

CSG MD SB947 MTA Reform Act 2026 testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Bill Pugh

Position: FAV

**Testimony on SB 947
MTA Reform Act
Senate Finance Committee and Budget & Taxation Committee**

Date: March 4, 2026

Position: FAVORABLE

The Coalition for Smarter Growth supports **SB 947**. 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 work extensively in the Maryland suburbs of DC, in particular in Prince George's and Montgomery counties.

In particular, we are testifying in support of two of the bill provisions:

- Establishment of a Commuter Services Advisory Board for MARC and MTA Commuter Bus services; and
- A technical study on the creation of a rail authority in the state.

MARC and MTA commuter bus services are vital transportation options in Maryland, and deserve their own advisory board. Given crowded corridors like the BW Parkway and I-270, enhanced MARC service has the potential to cost-effectively provide more reliable, sustainable and affordable travel options. New direct rail service to major job centers like L'Enfant Plaza and National Landing in Virginia is also in early planning stages. In addition, MARC stations have significant potential to support more homes and businesses, providing affordable locations that save households and workers transportation costs and time. The state-owned transit-oriented development sites along the Penn Line could accommodate 3,000 new housing units and generate \$800 million in new state and local revenue.

The proposed advisory board would help ensure closer stakeholder involvement and guidance to MARC and MTA Commuter Bus planning and operations decisions. CSG has seen the beneficial role of the advisory board of the Virginia Railway Express (VRE) in the Northern Virginia suburbs of DC. With focused, dedicated boards of regional officials, the VRE commuter railroad has been able to implement a full program of station, maintenance facility, and track improvements, with more on the way.

SB 947 also studies a statewide rail authority, which has been a successful model in other states. In neighboring Virginia, the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPRA), created by the General Assembly in 2020, has brought focus to managing, funding, and growing statewide rail services. VPRA has the authority to own and acquire rail infrastructure, and major investments in the *Transforming Rail in Virginia Plan* are proceeding, with significant benefits for freight, commuter and intercity rail. By adding focus on rail facility and service improvements, a dedicated authority in Maryland could likewise help unleash the potential of the state's extensive rail infrastructure and opportunities for economic development.

We ask for a **favorable report for SB 947** by the committees. Thank you.

SB 947 - Maryland Transit Administration Reform Ac

Uploaded by: Brian Wivell

Position: FAV

Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1300

126 W. 25th Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21218
Telephone: 410-889-3566 Facsimile: 410-243-5541
www.atu1300.org

Proudly representing the transit workers of the MTA!



SB 947 - Maryland Transit Administration Reform Act Favorable

Senate Finance Committee & Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
March 6th, 2026

ATU Local 1300 represents over 3,000 transit workers at the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA). This includes bus operators, bus mechanics, rail operators, rail maintenance workers, and more. Our members keep Maryland moving every day.

Since the cancellation of the MTA's Red Line rail project in 2015, Baltimore transit riders, elected officials, and organizations have renewed their calls for expanded Baltimore regional input and authority over the decisions made that impact their everyday transportation. Some even advocated for the full dismantling of the MTA system in Baltimore and the creation of a Baltimore Regional Transit Authority (BRTA), a move that we believed would have unintended financial and logistical consequences.

In 2023, the General Assembly passed legislation that created the Baltimore Regional Transit Commission (BRTC), a first of its kind entity for Baltimore residents to be given some direct voice in the oversight of MTA services in the area. The BRTC importantly included a seat for labor representatives of frontline MTA workers, following the model of other transit systems around the country. ATU Local 1300 was proud to participate in this process, but we often felt that the BRTC did not have sufficient authority to provide oversight or accountability. The Red Line was re-announced, but many advocates framed their ongoing concerns with one question, "If there were a Governor unfriendly to transit, what would stop them from canceling the project all over again?"

2025's HB 517 paved the way for a comprehensive review of the MTA's structure and explored ways where the administration may make governance changes to provide appropriate oversight and input for local Baltimore City transit services. The Workgroup had some limitations. It wasn't really tasked with tackling some of the complicated funding discussions necessary for any real restructure. Nevertheless, we were happy to attend every meeting as members of the public and interested stakeholders. We provided routine commentary and feedback, especially around ATU's experiences with transit reorganizations. We flagged concerns about UMTA 13(c) issues and jeopardizing federal funding if reorganizations were done poorly. We also raised concerns about how pension liabilities may be transferred. Ultimately, Local 1300 is happy with where the workgroup came to consensus. It does not really make sense, practically, to do a full reorganization or breaking apart of the MTA, though the introduction of a new Core Services Board and a Commuter Services Advisory Board will go a long way towards addressing transit rider concerns. Like the BRTC, we were happy to see the inclusion of a labor seat on the Baltimore Core Service Board.

We believe that long term funding questions for the MTA have not been resolved, but the Workgroup did a thorough job in addressing its charge. We believe the MTA Reform Act found a happy medium between modernization, addressing the concerns of a particular region versus MTA's statewide role, and avoiding common transit reorganization pitfalls. We urge the committee to issue a favorable report on this bill.

