



# Transportation Alliance

February 26, 2026

## **Testimony on HB 916 – *Transportation - Regional Transportation Authorities –* Environment & Transportation Committee**

### **Position: Unfavorable**

The Central Maryland Transportation Alliance respectfully opposes HB 916, which would create three new regional transportation authorities across the state charged with funding and implementing transportation projects in their respective geographies. While the Transportation Alliance has been supportive of raising revenue for transportation projects and has advocated for an independent regional transportation or transit agency in Baltimore, we don't believe HB 916 offers the best path to get there.

For years leaders in the Greater Baltimore region have been seeking to reform the way its local public transportation is governed and financed. Structural challenges in the current centralized governance structure of the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) make maintaining and improving transit performance difficult. The result is an unreliable public transportation system that further disadvantages many users already negatively impacted by poverty and structural racism, discourages ridership growth, and puts the region at a competitive disadvantage compared to other metropolitan areas with robust, reliable public transit.

Moreover, the lack of local participation in planning and funding decisions has been a contributing factor to ongoing maintenance problems and lack of significant expansion or improvement. Of the 50 largest transit agencies in the country, the MTA is the only one that is part of a state department of transportation without a board of directors and where decision-making lies solely with a governor. In recent years the General Assembly has taken a step toward reform through legislation that established a Baltimore Regional Transit Commission (BRTC). The BRTC has been a huge improvement in terms of having an official body that is providing some measure of transparency to MTA's operations, plans and budget. However, it is largely an advisory body that lacks the full power of a regional transportation authority.

The General Assembly is now considering bills such as HB 1081 that seek further changes to the BRTC and MTA's governance structure. We support some, but not all of those changes. The core of the problem is a mismatch between who runs our local transit system and who relies on it. HB 916 does not address this mismatch and would leave the current governance model in place.



## Transportation Alliance

Additionally, language in the bill talks about the purpose of the authorities is maximizing the movement of people, as well as promoting efficiency, safety, environmental impacts and social justice. However, the bill calls for transportation projects to be evaluated by one metric above all others: their ability to “reduce congestion”. This sounds like a neutral and common-sense way to evaluate transportation projects, but it too often leads us to focus on the mobility of free-flowing car traffic as the end-all, be-all of transportation goals. Forward-thinking transportation planning should prioritize goals like access (the ability to reach destinations) over vehicle throughput (the ability to move quickly).

We encourage an UNFAVORABLE report for House Bill 916.