



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of HB1492

Vehicle Laws - Bus Lane Monitoring Cameras - Authorization

Dear Chair Barve and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

HB 1492 has the potential to significantly improve the quality of public transit in Maryland. It is enabling legislation that unleashes the potential of dedicated bus lanes to increase the speed and efficiency of each trip. This bill is the product of the Dedicated Bus Lane Workgroup and is supported by the Maryland Transportation Administration (MTA), the Mayor of Baltimore and the Baltimore City Department of Transportation, as well as transit advocates. This bill has no fiscal note and no opposition.

To understand what a dedicated bus lane is, please refer to supportive documentation in your packets, including photos and images. Dedicated bus lanes (DBL) are specially marked to separate them from regular traffic. This separation improves the safety, reliability, speed and frequency of the entire network. Such lanes are used successfully in cities like San Francisco and New York. Combined with other improvements, such as signal prioritization, buses travelling on dedicated lanes offer higher quality service. Careful planning is needed to accommodate other activities, such as deliveries and drop offs. However, unless the lanes are enforced to prevent obstructions, they are nothing more than pretty paint on the pavement.

This is a statewide bill that will have immediate local impact in Baltimore City, because it is the only locality that has DBLs at this time. As part of the Baltimore Link system upgrade launched by the MTA in 2017, after the cancellation of the Baltimore Red Line light rail project. About five miles of dedicated lanes were installed. The majority of the dedicated lane system is currently located in my district, the 46th.

In 2019 I passed HB130 which required the MTA and Baltimore City Department of Transportation (BCDOT) to study methods for enforcing the city's dedicated bus lanes and report these findings to the General Assembly, which they did in December 2019.

The study report recommended the following:

- **Enforcement:** pilot test a well-coordinated DBL enforcement program, then expand to full implementation, with enforcement using stationary cameras.
- **Education:** launch a public education campaign and continue awareness-raising efforts.

- **Engineering:** Maintain red painted lanes in good repair and establish a curbside management working group.

HB1492 enables implementation of the most urgent recommendation: enforcement of DBLs using existing stationary cameras to issue civil citations.

This really matters to people in Baltimore. The quality of bus service is a matter of real consequence to thousands of workers, students and even tourists. Reliable, fast and frequent bus service is essential to equity, because quality transit is the bedrock for access to opportunity. It enables access to opportunity and is a boon to our economy, environment and health. Lack of enforcement of the lanes is also dangerous for people riding bikes, who depend on them to move safely through the downtown area.

Baltimore's central business district is the region's largest employment center. Other areas, like Towson, Woodlawn, Linthicum and Sparrows Point are emerging job hubs as well. About 33% of Baltimore households do not own cars. For them, the most critical link to employment is the bus system. And when buses are slow, or infrequent, workers risk losing their jobs.

Thousands of middle school and high school students in Baltimore are dependent on Baltimore's bus system. Our city does not have a yellow school bus service; our kids ride MTA buses, which means that slow, unreliable service directly affects their education. As we are fighting hard to improve the quality of education for Maryland's children, we should also give as much attention to improving the transit system that helps them get to class every day. This bill will show how we can accomplish this important goal in a simple, cost effective way.

The Baltimore City Department of Transportation and the MTA have offered amendments which I consider friendly and will accept.

I respectfully request a favorable report and thank you for your consideration.