SB0947_Maryland_Transit_Administration_Reform_Act_

Uploaded by: Cecilia Plante

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY FOR SB0947 Maryland Transit Administration Reform Act

Bill Sponsor: Senator McCray

Committee: Finance

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0947 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists, and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

If the remit of the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) was to make transportation in Maryland world class, or even just good, they have failed epically. There is no easy way to get from any one city in Maryland to any other city unless you a) drive (which many people can't afford), and b) sit in traffic forever. We have no good public transportation system.

In Frederick, I live less than 1 mile from a rail station. However, it doesn't run except for rush hour on weekends, and I can only use it to get to DC, not to Baltimore, or Annapolis. And, let's not talk about the idiot move to drop the Red Line. The MTA does not make good decisions and it's time to have some oversight.

This bill, if enacted, would reform the Maryland Transit Administration--which runs Baltimore-area transit as well as statewide commuter rail and commuter bus service--by creating two new boards to oversee their decision-making. The board would have the ability to oversee budgets, approve new initiatives and policies and have approval authority, supported by at least two-thirds of the members of the board, over any decision by the Department of Transportation or the Administration to withdraw a new starts capital investment grant or another federal grant for any Baltimore core transit service area project.

All we have to say, is its past time to do this. Our members have no confidence in the MTA and we believe a lot of our money has gone to waste.

We strongly support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.

Written Testimony - SB947.pdf

Uploaded by: David Pendleton

Position: FAV

DAVID PENDLETON SR.
Chairperson/Director

TOM CAHILL
Vice Chairperson/Assistant
Director

BRITTANY GARRIS
Secretary



ANNAPOLIS OFFICE
99 Cathedral Street
Suite 201
Annapolis, MD 21401-2597

PH: (240) 271-9420
smartmdsla@yahoo.com

March 04, 2026

SB947 – MTA Reform Act

REPRESENTATIVES

CUMBERLAND

Local 600
RANDY MARTZ

BRUNSWICK

Local 631
TOM CAHILL

EDMONSTON

Local 1470
BRITTANY GARRIS

BALTIMORE

Local 610
CHRIS ALEXANDER

Local 1949
JACOB STROMAN

Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes and Members of the Senate Finance Committee

Hello, my name is David Pendleton, I am the Director of the Maryland Safety and Legislative Board for the Transportation Division of SMART. Our members in the State of Maryland are employees of CSX Transportation, Norfolk Southern, Canton Railroad, Amtrak and MARC. We are conductors, engineers, yardmasters, switchmen and utility workers. We are **the train union**.

I am here today urging a favorable report for **SB947**, the MTA Reform Act.

SB947 would create the Board of Directors for the Baltimore Core Transit Services and the Commuter Services Advisory Board for MARC Commuter Rail and the Administration's Commuter Bus Service within the MTA. Furthermore this law proposes a Constitutional Amendment allowing the Administration certain condemnation Authority and requiring MDOT to complete a technical study on the creation of a rail authority in the State.

Reforming the MTA in this manner, allowing MARC to operate more independently of the MTA will allow it to be more efficient, growth oriented and attentive to the needs of the riding public.

Our neighbor rail commuter agency, the VRE, has had similar authority for decades, while also having similar operations to MARC. According to its [CEO's report](#), in 2024, VRE's operating expenses were 1.8 million dollars under budget. This was due to its leadership being able to make decisions without unnecessary bureaucracy.

Despite ridership being only [33%](#) of pre-pandemic levels, these efficiencies were achieved without having to lay off employees or make cuts to its service. In fact, VRE has managed to expand. Starting construction on many capital improvements at several of its stations and facilities.

To date totaling \$125,000,000.00 worth of capital improvements. Many more are in the development and final planning stages totaling hundreds of millions of dollars more. Creating thousands of good paying union construction jobs.


MARC operates 3 times as many trains as the VRE, runs 7 days-a-week and transports double the amount of passengers. Imagine what MARC can do if it were free to operate in the same manner. Once this model proves to be successful, imagine the positive reforms that could be made.

A better service, more attentive to its customers' needs, while creating and maintaining thousands of good union jobs, a win-win formula for success!

Thank you for your time and consideration of our positions. SMART urges a favorable report!

Sincerely,

David Sr

David Pendleton Sr., Chairperson/Director
Maryland Safety & Legislative Board, LO-023
 SMART Transportation Division

SB0947_Maryland_Transit_Administration_Reform_Act_

Uploaded by: John Ford

Position: FAV

TESTIMONY FOR SB0947
Maryland Transit Administration Reform Act

Dear Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0947. I am a Baltimore City resident of District 46, and am writing this testimony while waiting downtown for 30 minutes while waiting for the next rush hour bus between our downtown and one of our largest residential communities. If I were working outside rush hour hours, I could be waiting at my office for an hour between buses, with no other transportation options. The MTA administration is failing Baltimore and has been for all living memory.

This bill, if enacted, would reform the Maryland Transit Administration--which runs Baltimore-area transit as well as statewide commuter rail and commuter bus service--by creating two new boards to oversee their decision-making. The board would have the ability to oversee budgets, approve new initiatives and policies and have approval authority, supported by at least two-thirds of the members of the board, over any decision by the Department of Transportation or the Administration to withdraw a new starts capital investment grant or another federal grant for any Baltimore core transit service area project.

I strongly support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.

