



Transportation Association of Maryland

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Bill: House Bill 1344: Maryland Transit Administration – Locally Operated Transit Systems – Study

Position: SUPPORT

Dear Chair Korman, Vice-Chair Guyton, and Members of the Committee:

The Transportation Association of Maryland represents every local transit agency in our state from Garrett County to Town of Ocean City, and recognizes and affirms the key principle of helping Marylanders everywhere have access to the life-enhancing and life-preserving mobility provided by adequate public transportation. Many Marylanders, especially elderly citizens and persons with disabilities rely upon public transit options as their primary means of accessing all the necessities of life – work, medical care, and all the thousand incidental trips without which life cannot be sustained.

The Locally Operated Transit Systems, or “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%.

The trips provided by our members are 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.

Reports in previous years have indicated that 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.

We believe that HB 1344 will show that the proportion of budget support provided by the state government has declined in recent years, to the detriment of local service. However, we and other transit advocates lack this critical data in helping to make the case. We also are encouraged by the bill’s provisions for reporting on best practices in other states for providing necessary local transit funding. For these reasons, among many others, we respectfully urge a favorable report on HB 1344.

Sincerely,

John Duklewski
Executive Director, Transportation Association of Maryland