



# NEWS RELEASE

## HOWARD COUNTY COUNCIL

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact: Colette Gelwicks, 410-313-2001

[cgelwicks@howardcountymd.gov](mailto:cgelwicks@howardcountymd.gov)

## Councilmember Christiana Rigby Advances Major Climate Package for Howard County

*Ellicott City, MD (January 4, 2023)* – Howard County Councilmember Christiana Rigby has introduced major climate and transportation legislation in Howard County, Maryland. This package of legislation is designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Howard County and position the county to achieve its carbon reduction goals and timeline.

The legislative package contains two bills designed to address the two greatest causes of greenhouse gas emissions in Howard County, which are buildings and transportation. Specifically, the proposed legislation will move the County closer to requiring all new buildings to be all-electric and provide for renewed investment in public transportation services.

In 2022, the Maryland General Assembly passed the [Climate Solutions Now Act](#), which sets statewide carbon reduction goals for Maryland. Under this law, the State of Maryland must reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 60% by 2031 and ultimately achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2045.

“We must act with urgency to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and comprehensively address climate change at the local level,” said Councilmember Christiana Rigby. “To meet these goals, I am advancing a legislative package that progresses critical climate and transportation initiatives in Howard County. Howard County must continue to lead the way into a climate-resilient future.”

### **Clean New Buildings Climate Act**

The Clean New Buildings Climate Act ([CB05-2023](#)) directs Howard County Government to develop all-electric building standards for new construction and present those recommendations to the County Council in a report by the end of 2023, in advance of Howard County’s next building code adoption cycle.

According to Howard County’s preliminary [Climate Action and Resiliency Plan](#), buildings account for roughly 40% of Howard County’s local greenhouse gas emissions, of which 11% of emissions are directly from on-site fuel combustion in buildings. In order to meet the emission reduction goals set forth by the Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022, Howard County must move toward all-electric buildings by phasing out the use of fossil fuels in new construction.

In addition to the climate benefits, all-electric buildings also enhance the safety and health conditions for residents who live and work in buildings. Numerous academic and medical studies have linked the use of natural gas in buildings to higher rates of childhood asthma, poor air quality, and exposure to hazardous pollutants.

The Clean New Buildings Climate Act puts Howard County on the path to eliminate fossil fuel use in new buildings. This legislation will not affect existing buildings in Howard County that rely on fossil fuels.

### **Transit Investment Act**

The Transit Investment Act ([CB04-2023](#)) would create a dedicated fund for public transit operations in Howard County's operating budget and direct an estimated \$500,000 to fixed-route transit operations annually in the county.

Howard County's preliminary [Climate Action and Resiliency Plan](#) states that the transportation sector accounts for approximately 55% of Howard County's local greenhouse gas emissions. These emissions are largely driven by single-occupancy vehicle trips within the county. The [Federal Transit Administration](#) has identified that public transportation produces far fewer greenhouse gas emissions than single-occupancy vehicles, making public transportation an important tool in efforts to reduce emissions and combat climate change.

Currently, Howard County offers public transportation options through the Regional Transportation Agency of Central Maryland (RTA). The RTA operates primarily in Howard County and the City of Laurel, with limited connections to Prince Georges, Anne Arundel, and Baltimore Counties. While many Howard County residents rely on the RTA to meet their daily transportation needs, many more residents are discouraged from using the system because of limited route availability and frequency of service.

The Transit Investment Act seeks to address these issues by directing increased investment into Howard County's public transit services. The funds generated from this legislation must be used to make improvements to fixed-route transit operations in Howard County, which may result in new RTA transit routes, better bus frequency, and improvements to existing bus infrastructure and service.

---

The Clean New Buildings Climate Act (CB05-2023) and the Transit Invest Act (CB04-2023) were introduced at the Council's Legislative Session on January 3, 2023. Public testimony will be accepted at the Public Hearing on January 17, 2022. The bills will be up for a vote at the Legislative Session on February 6, 2023. Individuals and organizations can sign up to provide virtual or in-person testimony by visiting [this website](#).

To read the pending legislation, please visit: <https://cc.howardcountymd.gov/Legislation>.

###