John Preston Ford
529 S East Ave
Baltimore, MD 21224

BRTC Testimony -- Senate Finance -- SB 947 MTA Ref

Uploaded by: Jon Laria

Position: FAV



**Jon Laria Testimony for Senate Finance Committee
Hearing Date – March 6, 2026**

**Senate Bill 947 – Maryland Transit Administration Reform Act
Position – Support**

Chair Beidle and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Jon Laria, and I serve as Chair of the Baltimore Regional Transit Commission (BRTC).

The Commission strongly supports Senate Bill 947, the Maryland Transit Administration Reform Act. This bill represents the most significant modernization of Maryland transit governance in decades and faithfully implements the consensus recommendations of the Workgroup on the Reorganization of the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) established by Chapter 402 of 2025 (the “Workgroup”). It advances reforms in governance, oversight, organizational capacity, management structure, legal authority, procurement, and long-range planning, each aligned with the Workgroup’s findings and designed to create increased accountability. As the Workgroup concluded, “MTA governance reform would enhance transparency and collaboration for local governments and the public in transit decision-making.”

The BRTC itself was created in 2023 in recognition of the Baltimore region’s local stakeholders’ lack of a meaningful voice in how the region’s transit system in the region operates and serves its residents. In fact, the Workgroup identified this as its first problem statement: “The Baltimore region has lacked direct or shared control over transit and governance decisions... Enabling more local representation and authority is essential.”

SB 947 addresses this directly by establishing a strong, locally-informed governing board for MTA’s Baltimore Core Transit Service. Unlike the current BRTC, which that Board would replace, the Core Transit Service Board would be required to approve MTA’s operating and capital budget requests, as well as major service plans, policies, and initiatives. Also, withdrawal of a federal New Starts Capital Investment Grant project would require a two-thirds supermajority, an essential safeguard to preserve long-term capital commitments and avoid pre-emptive cancellation of critical projects such as the Baltimore-area Red Line, which was cancelled by a previous Governor absent any input or consensus.

The Workgroup also recognized that commuter rail and bus services operate under different conditions than Baltimore’s core transit network. To address these distinct needs, the Workgroup recommended a separate advisory body. SB 947 implements this by establishing a Commuter Services Advisory Board with a mandate to advise on service plans, policies, and budget submissions.

The Workgroup also identified inconsistencies in how senior MTA management positions were treated relative to other MDOT leadership roles. To promote coherence and accountability, it recommended aligning MTA’s personnel practices with broader departmental standards. SB 947 accomplishes this by granting the Maryland Transportation Commission authority over qualifications, appointments, compensation, and leave policies for up to twelve key MTA

management positions. This reform reduces the risk of politicized or ad hoc personnel decisions and ensures that MTA's leadership structure is consistent with statewide norms.

Beyond governance and personnel, the Workgroup highlighted several legal and procedural barriers that have long hindered MTA's ability to deliver major projects efficiently, which are included in the bill:

1. By capping MTA's tort liability at \$400,000 per claimant, the bill aligns the agency with other state entities and reduces fiscal uncertainty;
2. By granting quick-take authority through a constitutional amendment, the bill equips MTA with a critical tool for timely property acquisition, an area where delays have historically slowed major projects; and
3. By aligning MTA's procurement requirements with those of other MDOT modes, the bill allows MTA to adopt procurement practices better suited to the scale and complexity of transit infrastructure and deliver these to the public faster.

Together, these reforms remove longstanding structural impediments and directly implement the Workgroup's findings.

For these reasons, the Baltimore Regional Transit Commission strongly supports SB 947. It delivers the accountability, transparency, and regional responsiveness that Baltimore's transit system requires and deserves.

We respectfully urge a favorable report.

MGA 2026 Testimony Bill SB0947 (Maryland Transit A

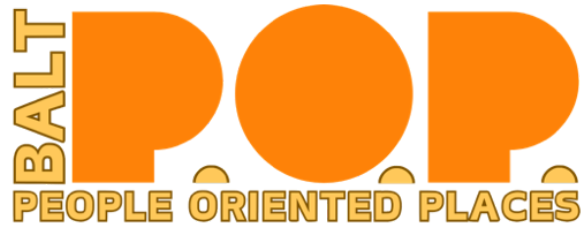
Uploaded by: Michael Scepaniak

Position: FAV

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.

BMC Testimony SB0947.pdf

Uploaded by: Mike Kelly

Position: FAV



**Testimony Presented to the Senate Finance Committee
SB0947 – Maryland Transit Administration Reform Act**

Position: Favorable

Chair and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of SB0947 the Maryland Transit Administration Reform Act. I serve as Executive Director of the Baltimore Metropolitan Council, the federally designated metropolitan planning organization for central Maryland, and as a member of the Workgroup on the Reorganization of the Maryland Transit Administration charged with examining MTA governance. After five public meetings and months of work reviewing MTA's structure, national governance models, and operational challenges, the Workgroup reached a clear conclusion: creation of a Baltimore Core Services Board is in the interest of the State of Maryland.

