



# POSITION STATEMENT

## TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE HOUSE ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

### HOUSE BILL 546 – MARYLAND TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION OVERSIGHT AND PLANNING BOARD

**DONALD C. FRY  
PRESIDENT & CEO  
GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE**

#### **POSITION: Support**

The Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) is a non-partisan, independent, regional business advocacy organization comprised of hundreds of businesses -- large, medium and small -- educational institutions, nonprofit organizations and foundations located in Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, and Howard counties as well as Baltimore City. The GBC is a 60-year-old, private-sector membership organization with a rich legacy of working with government to find solutions to problems that negatively affect our competitiveness and viability. It is an organization that prides itself on advocating for changes in public policies that strengthen the business climate while improving the quality of life in the region.

#### **The Greater Baltimore Committee supports House Bill 546 – Maryland Transit Administration Oversight and Planning Board.**

Public transit is a service that millions of Marylanders across the state depend on – nearly 114 million riders took advantage of public transit in FY2014, the vast majority of them riding buses. For individuals without personal modes of transportation, the transit system is critically important for getting to places such as work, school, and home. Aside from being a very necessary public service, transit also provides a multitude of environmental and quality-of-life benefits, including reducing global warming and helping to alleviate some of the worst traffic in the nation.

Despite the clear need for a high-quality transit, Maryland does not currently have a system that can adequately handle the demand for a reliable, responsive system. In the first six months of 2014, on average buses were on time only 81% of the time.

All of the state's public transit is overseen by the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA), a division of the Maryland Department of Transportation. As currently operated, the MTA does not comply with any reporting or planning requirements related to service quality that is specifically responsive to customer feedback. When busses come late or not at all, or when MARC trains or other MTA services break down, Marylanders have no recourse against the agency and are provided with no guarantees of future improvements. Aside from being extremely inconvenient, this lack of reliability is also detrimental with regards to encouraging people to take transit instead of driving when they have the option.

House Bill 546 would create an Oversight and Planning Board for the MTA. This new board would be comprised of government, business, labor, and private citizens, as well other members appointed by the Governor. The board would be charged with reviewing or initiating policies to improve service based on customer feedback, approving an operating plan and specific policies related to service quality, and other functions related to service quality, public safety and marketing. In short, this board would ensure that the MTA is held to a higher standard of quality.

The GBC believes this legislation would serve its intended purpose – to ensure that Maryland's transit system is a dependable, high-quality system that is capable of supporting the needs of our growing economy.

**For the reasons stated above, the Greater Baltimore Committee urges a favorable report of House Bill 546.**

**GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE**

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