



POSITION STATEMENT

HOUSE BILL 1236 -- TRANSIT - MARYLAND AREA REGIONAL COMMUTER TRAIN - EXPANSION OF SERVICE

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GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE**

The Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) is concerned with the timing of House Bill 1236 – Transit- Maryland Area Regional Commuter Train- Expansion of Service. This bill would require the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) to:

“...engage in good faith negotiations with the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and the appropriate railroad companies **to reach a written agreement** on a pilot program to establish Maryland Area Regional Commuter train service between Union Station in the District of Columbia and Alexandria Station in the Commonwealth of Virginia.”

Last month, the GBC testified before the House Appropriations Committee in support of House Bill 368 – the Transit Safety and Investment Act. This legislation would set a minimum capital funding level for the MTA of \$500 million each year for FY2022-2027 and prohibit reductions to MTA’s operating funding levels during the same time period. This minimum capital funding level would require an estimated \$120 million more per year in capital funding to the MTA. This is analogous to the funding agreement that the Maryland General Assembly passed in the 2018 Session to guarantee funding levels for the Washington Metropolitan Transit Administration (WMATA).

The legislation was introduced following the release in July 2019 of the MTA’s Capital Needs Inventory report that identified \$4.6 billion in capital needs over the next ten years to *maintain the current system in a state of good repair*, \$2 billion of which was unfunded.

Following that report, it was incredulous to then see \$303 million in cuts to MTA’s capital program in the FY2020-2025 Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP).

The GBC strongly supports House Bill 368 as a necessary step to ensure the system preservation of existing transit service and that MTA is adequately funded to provide safe and continuous operations of the transit system. House Bill 368 is pending action by the House Appropriations Committee.

Unlike House Bill 368, which is designed to provide the MTA with the adequate funding to maintain a state of good repair and prevent further breakdowns and service disruption, House Bill 1236 represents an expansion of service.

The GBC is concerned about the timing of this legislation as it strongly believes that system preservation should be the top priority of the MTA. An emphasis on system preservation is even more pressing in light of the reduction of the MTA capital budget in the current CTP while a \$2 billion shortfall exists to maintain the current system in a state of good repair.

One of the GBC’s 2020 Legislative Priorities calls for a “balanced transportation policy and funding priorities...and equitable investments in systems across regions, modes, and communities.”

GREATER BALTIMORE COMMITTEE

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While we appreciate that some may suggest the need to expand MARC service to the District of Columbia and Virginia, should House Bill 1236 be enacted it would further widen the gap between the state's investment in transit among the state's two metropolitan regions by having one region experience expanded service while the other does not have its current system preservation needs adequately funded.

Despite this concern, should the Committee be inclined to pass HB 1236, the GBC recommends that the bill be amended as follows:

- Provide for a feasibility study, rather than a written agreement, of the service expansion across jurisdictions with refined cost projections and
- Include a feasibility or project planning study of equal significance in the Greater Baltimore region, such as a feasibility or project planning study of:
 - (1) Advancing the planning and construction of the Bayview MARC Station that includes analysis of innovative financing concepts;
 - (2) Design and feasibility analysis to advance the Penn-Camden Connector which would enable Penn Line service into Downtown Baltimore and provide access to the new maintenance and storage facility under development in Riverside;
 - (3) Requirement to advance multijurisdictional conversations to close the nearly 30-mile gap in commuter rail service between Perryville, Maryland and Newark, Delaware.

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 65-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.