The Baltimore region has not experienced a major expansion of its transit system in more than 30 years. The unilateral cancellation of the Red Line in 2015 demonstrated the structural vulnerability of the current governance framework. Regardless of one's position on that project, the underlying issue is that a generational transit investment can be halted without institutional guardrails or sustained regional input. Today, transit serving Baltimore – buses, light rail, metro, and MARC – is operated by MTA, a unit within MDOT, which must balance competing statewide priorities across highways, bridges, ports, and aviation. In that structure, Baltimore's core transit system lacks a dedicated governance body focused exclusively on its performance, capital planning, and long-term stability. Among the nation's largest transit systems, Baltimore stands alone in lacking its own board.

SB947 implements the principal recommendation of the Workgroup on the Reorganization of the Maryland Transit Administration by establishing a Baltimore Core Services Board within MTA focused solely on bus, metro, and light rail services in the region. The Board would provide oversight of annual budgets and planning decisions and create guardrails to protect major capital investments from unilateral withdrawal.

The Governor would retain majority appointment authority and designate the Chair, while the Mayor of Baltimore City and surrounding county executives would appoint additional



members, including representation for riders and key stakeholders. For the first time, local elected executives in the Baltimore region would have an official voice in the operation of our major transit service. Further, our residents and the system's riders would have a public forum to track development, advocate for change and hear directly from MTA's leaders about the system that, for many, is a literal lifeline.

The proposal maintains MTA as a state agency within MDOT and preserves the Governor's ultimate budget authority. It does not create a new independent authority; rather, it is a measured reform that balances continued state control with meaningful local accountability and transparency.

Maryland's structure places transit under state control and land use under local control, making local/state coordination essential. A Baltimore Core Services Board would provide a formal governance bridge to improve transparency in resource allocation, strengthen alignment with transit-oriented development, and ensure greater continuity for long-term capital investments across administrations. The Workgroup on the Reorganization of the Maryland Transit Administration determined that this reform serves the State's interest and enhances accountability without disrupting MDOT's statewide responsibilities. Governance reform alone will not resolve every transit challenge, but it is the necessary first step.

Additionally, the Commuter Services Advisory Board established by SB0947 will establish a statewide body to guide and advise on the investments in our MARC and commuter bus system, which connects the Baltimore and Capital Regions and Western Maryland. Efficient commuter train service can harness the economies of our two largest metropolitan regions and allow suburban and rural jurisdictions to benefit from the economic development potential of transit-oriented development. The Commuter Services Advisory Board and proposed study of a Maryland rail authority will further our state's efforts to connect our residents and expand access to opportunity to all Marylanders.

I respectfully urge a favorable report and timely passage of this legislation so that Maryland can position the next gubernatorial term to deliver tangible improvements for Baltimore's transit riders and the regional economy.

Michael B. Kelly
Executive Director

SB0947-BT-FIN-FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Nina Themelis

Position: FAV



BRANDON M. SCOTT
MAYOR

*Office of Government Relations
88 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401*

SB0947

March 6, 2026

TO: Members of the Senate Finance and Budget & Taxation Committees

FROM: Nina Themelis, Director, Mayor's Office of Government Relations

RE: Senate Bill 947 – Maryland Transit Administration Reform Act

POSITION: FAVORABLE

Chairs Beidle and Guzzone, Vice Chairs Hayes and Rosapepe, and Members of the Committees, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) enthusiastically **supports** Senate Bill (SB) 947.

SB 947 provides for governance and accountability at the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) by establishing separate core service and regional transit boards with oversight and approval powers over operational decisions and long-term investment. Furthermore, the legislation would put in place reasonable safeguards for the acquisition of property through condemnation.

In Fiscal Year 2025, MTA accounted for nearly 44% of the State's 162 million transit trips. MTA accounted for more transit trips than WMATA (61.3 million) or all Locally Operated Transit Systems combined (30 million). Baltimore core transit service alone accounted for nearly 65 million transit trips. ("Baltimore core transit service" is defined by SB 947 as consisting of Baltimore-area bus, light rail, metro, and paratransit.) MTA's core transit service is a critical piece of Baltimore City's transportation network—of its roughly 570,000 residents, one out of three Baltimoreans lack access to a personal vehicle.

In light of these facts, the need for this legislation becomes apparent. SB 947 would first and foremost insulate MTA's Baltimore-region operations and capital projects from the political climate by creating a layer of oversight at the local level. The Board of Directors for Baltimore Core Transit Service would act as a decision-making body supervising core transit service—light rail, metro, and bus. It would guide long-term investments and operating decisions (such as service adjustments), ensuring that the needs of Baltimore and its peer counties are met. More critically, the existence of this core service Board would ensure that MTA's decisions are informed by the region's best interests, not politics.

