projects and Impact Assessments (Transportation and Climate Alignment Act of 2026)



Position: **Favorable**

Members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee,

As a group which views public transit and active transportation as being preferred modes of transportation for maximizing the appeal and productivity of Baltimore and its closest-in suburbs, we feel that HB0437 is a very necessary bill whose time has come.

Over the course of the past couple general assembly sessions, it has become obvious that dollars available for our transportation system are proving to be scarce. We need to make the best use of these infrastructure dollars. To do that, it is important to focus our investments on projects that meet state and regional goals to strengthen our economy, advance equity, improve mobility, and fight climate change.

This bill follows in the footsteps of similar legislation enacted in Colorado (2021) and Minnesota (2023), building off of lessons learned from their years of implementation. Colorado has had several years now to see their legislation yield tangible, positive impacts. It has guided their transportation investment decision-making in significant, needle-moving ways and has proven key to them breaking out of the perpetual and self-defeating cycle of highway expansions.

Highway expansions have proven to be a wasteful use of public dollars. According to a Central Maryland Transportation Alliance analysis of data from the Texas Transportation Institute, between 1982 and 2011, the Baltimore region increased highway lane miles by 76%. During that time, the region's population grew by 48% (from 1.7 million to 2.5 million). Even though road expansion far **outpaced** population growth (76% vs. 48%), traffic congestion got **worse**. One key measure, known as congested lane miles, increased from 31% to 58%, and the annual hours of delay per automobile commuter more than quadrupled from 9 hours a year to 41 hours a year. [1] This bill will prove critical in helping us break free of this self-destructive behavior, focusing our limited funds on only the most worthy and highest-yielding transportation projects.

This bill supports the Maryland Climate Pollution Reduction Plan's finding that a 20% per-capita reduction in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) by 2050 is necessary to meet the state's climate goals. Transformation of our transportation sector has proven to be slow and elusive. To be clear, vehicle electrification is only one part of the solution. Increasing our investments in public transit,

bikeways, pedestrian infrastructure, and other strategies that reduce automobile-based travel is needed to meet our climate goals.

This bill will require the Maryland Department of Transportation and regional transportation planning agencies to measure and **mitigate** any increases in VMT and climate pollution caused by any highway expansion project under consideration that will cost more than \$5 million.

The menu of possible mitigation actions is expansive, and will need to be prioritized for implementation in the overburdened and underserved communities (as defined by the Climate Solutions Now Act) most impacted by past highway projects. Such mitigation efforts will help expand people's transportation choices, offer high returns on investment, improve the ability of everyone in our communities to be happy and productive Marylanders, and strengthen the state's economy - all while reducing the long-term costs of our transportation system and reducing climate and other harmful air pollution.

We hope the committee finds these points helpful and convincing and we urge its members to **vote in favor of HB0437**. Thank you for your efforts and the opportunity for us to testify on this legislation.

[BaltPOP - Baltimoreans for People-Oriented Places](#)

[1] Eric Norton and Brian O'Malley. "Opinion: More Roads Mean More Congestion". September 4, 2019.

<https://www.marylandmatters.org/2019/09/04/opinion-more-roads-mean-more-congestion/>