



**BILL NO.:** House Bill 1155

**TITLE:** Transportation – Consolidated Transportation Program – Evaluation and Selection of Proposed Capital Projects

**POSITION:** **OPPOSE**

**DATE:** March 2, 2010

**COMMITTEE:** Ways and Means and Environmental Matters

**CONTACT:** Andrea Mansfield

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** House Bill 1155. This bill would require the Maryland Department of Transportation to include in the Consolidated Transportation Plan (CTP) a list of the current State transportation goals, program priorities and the criteria used to select major capital projects for inclusion in the capital program. The bill would require counties that request major capital projects for the CTP to include a purpose and need statement justifying the project that includes 1) the location of the project, including a map of the project’s limits, area, or transportation corridor; and 2) a rigorous list of priorities and factors considered in presenting the purpose and need summary statement.

Under the current process for the submission of major capital projects for the CTP, local governments submit “Priority Letters” outlining projects in the late spring/early summer each year and participate in annual meetings with the Transportation Secretary each fall. These meetings provide an opportunity for the State and local governments to discuss their priorities and ensure they are aligned.

Current State priorities focus on coordinating land use and transportation plans, ensuring that existing transit stations are supported with appropriate land uses, densities and infrastructure. However, the benchmarks and indicators outlined in HB 1155 would generate new criteria for project selection and the purpose and need statements required to justify projects. MACo believes these new criteria represent a major change in transportation planning, implementing a one-size-fits-all approach that may negatively affect some jurisdictions.

In addition to justifying a projects’ necessity and how it would meet State transportation goals, HB 1155 would require that a major project request describe how it addresses climate action plan goals and potential land use changes that support its purpose and need. This type of information may make sense in a metropolitan area where substantial multi-modal transportation projects could relieve congestion and improve air quality, but in a rural area these factors are unlikely. If these criteria are used to determine project priority for inclusion in the CIP, projects

in rural areas could become a lower priority overall in any queuing of projects, hampering the State's ability to balance the needs of its diverse geography.

HB 1155 would also establish additional goal considerations, indicators and benchmarks designed to quantify the goals and objectives in the Maryland Transportation Plan, including environmental impacts of the transportation investment. Performance indicators and benchmarks include any projected decreases or increases in accessibility to housing, employment, and public benefit.

Again, MACo is concerned that emphasizing these indicators and benchmarks would lead to pushing rural projects even further down the queue. Changes that could affect funding priorities in the CTP should not be rushed through in one-size-fits-all legislation.

Lastly, MACo is concerned about the costs of requiring jurisdictions to include this information in project requests. Many jurisdictions do not have the expertise to conduct this type of specialty review and would require hiring staff that does. At a time of dramatic reductions in local aid, hiring freezes, layoffs, and furloughing staff, jurisdictions can little afford this additional burden.

Although MACo does see value in ensuring that projects meet broader statewide goals, HB 1155 goes too far in replacing a productive and collaborative process with one deeply enmeshed in one-size-fits-all indicators and ill-fitting criteria. For these reasons, MACo **OPPOSES** HB 1155 and requests that the Committee issue an **UNFAVORABLE REPORT**.