



Maryland PIRG

Maryland Public Interest Research Group

September 15, 2020

Governor Larry Hogan
State of Maryland
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

CC:

Kevin Quinn, Maryland Transit Administrator
Greg Slater, Maryland Transportation Secretary

Dear Gov. Hogan,

Last week, the Maryland Department of Transportation and Maryland Transit Administration announced [\\$43 million in cuts to the MTA operating budget](#) and \$150 million in cuts to the six year capital budget. While modest operating cost reductions may make sense, such as telework and other savings due to COVID-19 or technological improvements, it is absolutely unacceptable to cut service or the capital budget.

The [proposal](#) includes cutting bus service by 20% and reducing MARC, commuter bus, and paratransit service. The \$150 million in cuts to the MTA's six year capital budget means deferring equipment replacement, bus division upgrades, parking lot maintenance and state funding for local transit systems.

While we have seen short-term decline in all transportation use due to COVID-19, the long term trends are likely to continue as they have: people are increasingly demanding access to public transportation, safe biking and walking routes, and modern ride-share options.

Short-term, access via transit to hospital systems and food supply chains is vital to the success of the COVID-19 public health response. According to [research from Transit Center](#), 36% of transit users are classified as essential during the COVID-19 emergency, including hospital staff, grocery store workers, pharmacists, social service providers, and others. Cutting service in the midst of a pandemic is dangerous to health and safety.

Long term, we should do everything we can to support the shift away from driving for the health of our communities and planet. We must invest today in the transit we want for our future. Cutting transit means more Marylanders will be forced into cars, or left unable to travel to work, shop, and learn.

Each year, pollution from cars, trucks and other vehicles cuts short an [estimated 58,000 lives](#) in the United States, and increases the risk of lung cancer, stroke and heart disease. Transportation is also now [Maryland's number one source of greenhouse gases](#), with emissions from cars, trucks, buses and other vehicles surpassing every other source.

Cars are much safer than they used to be, but motor vehicle crashes each year still kill an estimated [40,000 Americans and seriously injure 4.5 million](#). And, with some of the worst traffic in the world, many Marylanders agree that we need to have more transportation options so we can keep cars off the road and reduce traffic congestion.

If we make it easier, more affordable, and more pleasant for more people to take a train or bus, or to bike or walk, then more of us will choose to do so. Ultimately, the future of transportation is about rescuing Marylanders from the nightmare transportation has become. It's about expanding our choices, while losing fewer lives to traffic jams, car accidents and toxic fumes.

Now is not the time to disinvest in transit. As we respond to the COVID-19 crisis, and work to safely reopen and recover, we must do so in a way that moves Maryland forward to improve our health, builds stronger communities, and creates accessible, safe ways to get around.

Please reject these shortsighted cuts to the MTA operating and capital budgets.

Sincerely,

Emily Scarr
Maryland PIRG Director

Kate Breimann
Environment Maryland Director