

Statement of the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 689 on HB 205
Southern Maryland Rapid Transit Project - Requirements and Funding
House Appropriations Committee
January 28th, 2020

At the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 689 we represent over 13,000 workers and retirees performing many skilled transportation crafts for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), MetroAccess, DASH, and the DC Streetcar.

This state desperately needs to expand its transit offerings. Traffic congestion threatens to put the brakes on any economic growth this state has. We know from empirical studies that we can't pave our way out of traffic congestion. Our only solution is to promote multi-modal transit and soon. Americans are waking up to the recognition that we need to make up for decades of underinvestment. We've watched as other countries with fewer resources are able to build more comprehensive transportation networks, simply because they prioritized mass transit over the needs of single occupancy vehicles.

We're especially happy to support HB205, which funds the study of transit opportunities along Maryland 17 Route 5/U.S. Route 301. This region has become infamous in recent years for having the "worst commute in America."

We know that the history of WMATA's development prioritized certain communities over others. As WMATA expands all the way out into Loudoun County in Virginia it's incredibly important to ensure that the residents practically touching DC's borders have access to transit opportunities as well. We also know that bus lines do not drive economic development in the same way that light rail or heavy rail does. We hope that such a transit project takes into consideration ways that it can further the goals of transit oriented development and minimizing the need for people to be reliant on cars.

We encourage all of the Delegates to support this measure and consider other commutes that might see relief from traffic congestion by expanding mass transit offerings.