



COALITION FOR SMARTER GROWTH

April 4, 2011

The Honorable Maggie McIntosh, Chair
House Environmental Matters Committee
6 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401, fax: 410-841-3509

RE: Support for Senate Bill 623: Maryland Department of Transportation – Transit Review and Evaluation

Dear Chair McIntosh:

Please accept these comments on behalf of the Coalition for Smarter Growth. My organization works to ensure that transportation and development decisions in the Washington, D.C., region, including the Maryland suburbs, accommodate growth while revitalizing communities, providing more housing and travel choices, and conserving our natural and historic areas.

We would like to express our strong support for SB 623. This bill will help the state and local transit and transportation agencies save limited funds while providing better transit service. By moving buses faster (or light rail vehicles), transit agencies can simultaneously save money, improve service for passengers, and attract new riders and fares. This bill would direct MDOT to establish the tools needed to assess when and where to deploy roadway operational improvements for transit vehicles so that we can take full advantage of efficiencies and make the most of existing transit service. Road-running transit service can realize cost savings, travel time reductions, and reliability improvements through a suite of measures that can be applied incrementally or all at once.

Other parts of the country have taken advantage of these tools to great effect. The Washington, D.C. metropolitan region is poised to deploy many cost-saving and service improvement measures due to WMATA's effort with the Bus Priority Corridors Network planning and implementation over the last two years. This effort has paid off with the winning of a competitive federal TIGER grant which is bringing millions of dollars to Prince George's and Montgomery Counties. Through MDOT's cooperation to help implement the TIGER grant in suburban Maryland Bus Priority Corridors, the State will gain experience that can be used to expand such benefits to other parts of the state. The TIGER grant will provide funding to implement many of these transit-priority measures. SB 623 leverages this federal grant for broader application, a logical next step for MDOT.

Inefficient management of roadways is wasting limited and shrinking resources that could be providing better travel services to more Maryland residents. Given the budget challenges faced by WMATA and all levels of government, this bill is especially important to provide new cost savings. We recommend that MDOT offer the rapid deployment of these cost-saving measures in exchange for reducing the Maryland share of the WMATA budget deficit and allow the state to retain bus service that could be proposed to be cut.

Page Two
Support SB 623
Coalition for Smarter Growth

We ask for the committee's favorable report on this important bill. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cheryl Cort', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Cheryl Cort
Policy Director