



**Zeke Cohen**

Councilmember

*First District*

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March 14, 2024

The Honorable Michael Regan  
Administrator  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Regan:

I am writing to express my strong support for the Maryland Department of Transportation's (MDOT) funding application through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) Program for the Eastern Bus Division Reconstruction Project. This combined bus facility rebuild, bus procurement, and workforce development effort will enable the agency's first full delivery of battery-electric buses as part of its state-mandated transition to a zero-emission bus fleet.

EPA has made \$4.6 billion in competitive grant funding available for measures that will achieve the greatest potential greenhouse gas emissions reductions. This project meets this program's goals in that it will help to advance the Maryland Transit Administration's (MTA) ongoing pilot rollout of BEBs into a full zero-emission bus fleet conversion. In addition to reconstructing the existing Eastern Bus Division in Greektown for the storage, charging, and maintenance of BEBs, this grant application will request funding for the procurement of new BEBs.

The newly constructed Eastern Bus Division will also house robust workforce development training to prepare MTA staff to operate and maintain the BEBs and to remain at the forefront of this evolving transit technology. MTA will use registered apprenticeships that provide on-the-job training and classroom instruction to workers to teach them new skills, advance their careers, and develop an overall workforce that is prepared for the arrival of zero-emissions technology. The program will have a dedicated curriculum that addresses ZEB technology maintenance, repair, and safety. It will also pay apprentices a progressive wage and permit them to join an international labor union.

The Eastern Bus Division Reconstruction Project is consistent with MTA's Zero-Emission Transition Plan and supports progress toward statewide goals for sustainable transit operations. Maryland's 2019 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Act requires MTA to transition 50 percent of its fleet to zero-emission technology by 2030, a target also reiterated in the 2020 Central Maryland Regional Transit Plan. Bus fleet electrification will advance statewide efforts to achieve an ambitious, but attainable goal of net-zero emissions in Maryland by 2045, as mandated in the 2022 Maryland Climate Solutions Now Act.

The state's adoption of the Zero-Emission Bus Transition Act in 2021 prohibits MTA from procuring internal combustion engine vehicles after FY 2022. To accomplish this ambitious fleet transition goal and comply with state mandates, MTA is shifting to exclusive purchase of zero-emissions buses and



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developing the charging infrastructure to ensure a successful and seamless fleet conversion. The Eastern Bus Division Reconstruction Project is vital to this effort.

The Eastern Bus Division facility is one of four MTA bus maintenance and operations facilities serving the Baltimore metropolitan area. This maintenance facility in Greektown has surpassed the end of its useful life and the current configuration cannot be retrofitted to meet MTA's employee and electrified-bus fleet needs. The spatial requirements for bus charging, storing, and maintaining require redevelopment, presenting an opportunity to house a future hub for the ZEB fleet conversion.

A successful grant application will allow MTA to complete the transition, provide a safe and efficient workspace for employees, and improve the quality of life for residents in the surrounding communities. The new Eastern Bus Division will comprise increased electrical infrastructure and capacity; a transportation and maintenance facility with maintenance bays, amenities for bus operators, and a bus storage canopy with pantographs for battery electric buses (BEBs); vaulting; service and wash lanes; employee parking; and training rooms for MTA staff in a certified LEED Silver building.

Community organizations in the adjacent Greektown neighborhood in Southeast Baltimore have given their support for this project, which stands to improve air quality by eliminating greenhouse gas emissions with the operation of BEBs; minimizing noise impacts by moving the bus division entrance away from residential properties, installing sound barriers, and operating quieter BEBs; upgrading Ponca Street pedestrian infrastructure with new sidewalks and street trees; and redesigning the intersection at Eastern Avenue to include new crosswalks and pedestrian signals.

With the inaugural round of the CPRG Program, EPA is providing major capital resources to support large-scale GHG emission reductions across the country. MDOT's Eastern Bus Division Reconstruction Project is critical to fulfilling this goal in Maryland. Thank you for your consideration, and we urge you to approve MDOT's grant application.

Sincerely,

Councilmember Zeke Cohen

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Zeke Ch", written over a light gray rectangular background.