

Bill: SB0947

Bill Title: Maryland Transit Administration  
Reform Act

Position: **Favorable**



Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

As a group which views public transit as being a preferred mode of transportation for maximizing the appeal and productivity of Baltimore and its closest-in suburbs, we support SB0947.

Baltimore's transit has long struggled with a fundamental governance mismatch: those affected by transportation policy are not the ones who have decisionmaking power. Decisions regarding Baltimore regional transportation are made by a state level agency, the Maryland Department of Transportation. As a result, *all* Maryland residents — whether or not they live in the Baltimore region — have a voice on the future direction of transportation in the Baltimore area.

Baltimore's situation is exceptional, in a negative way. In other metropolitan areas, this problem has been solved by creating a regional transportation authority, a regional body that has planning and funding powers for transportation across the entire metropolitan area. Among the fifty largest transit agencies in the United States, the Maryland Transit Administration is the *only one* that does not operate under a regional transportation authority [1]. Because of this, Baltimore's transportation network is not accountable to the residents of the Baltimore region, with potentially catastrophic results. This was demonstrated persuasively in 2015, when Governor Larry Hogan unilaterally cancelled the Baltimore Red Line transit project. The Maryland legislature has a duty to ensure that a similar disregard for the voices of the Baltimore region cannot be repeated in the future.

In this legislative session, we have received two potential answers to Baltimore's transit governance deficit: HB0916 and this bill. Out of these two options, this bill provides a more realistic and effective pathway towards better regional governance for Baltimore. This bill is the product of the Baltimore Regional Transit Commission, a workgroup created specifically to study solutions for transportation governance in Baltimore. While the Core Service Board suggested by this bill would not create a true regional transportation authority, it represents a practical step towards regional control that avoids unnecessary bureaucratic disruption.

Developing an independent regional authority should remain a goal of the legislature. This bill moves us toward this goal without repeating the highway-oriented investment mistakes of the past.

We hope the committee finds these points helpful and convincing and we urge its members to **vote for SB0947**. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this legislation.

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

[1] Eno Center for Transportation, *Transit Reform for Maryland: New Models for Accountability, Stability, and Equity* (November 2020), p. 2.