



Maryland Chamber of Commerce

Legislative Position

**SB 539
OPPOSE
EHEA
Committee
03/03/09**

SB 539

Driver Relief Act of 2009

Brief Summary of Bill:

SB 539 requires State, local, and regional transportation plans, capital improvement programs, and project alternative selections to (1) attain a performance objective of reducing the statewide average of vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per capita 35% by January 1, 2036, based on the statewide per capita VMT level in 2005; and (2) be implemented or amended to reduce the statewide VMT per capita 2.8% by the end of 2012 and an additional 1.4% for each subsequent year through 2035.

Maryland Chamber's Position:

The Maryland Chamber of Commerce opposes this bill. This legislation would put Maryland at a significant competitive disadvantage with surrounding states, and discourage the growth of new businesses and deter the expansion of existing businesses. This legislation is counter to BRAC, and expresses no consideration of alternative energy for cars and trucks. It assumes that there is no environmentally sound way to drive a vehicle. This will certainly prove false in the near future.

The legislation attempts to steer transportation investment toward non-highway capital improvements (transit investment). Transit is an encouraged form of transportation; however, its promotion should not come at the detriment of highway transportation. This legislation is overbroad and unnecessary.

The fiscal impact of this legislation is significant as well. It would take needed funds away from road projects, and add to small business cost at a time when businesses are struggling to survive.

A reduction in vehicle miles traveled should not be mandated by legislation. It is already driven by need in the market. Drivers adapt to current their circumstances. Today, people drive due to necessity. A legislative mandates on vehicle miles traveled is misguided and unnecessary.

For these reasons, the Maryland Chamber respectfully requests that the Committee give SB 539 an unfavorable report.

If questions please contact Allyson Black, ablack@mdchamber.org