

Transportation Association of Maryland *2024 Legislative Agenda*

4 PRIORITY ISSUES

1. Preservation of Local Transit Funding

Despite already being cut by 20% in FY 21 in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, MDOT's FY24-FY29 Consolidated Transportation Program proposes cutting aid to local transit by a further \$52.7 Million, a 40% reduction. This represents a dangerous and inequitable abandonment of state support for local transit over the past five years, which will have serious effects on the viability of local transit in Maryland. State funding for local transit is critical to maintaining local service, including the critical paratransit operations that Marylanders' rely on to access jobs, medical care, and basic quality of life. The preservation of historic levels of state transit funding is critical in the coming session.

2. Driver Assault Legislation

Assaults on public transit operators has increased significantly, especially during the pandemic. The Federal Transit Administration data shows that operator assaults per trip have increased fourfold from 2009 to 2020. In 2023, SB 693 / HB 1049 passed, requiring MDOT MTA to submit an annual report on assaults on Maryland public transit operators by December 1 each year. We look forward to this report and taking additional steps to protect operators and their passengers.

3. Senior Rides

This program, which relies on volunteer drivers to transport over 26,000 low and moderate-income seniors per year, was funded at a flat level (\$187,000) since FY 2014 until TAM secured a \$50,000 increase for the FY 24 year. We request that this funding be set at a level sufficient to fully fund all current grantees, **\$500,000**. The cost-per-trip of this program is far lower than any other form of publicly supported transportation, including public transportation, taxi vouchers, and other programs (under \$20 per trip in FY 23). TAM requests this funding be further enhanced. ***The increased funding already gained will result in over 8,000 additional trips in FY 24.*** Regrettably, MDOT plans to cut this funding by 40% in their proposed funding levels, which would result in the closure or curtailment of many of Maryland's volunteer-based transit programs.

4. Unrealistic Transition Plans

TAM recognizes the importance of sustainable and efficient public transportation systems. While we share the goal of reducing emissions, we oppose state mandates that require local transit agencies to purchase zero-emission vehicles as a one-size-fits-all solution on a strict deadline. The transition to zero-emission vehicles is a commendable long-term objective, but it must be carried out with careful consideration for the unique circumstances and challenges faced by agencies across our state. Mandates will place an undue financial burden on already cash-strapped agencies and compromise the quality and accessibility of public transportation services for communities. We advocate for a more flexible and realistic approach, allowing transit agencies to flexibly transition to zero-emission vehicles as part of a well-thought-out, adequately resourced, and locally tailored strategy.



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The Transportation Association of Maryland (TAM) is a statewide nonprofit organization with over 100 community transportation, human service, and vendor members. We represent community transportation in every county and jurisdiction in the State of Maryland. As a whole, we are dedicated to improving mobility for all of Maryland's citizens.

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