# Testimony of Deputy Secretary Samantha Biddle

## Maryland Department of Transportation

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

## Senate Environment and Public Works Subcommittee on Transportation and Infrastructure

## The Road Ahead: Proposals to Improve America's Transportation Infrastructure

**July 23, 2025**

Chairman Cramer, Ranking Member Alsobrooks, and members of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works Subcommittee on Transportation and Infrastructure, thank you for the opportunity to testify on several important legislative proposals that effectively respond to the evolving needs of our nation's surface transportation system. My name is Samantha Biddle, and I have the privilege of serving as the Deputy Secretary of the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT).

MDOT is unique among state departments of transportation (state DOTs) in that it is a fully integrated, multimodal agency. MDOT is composed of five modal administrations—Maryland Aviation Administration (MAA), Maryland Port Administration (MPA), Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA), State Highway Administration (SHA), and Maryland Transit Administration (MTA)—and it also supports authorities like the Maryland Transportation Authority and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA). This organizational structure allows MDOT to deliver coordinated, efficient, high-quality transportation services that connect Marylanders to jobs, education, resources, and services by road, rail, water, air, or shared mobility, improving the quality of life for all residents.

As Congress begins crafting the next surface transportation authorization, MDOT urges you to build upon the historic progress made in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), with continued focus on predictability, flexibility, equity, safety, and sustainability. These themes are not abstract to us – they shape our work every day, from the Port of Baltimore to rural Western Maryland. Advancing these themes requires practical, bipartisan tools – such as S. 1733, *the Highway Funding Transferability Improvement Act* and S. 1828, the *Safe Routes Improvement Act*.

**S. 1733 – Highway Funding Transferability Improvement Act**

I want to thank Senator Cramer for introducing this legislation and Ranking Member Alsobrooks for her leadership and co-sponsorship. S. 1733 would increase the allowable transfer of federal highway funds between eligible programs from 50% to 75%, granting states the flexibility needed to direct funds where they are most impactful. This is a small legislative change with significant implications.

For Maryland, this bill is not about increasing or favoring one mode of transportation over another. It ensures that MDOT, and state DOTs across the United States, may use federal funds to advance its critical state goals. In Maryland's case, this enables MDOT to utilize every federal dollar as efficiently and flexibly as possible to meet diverse and multimodal needs—whether that means modernizing transit facilities, enhancing electric vehicle (EV)

charging infrastructure, investing in climate resilience, hardening coastal infrastructure, or addressing safety and accessibility challenges in underserved communities, especially those along high-speed roadways.

The existing program already provides meaningful flexibility. MDOT uses this to support multimodal priorities—for example, flexing $45 million annually from the SHA to the MTA for bus acquisitions, with nearly $200 million more planned for transit capital needs over the next six years. MDOT also recently flexed funding to the Port Administration to improve resiliency and address flooding at its busiest marine terminal.

However, additional flexibility will allow MDOT to advance a truly multimodal and equitable capital program that reflects the priorities of the Moore-Miller Administration: a safe, reliable, sustainable transportation system that works for everyone, in every corner of the state. It will facilitate smarter, faster decisions across MDOT's modes – aligning our formula dollars with actual needs on the ground.

**S. 1828 – Safe Routes Improvement Act**

I also want to thank Senator Cramer for introducing S. 1828, the *Safe Routes Improvement Act* and express my gratitude to Senator Ed Markey for cosponsoring this legislation. S. 1828 advances a critical federal priority—protecting vulnerable road users, particularly children and pedestrians near schools and community gathering spaces. This bill requires every state DOT to have a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) coordinator. It aligns with MDOT's Vision Zero strategy, its Pedestrian Safety Action Plan, and its strong partnerships with local governments to implement Complete Streets and context-sensitive safety improvements. In fact, MDOT has been actively working to encourage more local governments and local educational agencies in our state to utilize SRTS coordinators and SRTS funding, especially the unique role SRTS coordinators can play in facilitating federal, state, and local investments in safe and accessible infrastructure and programming.

S. 1828's provisions complement the purposes of many projects Maryland is undertaking statewide. For example:

- In Montgomery County, MDOT is partnered with local officials to improve pedestrian access near Wheaton High School, installing high-visibility crosswalks and traffic calming measures. S. 1828 would help MDOT do more of these targeted, high-impact projects statewide and dedicate staff resources to enhance local governmental coordination.
- In Prince George's County, MDOT is working with communities near WMATA rail stations to fill sidewalk gaps and create safe walking and biking connections to transit – especially important for transit-dependent residents.

- In Western Maryland, MDOT is partnering with Frostburg and Cumberland to revitalize downtown areas with walkable infrastructure that ties into regional trail networks like the Great Allegheny Passage and the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal towpath – supporting safety, tourism and recreational opportunities, and economic development.

Maryland has made strong use of the SRTS program, with SHA currently managing 20 initiatives totaling over $5 million. These initiatives include feasibility studies, non-infrastructure initiatives, and construction projects supporting K–12 students across the state. In recent years, MDOT has enhanced technical assistance to local partners, adding project managers, launching a new sponsor training program, and developing prioritization tools. S. 1828 will further this important work by formalizing roles like Safe Routes coordinators and ensuring every state DOT is equipped to prioritize child pedestrian safety as Maryland has.

**Surface Transportation Reauthorization Priorities**

As Congress begins to shape the next authorization bill, MDOT urges the Subcommittee to consider a framework that recognizes and supports the full spectrum of transportation needs in a balanced manner, not just highways.

First, MDOT urges continued investment in predictable, formula-based funding for all modes—highways, transit, freight and passenger rail, ports, and aviation. As a multimodal state DOT, MDOT relies on cross-cutting programs to maintain flexibility and advance an integrated system.

Second, MDOT supports reforms like S. 944, the *Sarah Debbink Langenkamp Active Transportation Safety Act*, which allows projects that include proven safety countermeasures, like protected bike lanes or high-visibility crosswalks—to be eligible for 100% federal cost share. These changes are especially important for disadvantaged communities that may lack local match funding but desperately need safety upgrades. We greatly appreciate the leadership of Senator Alsobrooks and the entire Maryland congressional delegation on this effort that honors the legacy of Sarah Debbink Langenkamp.

Third, MDOT supports the IIJA's focus on infrastructure resilience, electrification, and sustainability. The ability to use federal highway funds for climate-adaptive infrastructure, shoreline protection, and multimodal investments is essential in Maryland, where nearly 3,200 miles of shoreline meet our dense, interconnected transportation network. Further, we support Congress's approach to these IIJA-created efforts and encourage Congress to continue to require that these funds be spent for these specific purposes. We also

encourage the U.S. Department of Transportation to expeditiously re-release its funding opportunity for the Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-saving Transportation (PROTECT) discretionary grant program.

**Conclusion**

MDOT's experience shows that no one-size-fits-all approach can meet the complex needs of modern transportation. MDOT appreciates that S. 1733 and S. 1828 reflect that principle and afford states with the flexibility and tools to build safer, more equitable, and more resilient infrastructure.

Again, I want to thank Chairman Cramer and Ranking Member Alsobrooks for their leadership and partnership on these efforts. We are also extremely grateful to Ranking Member Alsobrook's leadership on this critical committee and her efforts to ensure Maryland has a leader at the table during the surface transportation reauthorization process. I also want to thank this Committee for its continued commitment to delivering a forward-looking surface transportation program.

I appreciate your time and attention this morning and I look forward to your questions.