
March 6, 2020

The Honorable Kumar Barve
Chairman, House Environment and Transportation Committee
251 House Office Building
Annapolis MD 21401

Re: Letter of Support – House Bill 1492 – Vehicle Laws – Bus Lane Monitoring Cameras – Authorization

Dear Chairman Barve and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) supports House Bill 1492 and offers the following information for the Committee's consideration.

House Bill 1492 prohibits a person from driving a motor vehicle in a dedicated bus lane (DBL) without local approval, as well as authorizes the local jurisdiction to implement a bus lane monitoring camera to enforce the prohibition. This legislation is modeled after the report required by CH 340 of 2019, in which the MDOT Maryland Transit Administration (MDOT MTA), jointly with the Baltimore City Department of Transportation (BCDOT), examined best practices and technologies used by selected peer transit agencies and proposed an action plan for enforcement of DBL violations in Baltimore.

MDOT MTA currently operates on a 5.5-mile network of dedicated lanes on high volume bus corridors in Downtown Baltimore City, with an additional 7 miles currently under construction through the North Avenue Rising project. Dedicated bus lanes are implemented in heavily used transit corridors; for example, each of the dedicated bus lanes in Baltimore City carry more people per lane than the adjacent general-purpose travel lanes. As MTA buses operate on streets owned and maintained by the City of Baltimore, the City's partnership is essential.

In February 2019, MDOT MTA released a study on the effectiveness of dedicated bus lanes, with traffic data reported both before and after the implementation of the lanes. During peak travel periods, improvements in travel times were found for 79% of the bus lanes. Travel time savings ranged from 4.7% on Baltimore Street, to 31.7% on Hillen Street/Guilford Avenue, with an average benefit of 9.3% per corridor. In addition, data demonstrates that these lanes have improved traveler safety by reducing the number of bus-involved crashes by nearly 12%.

Dedicated bus lanes offer the potential for increased speed, safety, reliability, and on-time performance for transit vehicles, minimizing delays, particularly during rush hours. The MDOT MTA joint report with Baltimore City found that in other jurisdictions across the country, automated lane enforcement has become a vital tool for assuring the efficiency of traffic in these lanes, as constant police monitoring may cause greater challenges and further contribute to transit delays.

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MDOT MTA Police, the Baltimore Police Department, and BCDOT's Safety Division have been actively patrolling dedicated bus lanes and issuing citations. Between January 1, 2018 and July 1, 2019, MDOT MTA Police issued approximately 2,020 citations and 249 warnings. In addition, the City of Baltimore issued 10,341 violations for No Parking/Standing In Bus Stop/Bus Lane during the same time period throughout the entire City. Currently, when a violation occurs, police enforcement typically requires the blocking of the dedicated lane for an extended period to write tickets, check information, and if necessary, make an arrest. If the stop results in an arrest, the vehicle then must be towed and impounded, which prolongs the amount of time the bus lane is blocked.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee grant House Bill 1492 a favorable report.

Respectfully submitted,

Dave Myers
Director of Government Affairs
Maryland Transit Administration
410-767-0820

Jeff Tosi
Director of Government Affairs
Maryland Department of Transportation
410-841-2850