

WRITTEN TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 492

Action Committee for Transit
PO Box 7074
Silver Spring, Maryland 20907

Action Committee for Transit, Montgomery County's advocate for policies and practice that promote the use of mass transit, supports the establishment of a state commission on MARC governance and funding. The commission would be a good opportunity to examine the needs of MARC from a regional perspective. For example, West Virginia's only financial contribution to MARC is maintenance of its three stations. When MTA proposed in November 2008 that the last Brunswick Line train in the evening would stop in Brunswick instead of continuing to Martinsburg, West Virginia officials protested, MTA reportedly implied that they were considering cutting all West Virginia service, and West Virginia officials agreed to a fare increase for only West Virginia riders. Now many West Virginia residents are driving to the Brunswick station -- where fares did not increase -- to catch the train; this means, of course, that West Virginia MARC service is even less cost-effective than before and even more likely to be cut. A similar issue is the \$4.3 million MTA recently paid to expand the parking lot at the Point of Rocks MARC station, given the apparently considerable proportion of Point of Rocks riders who are Virginia residents. Though these examples relate to the Brunswick Line, there certainly will be similar problems with the Penn Line in the future, if MARC is ever able to carry out its planned expansion of service to Wilmington and Alexandria.

Not only does MARC, as a long-haul commuter rail system, face interstate issues most other MTA transit systems do not, but MARC also must operate at the convenience and pleasure of CSX and Amtrak, for both of whom current MARC service, let alone expansion, is at best a nuisance.

And finally, in Maryland, MARC gets lost as only one of many transit systems MTA is responsible for, while in the DC metropolitan area, MARC gets lost because it carries so many fewer riders than Metro.

Therefore, ACT believes that it makes sense to have a commission to examine the needs of MARC by itself.