



Transportation Association of Maryland

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Bill: Senate Bill 20: Locally Operated Transit Systems - Mandatory Funding - Inflation Adjustment (Local Transit Sustainability Act)

Position: SUPPORT

Dear Chair Guzzone, Vice-Chair Rosapape, and Members of the Committee:

The Locally Operated Transit Systems, or as we call it, “LOTS”, operate in the local jurisdictions you represent and have existed in some form for over 40 years. They operate in every jurisdiction in our state, and provide nearly 64,000 trips every single day. However, these transit operations have been flat funded or reduced in funding for almost the past decade, despite increased cost of vehicles, salaries, gas, etc.

Since January 2020, the price index for Truck and Bus bodies has risen by over 34%, according to the Federal Reserve). According to the same source, diesel fuel is more than 36% more expensive. During the same five year period, the state of Maryland has actually decreased its support to LOTS by cutting its state match for operating funding by 20%.

Maintaining this transit is critical for our communities and are not just for route-based bus service. It also goes towards curb –to–curb service for:

- Elderly low-to-moderate income seniors;
- Non-elderly persons with disabilities; and
- Dialysis and cancer patients needing to access treatment.

MTA surveys of Local Transit indicate that in many parts of Maryland, the LOTS are either unable to provide all the medical trips requested, are turning away other types of trips to do so, and/or are spending considerable local funding to address the needs for medical and other transportation services in our communities.

MDOT has concluded in a 2021 study that LOTS service levels are constrained by current funding levels and that LOTS has been unable to fund all the current needs in our communities. The General Assembly passed a bill last year to sustain the funding for LOTS after it was originally proposed to be cut by about 40% this time last year but this amount was the same insufficient amount that has been provided to LOTS for about a decade.

Across local transit, the study is the same. The proportion of operating budget support provided by the state government has declined. In many agencies, the relative proportion of state funding is less than half of what it was 10 years ago. This shows that our local and federal partners have indeed worked to pick up the slack left by state efforts – but those efforts and resources are finite.



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At its most basic, tying state support to local transit to observed increased in the rate of cost inflation allows for the maintenance of service. However, those additional resources, often bolstered by local and federal spending, can mean:

- Implementing Sunday service
- Decreasing headways (time between bus arrivals) to 30 or 15 minutes in certain routes)
- Improving bus stop amenities and accessibility
- Expanding service to underserved areas of the community

By supporting this bill, you affirm our commitment to enhancing mobility, promoting equity, and fostering economic prosperity in communities across the state. For these reasons, we respectfully request a favorable report.

Sincerely,

John Duklewski
Executive Director, Transportation Association of Maryland