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Committee: Environment and Transportation

Testimony on: HB 141 – “Equity in Transportation Sector - Guidelines and Analyses”

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: January 27, 2022

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club supports the principles and intent of HB 141, which would require that the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) make achieving equity in the state transportation system a primary goal in its planning and decision making. MDOT would be required to collect and analyze data on racial and ethnic disparities in transportation and how persons with disabilities are impacted. Transit equity and cost-benefit analyses would need to be completed before any significant service change was proposed, and compliance would be required with the Federal Transit Administration’s Title VI Requirements and Guidelines for Federal Transit Administration recipients. The bill also would create an independent Commission on Transportation Equity to assist in the development of equitable transportation policies.

We believe it is critical that MDOT develop policies and performance measures to ensure that the state transportation system is equitable, and that it specifically evaluate how the transportation system can address climate change, environmental justice, the needs of persons with disabilities, and racial disparities in employment, education, housing, and health.

We strongly support transportation policies that take steps to dismantle systemic racism and reverse practices that place a disproportionate burden on low-income and minority communities. The building of highways through Black and Brown communities and the cancellation of Baltimore’s Red Line represent government policies that perpetuated racial and income inequities.

A change of direction is needed, and HB 141 could help bring about the equity in transportation that is sorely lacking at the present time. We urge a favorable report on this bill.

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Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America’s oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.