



Hon. Marc Korman
House Environment and Transportation Committee

Re: HB916 - Transportation - Regional Transportation Authorities
POSITION: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

ACEC/MD represents Maryland's private-sector engineering firms that design and deliver the transportation, water, environmental, and public works infrastructure that local governments and the State rely upon every day. Our members are deeply invested in stable, predictable transportation funding because it drives capital planning, project readiness, and delivery performance and economic growth across Maryland.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 916, which establishes the Baltimore Region, Capital Region, and Southern Maryland Region Transportation Authorities. We support the bill's fundamental goal of creating dedicated regional transportation planning and funding mechanisms to address Maryland's significant transportation infrastructure needs. However, we respectfully recommend amendments to ensure the proposed Regional Transportation Authorities (RTAs) align with existing federal planning structures, and preserve federal transportation funding.

Support for the Bill's Core Objectives

House Bill 916 addresses critical transportation infrastructure challenges through:

- Establishing dedicated regional authorities with governance structures to plan and implement transportation projects that maximize movement of people and promote efficiency, safety, and environmental and social justice impacts;
- Creating stable, predictable funding streams through the Baltimore Region, Capital Region, and Southern Maryland Region Transportation Funds;
- Requiring at least 30% of each regional fund to support transit projects, ensuring multimodal investment; and
- Empowering regions to develop long-range transportation plans and prioritize regional projects for state and federal funding

These provisions recognize that effective transportation planning requires regional coordination, dedicated resources, and local input into priority-setting. The establishment of special, nonlapsing funds provides fiscal stability that can leverage additional public and private investment.

Recommended Amendments

While we support the bill's objectives, we recommend two critical amendments to ensure successful implementation and protect Maryland's interests:



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Amendment 1: Align RTA Boundaries with Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Boundaries

Issue: The bill establishes three regional transportation authorities but does not explicitly align their geographic boundaries with existing Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) designated under federal law (23 U.S.C. § 134 and 49 U.S.C. § 5303).

Federal Context: Federal transportation law requires MPOs to conduct transportation planning in urbanized areas with populations over 50,000. Maryland's existing MPOs include the Baltimore Regional Transportation Board (BRTB), Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments/National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (COG/TPB), and the Salisbury-Wicomico MPO. These bodies are responsible for developing Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs) and long-range Metropolitan Transportation Plans (MTPs) that are prerequisites for federal funding eligibility.

Risk: Misalignment between RTA boundaries and MPO boundaries could create:

- Conflicting transportation plans and priorities between RTAs and federally-designated MPOs;
- Confusion over which entity has planning authority for federal funding purposes;
- Duplication of planning efforts and administrative costs; and
- Potential federal concerns about state compliance with metropolitan planning requirements

Amendment 2: Protect Federal Transportation Funding Eligibility

Issue: The bill creates new regional authorities with significant planning and project selection powers but does not explicitly address the relationship between RTA activities and federal funding eligibility requirements.

Federal Funding Context: Maryland receives substantial federal transportation funding through programs including:

Federal funding eligibility depends on compliance with federal planning requirements, including metropolitan transportation plans developed by MPOs, statewide transportation plans, and consistency with air quality conformity determinations under the Clean Air Act.

Risk: Without explicit safeguards, RTA activities could:

- Overlap or conflict with existing MPO planning responsibilities, undermining federally required regional transportation plans.
- Impose overlapping or excessive local surcharges that dampen private investment and job growth in key employment centers.
- Divert or restructure revenues in a way that violates federal matching, maintenance-of-effort, or eligibility requirements, putting formula and discretionary funds at risk.



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Conclusion

House Bill 916 represents an important step toward addressing Maryland's transportation infrastructure needs through regional planning and dedicated funding. These amendments strengthen the bill without undermining its core objectives. They provide necessary guardrails to ensure that regional transportation planning enhances, rather than conflicts with, existing federal frameworks and protects Maryland's fiscal and economic interests.

We urge the Committee to adopt these amendments and report **House Bill 916 favorably as amended.**

Thank you for your consideration. We are available to discuss these recommendations and work with the Committee on amendment language.

Respectfully,

Maria K. Donovan

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