

September 15, 2020

Contact: Kristen Harbeson, kharbeson@mdlcv.org and cell 410-952-8100

Re: Budget Cuts to the Maryland Transportation Administration

AN OPEN LETTER TO GOVERNOR LARRY HOGAN, MARYLAND TRANSPORTATION SECRETARY GREG SLATER, AND MARYLAND TRANSIT ADMINISTRATOR KEVIN QUINN:

Last week, the Maryland Department of Transportation and Maryland Transit Administration announced major cuts to the MTA system, including cutting bus service by 20%, reducing MARC, commuter local bus, and paratransit service, and cutting the MTA's already strained six year capital budget for critical safety needs by \$150 million. We, the undersigned, urge rejection of these cuts, which would be devastating to many Marylanders that live in low-income communities, communities of color, and people with disabilities.

Rather than take steps to relieve the strain of a veritable tsunami of challenges to Maryland's most vulnerable communities, MTA's plan would exacerbate residents' difficulties and hobble the state's recovery.

TransitCenter found that 40% of transit commuters in Baltimore City and 35% of transit riders in the state work in essential job sectors, with hospital and health care workers being the largest share of riders. A large number of essential workers – nurses, grocery store workers, child care professionals, nursing care staff, and so many more – rely on public transit to get to their jobs. The proposed cuts would make it harder for these vital workers to get to their jobs, which would threaten their employment and exacerbate the devastation the pandemic has wrought to our economy. A shortage of these critical workers will also add strain to a healthcare system that is already spread too thin.

Maryland should be investing in more public transportation, not less. We should be increasing access to job centers from the communities most in need, not cutting it. We should be prioritizing cleaner transportation alternatives that reduce pollution and the health conditions that make marginalized communities especially vulnerable to the impacts of coronavirus and other respiratory illnesses like asthma. Vehicle emissions also create NOx that ultimately contributes roughly one-third of the nitrogen pollution to the region's rivers, streams, and the Chesapeake Bay.

Among the problematic cuts to service, the proposed changes eliminate any route from Baltimore City (the jurisdiction with the highest reliance on public transportation) to Annapolis. Even in its current state, public transit to Annapolis is extremely limited, but at least it was available and provided mobility services. With the cuts, Annapolis would become inaccessible by public transportation, limiting the ability of many Marylanders to participate in our state's Democracy. Public participation is always essential to a free and fair government, but never more so than in a crisis.

In reference to Maryland's essential workers, the Maryland Transit Caucus has stated in their letter to the administration following the proposed cuts: *We rely on them. They rely on MTA.* We call on the administration to take immediate action. Funding from the Transportation Trust Fund should be allocated to public transit that benefits all Marylanders, rather than to highway expansion and construction projects that benefit only the wealthiest.

Signed,

1. Maryland League of Conservation Voters
2. Maryland Sierra Club
3. Common Cause Maryland
4. Clean Water Action
5. Climate Law & Policy Project
6. Safe Skies Maryland
7. Maryland Legislative Coalition
8. Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition
9. Maryland Campaign for Human Rights
10. Coalition for Smarter Growth
11. Baltimore Transit Equity Coalition
12. Transit Choices
13. Central Maryland Transportation Alliance
14. Maryland United for Peace and Justice
15. Sunrise Movement Baltimore
16. League of Women Voters Maryland
17. Maryland Nonprofits
18. Nuclear Information and Resource Service
19. Labor Network for Sustainability
20. Family League of Baltimore
21. Bikemore
22. Eastern Shore Land Conservancy
23. Maryland Center on Economic Policy
24. Job Opportunities Task Force
25. NAACP Maryland State Conference
26. Public Justice Center
27. Our Revolution Maryland
28. Indivisible Baltimore
29. Indivisible Howard County
30. Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility
31. Echotopia, LLC
32. Maryland Conservation Council
33. Ji'Aire's Workgroup
34. Indivisible Towson
35. ATU Local 1300
36. Food and Water Watch Action
37. Chesapeake Bay Foundation
38. Disability Rights Maryland
39. Consumer Advocates for Ride Services
40. Progressive Maryland
41. Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Mary
42. Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) - Baltimore
43. WISE Maryland
44. Maryland Climate Justice WIng
45. Takoma Park Mobilization Environment Committee
46. Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake
47. Accessible Resources for Independence
48. League for People with Disabilities
49. Climate X-Change Maryland
50. The Nature Conservancy - Maryland/DC Chapter
51. Saltzberg Consulting
52. Chesapeake Climate Action Network
53. Sunrise Howard County
54. Baltimore 350
55. The Parent and Community Advisory Board, Baltimore City Public Schools
56. Sunrise Rockville
57. Marylanders for Patient Rights
58. Bus Workgroup 14
59. South Baltimore Community Land Trust
60. Free Your Voice
61. Represent Maryland
62. Green Team at St. Vincent de Paul Church, Baltimore
63. Baltimore People's Climate Movement
64. The Climate Reality Project: Baltimore Chapter