



## Transportation and Climate Alignment Act (“TCA”)

Delegate Mark Edelson (HB 836) and Senator Clarence Lam (SB 681)



We need a strong transportation system that cuts harmful air and climate pollution and enables every Marylander to equitably and reliably access jobs, housing, education, food, healthcare, and recreation no matter where they live. The transportation sector continues to be the largest source of climate pollution in the state, and Maryland has the [second worst average commuting time](#) in the nation.

When Maryland plans future transportation projects, they should **align with the state’s goals to cut greenhouse gas emissions 60% by 2031 and the total miles cars and trucks travel on our roads** (known as Vehicle Miles Traveled) in order to protect our environment, mitigate traffic congestion, and improve mobility.

### What Would This Bill Do?

The bill would require the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) and regional transportation planning agencies to measure and mitigate any increases in climate pollution and Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) caused by planned highway expansion projects over \$10 million. Mitigation actions could include improving and expanding public transit, creating protected bike infrastructure, expanding broadband access, and locating jobs and amenities near where people live and near transit. This will help expand transportation choices while reducing climate pollution.

[Colorado](#) and [Minnesota](#) passed similar legislation in 2021 and 2023, respectively. Now Maryland has an opportunity to serve as a national leader in this growing movement by building off their best practices and bringing transportation planning into alignment with our climate goals. Maryland’s new [Climate Pollution Reduction Plan](#) indicates that reducing VMT is necessary for the state to meet its climate targets. The plan includes a goal to reduce per capita VMT 20% by 2050, which the Rocky Mountain Institute finds would reduce climate pollution by [59 Million Metric Tons](#), which is the same as preventing the annual emissions of over 120 natural gas power plants.

The bill would help comply with the Federal Highway Administration’s new greenhouse gas performance standard which requires state and regional transportation agencies to set goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector.

## Did you know?

- According to a [2023 survey](#) by the National Association of Realtors, 79% of U.S. residents said being within an easy walk of shops, parks, and other destinations is very/somewhat important and 65% said having public transport nearby is very/somewhat important.
- A 2020 [report](#) by Transportation For America and Smart Growth America found that **the climate benefits of more fuel efficient cars were undermined by increases in driving**. The report indicated that between 2009 and 2017, overall fuel efficiency for cars in the U.S. increased but was offset by increases in driving per capita. Overall, transportation emissions grew by 22%.
- According to an [analysis](#) by the Union of Concerned Scientists, Latinos and African Americans are exposed to 11% and 12% higher particulate matter concentrations from vehicle pollution respectively - compared to the average Maryland resident.

## Benefits of investing in transit, cycling, pedestrian infrastructure & supportive land use

**Reduces climate and air pollution.** Vehicles make up the largest source of climate pollution from the transportation sector in the state. In addition, recent modeling commissioned by the [Sierra Club](#) found that vehicles on the road contribute to nearly 16% of the federal air quality limits for ozone. Strategies that help reduce vehicle trips will cut this pollution.

**Makes smart use of limited infrastructure dollars.** Effective multimodal transportation investments that serve existing MD communities can reduce VMT and GHG and connect people to jobs. This makes a better use of infrastructure dollars compared to expensive new highways, widening projects and interchanges built for speculative development.

**Saves consumers money.** The average Maryland household would save \$500 to \$800 a year from new, affordable transportation choices and shorter automobile trips†. If new access to transit or biking networks allows a household to downsize from two vehicles to one, these savings would balloon to up to \$13,000 a year according to a [2023 report](#) from the American Public Transportation Association.

**Improves our health.** A [2019 report](#) by Rails to Trails found that the health savings from increased physical activity due to active transportation (e.g., cycling, walking) is currently \$20 billion annually.

**Create jobs.** Every \$1 billion invested in public transportation supports and creates approximately 50,000 jobs. According to a [study](#) by the Political Economy Research Institute, bicycle-only projects created more jobs compared to road-only projects (11.41 jobs vs. 7.75 jobs per \$1 million invested).

**Increased safety.** Traveling by public transportation is [10 times safer per mile](#) than traveling by car. Access to safe transportation choices would reduce automobile crashes in Maryland and prevent on average 110 crash fatalities per year in Maryland†.

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