

SB 81 - Southern Maryland Rapid Transit Project- Requirements and Funding

Budget and Taxation

January 20, 2021

Position: SUPPORT

The 450,000 residents of Prince George's, Charles, and St. Mary's counties who live in the MD5-US301 corridor need the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) to promptly undertake all steps necessary to complete the design, engineering, and NEPA process for the Southern Maryland Rapid Transit Project – high-capacity, fixed-route transit service from the Branch Avenue Metrorail Station to White Plains. SB 81 would require the State to complete this process and commit the necessary funding, estimated at \$27 million over the next two to three years.

In the past 25 years, the State has completed five major studies on the feasibility, alignment, projected ridership, and economic impact of high-capacity, fixed-route transit service to Southern Maryland. The conclusions of every study have repeatedly confirmed the urgent and growing need. Southern Maryland residents suffer through one of the longest daily commutes in the country. Between Charles and St. Mary's counties, there are an estimated 46,000 commuters with a combined ten million hours of lost productivity, family time, and leisure time as a result of excessive commute times.

Additionally, the transportation sector is Maryland's largest generator of greenhouse gases and is a major source of airborne nitrogen pollution that harms water quality.. The impacts of climate change are being experienced throughout Maryland, especially on the Eastern Shore where sea level rise and subsidence are resulting in considerable land loss.

Investing in transit and providing Marylanders with alternatives to driving is critical to achieving the State's statutory goal of a 40% reduction in emissions by 2030. Notably, the reduction in emissions will not just be limited to commuters choosing transit over driving. The Southern Maryland Rapid Transit Project will foster walkable, mixed-use, transit-oriented development that allows residents to live car-free or car-light – an attractive option for millennials, seniors, and many others.

The Southern Maryland Rapid Transit project will improve quality of life for Southern Maryland residents, promote economic development consistent with smart growth, and advance the State's emissions reduction goals. We respectfully request your support for SB 81.

Contacts: Elly Colmers Cowan, Preservation Maryland ecowan@presmd.org