In addition, the legislation would establish the Commuter Services Advisory Board, a body tasked with informing the operations and long-term expansion of Maryland Area Rail Commuter (MARC) and commuter bus service. Expanding MARC service through legislation is a long-standing area of interest for transit advocates Statewide. The system served 4.7 million riders in Fiscal Year 2025 and continues

to see rapid post-pandemic recovery, but expansion in the way of additional system miles has been limited. Whereas previous legislation considered the creation of a standalone rail agency charged with the operation of MARC service, SB 947 instead focuses on creating a forward-looking body intended to guide and advocate for the expansion of this critical rail service. This would allow MARC to remain within MTA's portfolio while providing for independent oversight which, similar to the core service Board, would be insulated from short-term political decision-making.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the creation of these independent boards would ensure that no single elected official can unilaterally decide which communities are worthy of transit investment. The 2015 cancellation of the Baltimore Red Line—a missing link in the region's transit network—was a devastating blow to the region's future. This unconscionable act of targeted disinvestment in tens of thousands of the Baltimore region's most vulnerable residents continues to be felt over ten years later. This shovel-ready project carried \$900,000,000 in federal investment, dollars which were returned to the Federal government as a result of its cancellation. While the Baltimore Red Line has since been revived, thousands of lifelong Marylanders were robbed of what was supposed to be a once-in-a-lifetime investment in the places they called home. Many of them would not live to see this vision realized. Safeguards must be put in place to guarantee that this kind of injustice is not allowed to repeat itself.

For the above stated reasons, the BCA respectfully requests a **favorable** report on SB 947.

Testimony in support of SB0947 - Maryland Transit

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

SB0947_RichardKaplowitz_FAV

03/06/2026

Richard Keith Kaplowitz

Frederick, MD 21703

TESTIMONY ON SB#0947- POSITION: FAVORABLE

Maryland Transit Administration Reform Act

TO: Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and members of the Finance Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#0947, **Maryland Transit Administration Reform Act**

This bill defines the “Baltimore Core Transit Service” as the administration’s Baltimore–area local bus; the administration’s Baltimore–area light rail; the administration’s Baltimore–area metro subway; and the administration’s Baltimore–area paratransit. It will locate this service in the Maryland Transit Administration along with a Commuter Services Advisory Board.

The Commuter Services Advisory Board consists of the following voting members, appointed by the governor:

- the secretary, or the secretary’s designee
- six members who reside in areas served by MARC or administration commuter buses
- one member who represents riders with accessibility challenges
- one member who is an employee of an administration commuter service contractor and is a member of a labor union that has a collective bargaining agreement with the commuter service contractor.

The governor shall designate the chair of the board, who shall serve as chair at the pleasure of the governor.

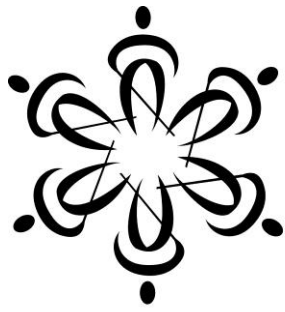
This bill will establish the Board of Directors for Baltimore Core Transit Service in the Maryland Transit Administration as a governing body with certain authority over the provision of Baltimore Core Transit Service; establishing the Commuter Services Advisory Board to provide certain oversight over and guidance for certain Administration commuter rail and bus services in the State; repealing the Baltimore Regional Transit Commission as an advisory commission for transit in the Baltimore City region; etc.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB#0947.

3-6-2026 FavorableSB0947_MTA_Reform.pdf

Uploaded by: Ronza Othman

Position: FAV



NATIONAL FEDERATION
OF THE BLIND
MARYLAND

Live the life you want.

From: Ronza Othman, President
National Federation of the Blind of Maryland
15 Charles Plaza, #3002
Baltimore, MD 21201 president@nfbmd.org

To: Senate Finance Committee

The members of the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland urge the Senate Finance Committee to give a favorable report to SB09471 - Maryland Transit Administration Reform Act.

This bill establishes the Board of Directors for Baltimore Core Transit Service, which will have the power to suggest new projects related to means of transit governed by MTA, including buses, light-rail, etc. It also begins a technical study on the creation of a prospective rail authority in the state.

Maryland has a vibrant community of blind and disabled people who face accessibility challenges related to MTA and public transportation. These include lack of fixed-route stop announcements, drivers' occasional misunderstanding of etiquette related to blind and disabled passengers, etc. We are happy to see that this bill includes on the board a position specifically allocated to someone who faces accessibility barriers. We believe the board, which includes such a position, has the capacity to make great strides in increasing the accessibility of MTA systems.

Blind people benefit from multi-modal public transportation, which enables us to choose how to arrive at different destinations. Buses and rail systems reach different places, and since we cannot drive, we must learn to use the public transportation resources available to us. While this bill only establishes a study for a prospective rail system, we are confident in the results indicating the benefits of a rail system to passengers in Baltimore.

For those reasons and others, we ask for a favorable report on SB0947. For questions, please contact me at President@nfbmd.org or at 443-426-4110.

SB947 HB1081 - 2026 - MAJ Written Testimony .pdf

Uploaded by: Alison Dodge

Position: FWA



2026 WRITTEN TESTIMONY

MARYLAND TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION REFORM ACT

SB947/HB1081 - FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

The Maryland Association for Justice (MAJ) has grave concerns regarding one provision of SB947/HB1081, which is buried in a lengthy bill that would implement a number of “reforms” for the Maryland Transit Administration. Found on Page 15, lines 5 through 7, this section of the proposed legislation would impose a \$400,000 “hard cap” on all damages (both economic and non-economic) recoverable in civil claims arising from the negligence of the MTA or its employees – even those causing serious bodily harm or death. For these reasons, MAJ seeks an amendment seeking the following:

STRIKE Page 15, lines 5 through 7.

