

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

Date: February 24, 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 HB 916 would increase taxes via three new taxing and planning authorities for transportation in portions of the state. **HB916 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.

HB916 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 demand and expensive road widening.

The HB916 “congestion reduction” metric is a false promise, because of induced demand. Three are better metrics like proximity and accessibility, 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 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 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 respectfully ask for an **Unfavorable report for HB 916** by the committee. Thank you.

Stewart Schwartz, Executive Director