



Maryland bill tackles climate pollution from transportation by expanding affordable, clean options

Media contact:

Bill Pugh, Coalition for Smarter Growth
 202-821-3226
 bill@smartergrowth.net

For immediate release

January 31, 2024

This week, Maryland Delegate Mark Edelson (46th District) and Senator Clarence Lam (12th District) introduced the **Transportation and Climate Alignment Act (TCA)**, bills [HB 836](#) and [SB 681](#). The legislation will help expand people’s transportation choices while reducing climate pollution from Maryland’s largest source of greenhouse gas emissions.

“For Maryland to achieve its landmark Climate Solutions Now goals, transportation projects must align with the state’s goals to cut climate pollution 60% by 2031 and reduce the miles that residents have to travel, which in turn fosters more affordable and convenient options to reach jobs and daily activities,” said Delegate Mark Edelson, bill sponsor in the House.

“Transportation is Maryland’s largest source of climate pollution. We need transparency to show whether the state’s planned transportation investments are helping achieve our climate goal or making it harder and more expensive by putting more traffic on our roads. The bill would provide a flexible toolkit to address travel needs while ensuring that projects don’t lead to more pollution in our communities,” said Senator Clarence Lam, bill sponsor in the Senate.

The TCA would require the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) and regional transportation planning agencies to measure and mitigate any increases in climate pollution and vehicle travel caused by proposed highway expansion projects over \$10 million.

Mitigation steps could include, but are not limited to, improving and expanding public transit, creating protected bike infrastructure, expanding broadband access, and locating jobs and amenities near where people live and near transit. These options help expand people's transportation choices while reducing climate pollution. Public involvement conducted for the 2050 Maryland Transportation Plan found that transit was the top need followed by pedestrian and bicycling improvements.

[Preliminary analysis](#) by RMI shows the additional benefits of Maryland achieving a transportation system that requires less driving. In addition to the climate benefits, over thirty years, Maryland would see 5,000 fewer deaths from traffic crashes, \$15,000 in household savings per family, cleaner air resulting in 2,000 fewer deaths, and more walking and biking resulting in 40,000 fewer deaths from inactivity and chronic disease.

"Accelerating electric vehicles is important, but only part of the solution for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. This legislation would give Maryland residents and workers more transportation choices and shorter travel distances for jobs and services, all of which reduce emissions and improve the air quality for all Marylanders. Reducing pollution from the transportation sector is a win-win for Maryland," said Lindsey Mendelson of the Sierra Club Maryland Chapter.

"People in the Baltimore region could see benefits like more frequent bus service, safer streets, new light rail vehicles or other clean ways to get around as a result of this legislation" said Brian O'Malley, Central Maryland Transportation Alliance.

"Maryland's residents and its economy depend on a robust public transportation network. Likewise, Maryland workers can save over \$13,000 per year by taking public transit instead of driving. Under the TCA, state agencies would consider climate-friendly public transit as an integral component for many of Maryland's road and highway projects. Our members prove every day that mass transit is both a necessary agenda item for the working class and the climate," said Matt Girardi, Amalgamated Transit Union, Local 689.

"No matter where you're from in the state, we are all impacted by vehicle exhaust from cars and trucks. This pollution doesn't just damage our health, it contributes to worsening climate impacts—killer heat, flooding, and severe storms. People of color and low-income communities are the most vulnerable to these harms. The TCA ensures that the state's major road and highway expansion projects don't continue to worsen climate emissions and other air pollution, and instead include cleaner and more affordable transportation options that promote thriving communities for all—such as public transit and safer, more convenient walking and biking," said Kevin Shen, Union of Concerned Scientists.

"With Maryland's limited transportation funds, the TCA can help the state re-evaluate or mitigate the impacts from highway expansion projects that undermine the state's investments to fight climate change and that increase traffic and sprawl. Decades of studies show that bigger highways don't achieve their stated goals due to [induced demand](#). On average each 1%

increase in highway capacity in a community leads to a 1% increase in driving,” said Bill Pugh, Coalition for Smarter Growth.

Fifteen individual organizations and the Transform Maryland Transportation Coalition are partnering to support the legislation. These are:

- Transform Maryland Transportation Coalition
- Sierra Club Maryland Chapter
- Central Maryland Transportation Alliance
- Ceres
- Chesapeake Climate Action Network
- Climate Communications Coalition
- Coalition for Smarter Growth
- Downtown Residents Advocacy Network
- Environment Maryland
- League of Women Voters of Maryland
- Maryland League of Conservation Voters
- Maryland Public Interest Research Group
- Strong Towns Baltimore
- Union of Concerned Scientists
- Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland
- Washington Area Bicyclist Association

For more information, visit: <https://tmtcoalition.org/tca>

###