This proposed cap has already been rejected by the General Assembly on several occasions. On at least four occasions, the House Judiciary Committee and/or Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee declined to pass focused legislation seeking to impose a cap on MTA liability: HB1130 (2007); SB832 (2019); SB32 (2021) (reported Unfavorable); SB743 (2025).

This year, the MTA has buried the proposed cap in legislation that otherwise has nothing to do with civil liability, and thus is pending before different committees than those that have rejected its prior efforts.

The MTA was founded in 1970 and holds itself out as “one of the largest multi-modal transit systems in the United States.” See mta.maryland.gov/about. It is responsible for the operation of Local Buses, Commuter Buses, Light Rail, Metro, MARC Trains, MobilityLink, and other transit modalities that provide transportation for millions of Marylanders every week.

At the time of its formation, the MTA could not be sued in tort under the doctrine of sovereign immunity. In 1977, recognizing that the MTA engages in activities that present risk of harm to the public in the event of negligence, the General Assembly waived sovereign immunity for the MTA. Md. Code, Trans. § 7-702 (1977). The General Assembly did not impose a special limit on the amount recoverable by injured victims.

(CONTINUED)

About Maryland Association for Justice

The Maryland Association for Justice (MAJ) represents over 1,250 trial attorneys throughout the state of Maryland. MAJ advocates for the preservation of the civil justice system, the protection of the rights of consumers and the education and professional development of its members.

10440 Little Patuxent Parkway, Suite 250
Columbia, MD 21044
(410) 872-0990 | FAX (410) 872-0993
info@mdforjustice.com
mdforjustice.com



2026 WRITTEN TESTIMONY

MARYLAND TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION REFORM ACT

SB947/HB1081 - FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

PAGE 2

Four years later, the General Assembly adopted the Maryland Tort Claims Act (“MTCA”), providing limited waiver of sovereign immunity in certain circumstances up to a capped amount (currently \$400,000). Md. Code, State Government § 12-101 et seq. The MTCA specifies that it “does not limit any other law that waives the sovereign immunity of the State or the units of the State government in tort.” § 12-103. In other words, the General Assembly made clear that it did not intend to impose the MTCA limits on preexisting immunity waivers, such as the waiver contained in § 7-702 of the Transportation Article. *Collier v. Nesbitt*, 79 Md. App. 729 (1989).

One of the prior unsuccessful attempts to impose a cap on MTA cases occurred in 2021 (SB32-reported unfavorable). At that time, the MTA Administrator submitted written testimony acknowledging that **“the fundamental fact that MDOT MTA, unlike any other State agency, operates modes of transportation that can pose a risk of severe personal injuries.”** https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/cmte_testimony/2021/jpr/528_01142021_91615-459.pdf.

Indeed, as a common carrier, under Maryland law, the MTA owes a heightened duty of care to its passengers – **the highest degree of care the law requires**. *Todd v. MTA*, 373 Md. 149 (2003).

Consistent with its legal obligations to provide Maryland passengers the highest duty of care, the MTA has ample insurance coverage to protect itself from liability for its negligence. The Fiscal Note specifies that the MTA carries \$10M in self-insurance, and excess coverage of \$290M. Clearly, access to insurance markets has never been unavailable or unaffordable to the MTA, so there is no compelling reason to limit its liability for potentially grievous harm.

Limiting the liability of the MTA for negligent conduct will not benefit Marylanders, but instead will simply deprive injured people of their right to full and fair compensation under the law. MAJ urges an Amendment removing this limit from SB947/HB1081.

Maryland Association for Justice urges a FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS Report on SB947/HB1081.

About Maryland Association for Justice

The Maryland Association for Justice (MAJ) represents over 1,250 trial attorneys throughout the state of Maryland. MAJ advocates for the preservation of the civil justice system, the protection of the rights of consumers and the education and professional development of its members.

10440 Little Patuxent Parkway, Suite 250
Columbia, MD 21044
(410) 872-0990 | FAX (410) 872-0993
info@mdforjustice.com
mdforjustice.com

SB 947 - STO and COM Testimony - Final.pdf

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Position: FWA



Testimony of Treasurer Dereck Davis and Comptroller Brooke Lierman

Senate Bill 947: Maryland Transit Administration Reform Act

Position: Favorable with Amendments

Senate Finance Committee

March 6, 2026

As two of the three members on the Board of Public Works (“BPW” or “Board”), the State Treasurer and the Comptroller understand the importance of oversight and transparency in the procurement process. Senate Bill 947, among other provisions, exempts Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) capital constructions projects on “existing and defined fixed guideway systems” from Division II of the State Finance and Procurement Article. In effect, this legislation would remove certain MTA capital construction projects from the Board’s jurisdiction. For the reasons discussed below, the State Treasurer’s Office and the Comptroller’s Office respectfully request that, if the Committee gives Senate Bill 947 favorable treatment, the Committee adopt an **amendment** to preserve BPW’s authority to review MTA capital construction projects.

