



Written Testimony Presented to the Environment and Transportation Committee

Hearing Date – January 30, 2025

House Bill 80 -- Land Use – Transit Oriented Development – Alterations

Position – Support with Amendments

Chair Korman and members of the Committee, I am Jon Laria, testifying today in my role as Chair of the Baltimore Regional Transit Commission (BRTC).

The BRTC was created by the Maryland General Assembly to provide oversight and advocacy for the Baltimore regional transit system, which is operated by the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA), and to ensure that diverse stakeholder perspectives are represented in agency decisions. The BRTC includes representatives from local government, transportation, industry, business, transit riders, transit advocates, labor, and the Moore-Miller Administration.

The BRTC is focused not only on transit itself, but also on the broader economic opportunities that transit provides, promotes, and creates. HB 80 is intended to help leverage Maryland's investments in public transit by promoting Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) at or near locations where the State has invested or will invest in transit facilities and infrastructure. As you know, TOD capitalizes on the economic and social benefits of growth concentrated around such public transit hubs.

The Moore-Miller Administration and the General Assembly have previously taken important steps to encourage TOD, including in the 2024 legislative session, but more can and should be done.

HB 80 would exempt special taxes for TOD from county tax limitations and bond caps; permit local jurisdictions to pool together special taxing districts to support the funding and financing of corridor-level TOD initiatives; amend existing State programs to support early-stage planning efforts and financing of TOD projects; and clarify that state-approved TODs are exempt from state procurement law. HB 80 would also prohibit certain local zoning restrictions on TOD projects, under specified conditions. In short, HB 80 would enable continued State commitment to TOD and its many benefits.

Importantly, I am sensitive to the desires and prerogatives of local governments with respect to local land use, and trust that the State and Maryland's local governments will find a balance between the State's legitimate and laudable interest in promoting TOD, and local government's longstanding role in land use control. MDOT has pledged to work closely with local jurisdictions to retain local involvement in TOD project development, and our support presumes that a mutually acceptable solution will be reached, with bill amendments if necessary.

On behalf the BRTC, I urge your support of HB 80 and the economic opportunities it will create for Maryland.