

# Action Committee for Transit

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P.O. Box 7074, Silver Spring, MD 20907

November 14, 2008

Governor Martin O'Malley  
State House  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Governor O'Malley,

It should be good news for everyone that people are driving less and using mass transit more. So it makes no sense that the Maryland Dept. of Transportation just announced that because people are driving less and buying less gasoline, there will be major cuts in service on the MARC trains and commuter buses that people are finally learning to use.

There are many roadways throughout the state that carry fewer persons per hour than the transit services that MDOT proposes to eliminate. Yet no one has proposed shutting down these roads.

In the short term, MDOT needs to do whatever possible to maintain current service. Yes, Maryland faces a budget shortfall. Yes, the money has to come from somewhere. But automobile transportation already receives enormous subsidies through real estate taxes used to build and maintain local roads, free parking and developer-built road "improvements" that transit riders pay for indirectly, and the exemption of gasoline and automobiles from the sales tax. In the last few years, there has been a further shift of financial burdens from drivers to transit riders by raising fares while automobile user charges remain constant. Why are transit services being eliminated while the state continues to expand the road network?

Elimination of the ten-trip MARC ticket as proposed would raise fares for non-daily riders substantially above VRE's recently-proposed 7% increase. All other major commuter rail systems in the country have ten-trip tickets, including VRE, SEPTA, Metro North, LIRR, Metra, Caltrain, and Metrolink. If they can have them, why can't MARC?

For the moment, we urge you to put preservation of existing transit services as the first priority, ahead of construction of new roads. Then, we urge you to work with the General Assembly in January to generate additional funding for the transportation trust fund by reducing the subsidies for automobile use. It is simply wrong to cut mass transit funding due to people driving less and using mass transit more.

Sincerely,

Ben Ross  
President