Scope of Procurement Exemption

Senate Bill 947 does not provide a definition for the term “fixed guideway systems.” This language is important, as it impacts the type and breadth of capital expenditures that would no longer fall under the Board’s oversight if the bill is enacted. Federal law¹ defines fixed guideway systems as including “rapid rail, light rail, commuter rail, automated guideway transit, people movers, ferry boat service, fixed-guideway facilities for buses (such as bus rapid transit), and other high occupancy vehicles.” Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) [guidance](#), on the other hand, focuses only on “rail transit system[s] for Metro Subway, Light Rail, and Commuter Rail” in its discussion of fixed guideway systems. This ambiguity means that, depending on the interpretation of “fixed guideway systems” under the law, a wide range of MTA capital expenditures could be removed from the Board’s jurisdiction if the bill passes without an amendment.

¹ 49 C.F.R § 611.105.

BPW's Role in Facilitating Transparency

The Board performs the crucial function of reviewing and approving capital projects, procurement contracts, and the acquisition, use, and transfer of State assets, ensuring that major State expenditures receive an appropriate amount of scrutiny. As the General Assembly's representative on the Board and the State's chief financial officer, the State Treasurer and the Comptroller feel strongly that the Board's oversight should be maintained rather than diminished.

Recently, the Treasurer and the Comptroller testified in support of [House Bill 587](#), which provides the Board with jurisdiction to review and approve State Highway Administration (SHA) capital expenditure projects for roads, bridges, and tunnels valued at \$500,000 or more. According to MDOT, in a survey of 193 projects from 2023 and 2024, the median contract value was \$3.6 million and the average contract value was \$8 million. Among that same pool of projects, only 16 contracts – just 8% – were awarded to minority business enterprises (MBEs). While Senate Bill 947 involves different types of transportation projects, the bill would remove more contracts from the Board's purview and undercut the State Treasurer and the Comptroller's shared vision of enhanced transparency.

Balancing the Interests of Transparency and Efficiency

When agencies seek exemptions from requirements to appear before the Board, they often incorrectly state that BPW adds significant time to the review and approval process. The fiscal note for House Bill 587, for example, notes that there is a four-and-a-half-week timeline for bringing items to the Board. In fact, agencies can and often do submit their agenda items as early as 12 calendar days before a meeting date. Agencies can also submit items by noon the Monday before a meeting (that is two days prior) at their discretion. In the two days before the meeting, if supported by two members of the Board, agencies can have items "hand-carried" and included in the agenda. The extended timeframes referenced by agencies reflect MDOT's own internal timelines, not BPW requirements.

In addition, to better balance the interests of transparency and efficiency, at BPW's meeting on February 18, the Board approved proposed regulations that raise the thresholds for which contracts and contract modifications require up-front Board approval. This will free up MDOT and other agencies, who will need to bring far fewer contracts as individual agenda items once the regulatory process is complete. From the State Treasurer's and Comptroller's perspectives, MDOT can revisit its own internal timelines if there is a concern that BPW review causes too much delay to important projects.

Amendment to Preserve Board Oversight

The State Treasurer and the Comptroller respectfully request that, if the Committee gives favorable treatment to Senate Bill 947, the Committee adopt an amendment to maintain the Board's oversight of MTA capital expenditures. Such an amendment would ensure that the General Assembly and the Board have a mechanism to evaluate the merits of these procurements and discuss them at regular, public meetings. Please contact Laura Atas, Deputy Treasurer for Public Policy (latas@treasurer.state.md.us), and Stephen Harrington, Director of Government Affairs for Comptroller Lierman (SHarrington@marylandtaxes.gov), with any questions.

SB0947_FWA_CMTAandBikemore.pdf

Uploaded by: Eric Norton

Position: FWA



**Transportation
Alliance**



Bikemore

March 6, 2026

**Testimony on SB 947 –
Maryland Transit Administration Reform Act –
Finance Committee**

Position: Favorable With Amendments

The Central Maryland Transportation Alliance and Bikemore recommend amendments to SB 947, which repeals the Baltimore Regional Transit Commission (BRTC) and replaces it with a board for Baltimore Core Transit Service. The bill also establishes an advisory board to provide guidance on the MARC commuter train and Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) commuter bus services.

We support the ongoing efforts of leaders in state and local governments to reform the governance of the MTA. There appears to be broad agreement that reform is needed to address the problems of prolonged underinvestment in the state of good repair needs and the expansion and improvement plans of the MTA, as well as the ability of former Governor Larry Hogan to unilaterally cancel the Red Line project after over \$200 million taxpayer dollars had been spent, \$900 million in federal investment had nearly been secured, and countless hours of stakeholder involvement had been asked for and given.

We think the root cause of the problems is the structural mismatch between the governance and the stakeholders. The stakeholders in the performance of the Baltimore Core Transit Service are primarily the people and businesses near the MTA light rail, MTA Metro Subway and MTA local bus routes. About 38 percent of the GDP of Maryland is generated in the MTA core service area, but only about 30 percent of the state's population lives there. The other 70 percent of the state's population experience indirect benefits when the Baltimore Core Transit Service supports the state's economy, but they probably focus on investment priorities that are more visible to them when they vote and advocate. The governance of the MTA resides solely with the Governor who answers to voters statewide.

SB 947 eliminates the BRTC which is staffed by the Baltimore Metropolitan Council (BMC) and replaces it with a board that is staffed by a state government agency. The majority of the new board's seats are appointed by the Governor, and it replaces the election of a chair by the members of the committee with appointment of a chair by the Governor. These changes would replace the BRTC with a body that is under greater influence of the Governor.



