



7338 Baltimore Ave
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College Park, MD 20740

Committee: Finance

Testimony on: SB 242 – “Transportation – I-270 Commuter Bus Route Study

Position: Support

Hearing Date: February 3, 2021

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club strongly supports the amended version of SB 242, which would require the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) to establish a commuter bus line between Montgomery County and Northern Virginia that would run weekdays during peak morning and late afternoon commuting hours.

The bus line would travel along I-270 and I-495 and include the following stops: Shady Grove Metro in Montgomery County, Tysons in Virginia and ideally additional transit stops along that corridor which were identified as population and job centers in the “I-495 American Legion Bridge Transit/TDM Study” recently completed by MDOT and the Virginia Department of Transportation in cooperation with a number of other organizations.

Transportation is now the primary contributor to climate-damaging greenhouse gas and other health-damaging emissions in our state, so getting individuals out of their cars and onto transit would be a positive development for our environment and residents’ health, as well as an effective way to reduce traffic congestion. Transit also serves residents needing to get to and from work and other locations who don’t own or have access to a car.

Both MDOT and VDOT have said that bus transit would be able to travel at no extra cost in new toll lanes that have been proposed for I-495 on both sides of the American Legion Bridge. While that is a noteworthy promise, we believe full implementation of transit alternatives along I-495 and I-270 described in the previously mentioned transit study would, if allowed to run in a dedicated lane in each direction, reduce traffic congestion along I-495 and I-270 sufficiently to actually eliminate the justification for expanding those highways.

In summary, having a commuter bus running between Shady Grove Metro in Montgomery County and Tysons in Virginia should be implemented to lessen air pollution, reduce congestion on I-270 and I-495, and serve the many residents needing to travel between Montgomery County and Northern Virginia who don’t own a car. We urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on this legislation.

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Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America’s oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 75,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.