**Transportation
Alliance**



Bikemore

That would not be a step in the direction of addressing the root cause of the problems that the Baltimore Core Transit Service faces. Therefore, we suggest amending Senate Bill 947 to have the new board staffed by the BMC and for its chair to be elected by its members.

We encourage a FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS report for Senate Bill 947.

SB0947 - LOSWA - MTA - MTA Reform Act.pdf

Uploaded by: Patricia Westervelt

Position: FWA

March 6, 2026

The Honorable Pam Beidle
Chair, Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Letter of Support with Amendments – Senate Bill 947 – Maryland Transit Administration Reform Act

Dear Chair Beidle and Committee members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully submits a letter in support of Senate Bill 947, with amendments.

SB 947 proposes significant structural and governance reforms within the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA), including the establishment of a Board of Directors for Baltimore Core Transit Service, the creation of a Commuter Services Advisory Board, clarification of management authorities, tort liability reform, authorization of quick take condemnation authority, and the establishment of a statutory framework intended to strengthen transit system oversight and performance.

MTA directly participated in the Workgroup on the Reorganization of the MTA through the 2025 interim session and supports SB 947. Based on the report issued by the Workgroup, SB 947 will enhance governance, strengthen system accountability, and position the agency to deliver reliable, equitable, and forward-looking transit service to Maryland residents.

MTA is grateful that SB 947 implements a fair and reasonable liability cap of \$400,000 per claimant for injuries arising from a single incident, aligning MTA with other State agencies and ensuring financial stability while maintaining accountability. As a vital public transportation provider, MTA faces unique liability challenges due to its exclusion from the Maryland Tort Claims Act.

Without a cap, the administration is exposed to unlimited liability, which places significant strain on resources that could otherwise be dedicated to enhancing transit services for Marylanders. High litigation costs, extensive legal processes, and unpredictable financial burdens can divert essential funding away from safety improvements, service enhancements, and infrastructure investments. Implementing a liability limit would allow MTA to better allocate its resources toward its core mission—providing safe, efficient, and reliable transit options to the public.

SB 947 proposes constitutional amendments and statutory changes to authorize quick-take condemnation authority for MTA projects. Quick-take authority is a critical project delivery tool used by transportation agencies nationwide to facilitate timely project implementation and

The Honorable Pam Beidle
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maintain eligibility for federal funding programs, while maintaining property owners' rights and due process to seek and be awarded fair property value.

SB 947 also includes reforms that grant MTA delegated procurement authority for capital construction projects on existing, defined, fixed guideway systems. These parity reforms in procurement, tort reform, and quick-take authority are critical and will put MTA in line with peer transit agencies and other MDOT modes, promoting cost and operational efficiencies.

MTA is working with the bill sponsor on several technical amendments for consideration to ensure consistent terminology and definitions throughout the bill, avoid conflicts with language in other state articles, and ensure compliance with federal statutes.

MTA supports SB 947 and its intent to strengthen governance and regional decision making and improve transit system performance. The requested technical amendments are intended to protect federal funding and contractual obligations, ensure clear and effective governance, support sound operational management, and enable timely and effective implementation. MTA looks forward to working with the bill sponsor and the committee on these amendments. MTA respectfully requests favorable consideration of Senate Bill 947 with these amendments.

Respectfully submitted,

Jalen Sanders
Director of Government Affairs
Maryland Transit Administration
443-810-4461

Matt Mickler
Director of Government Affairs
Maryland Department of Transportation
410-865-1090

SB947_MTA Reform_KennedyKrieger_LOI.pdf

Uploaded by: Emily Arneson

Position: INFO



March 6, 2026

The Honorable Pam Beidle
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Senate Bill 947 – Maryland Transit Administration Reform Act

Dear Chair Beidle:

The Maryland Center for Developmental Disabilities (MCDD) at Kennedy Krieger Institute is proud to be Maryland's designated federally funded University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service. The mission of the MCDD is to provide leadership that advances the inclusion of people with intellectual, developmental, and other disabilities through four core functions: interdisciplinary preservice training, continuing education and training; community services and technical assistance; research and evaluation; and product development and information dissemination. The MCDD is advised by a diverse Community Advisory Council (CAC) composed of more than 50 percent individuals with disabilities or family members and leaders from State agencies and organizations committed to improving the lives of Marylanders with disabilities.

The MCDD appreciates the inclusion of “at least one member who represents riders with accessibility challenges” in both the Baltimore Core Transit Service Board and the Commuter Services Advisory Board within Senate Bill 947.

Transportation continues to be a significant barrier for individuals with disabilities due to inaccessible public transit options, limited cross-county transportation, the financial burden associated with travel, and the inconsistency and unreliability of scheduled paratransit services.

An individual with lived experience can provide practical insight into how transit systems function in real life, identify existing barriers, and highlight challenges that may not be visible to planners or administrators. Their active participation within the community brings firsthand expertise that strengthens decision-making.

We value the meaningful inclusion of individuals with disabilities as this bill and its goals advance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maureen van Stone".

Maureen van Stone, Esq., MS
Assistant Vice President & Director
Maryland Center for Developmental Disabilities
Kennedy Krieger Institute