
April 2, 2024

The Honorable Marc Korman
Chair, House Environment and Transportation Committee
251 House Office Building
Annapolis MD 21401

RE: Letter of Support with Amendments – Senate Bill 943 – Vehicle Laws – Bus Obstruction Monitoring Systems (Better Bus Service Act of 2024)

Dear Chair Korman and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) supports the intent of Senate Bill 943 as it allows for increased efficiencies and enforcement of statewide dedicated bus lanes (DBLs).

Senate Bill 943 authorizes automated bus lane enforcement statewide, through either the use of wayside or onboard cameras. Additionally, it establishes the Workgroup on Curb Space Management, which is charged with analyzing curb space regulations within Baltimore City and providing recommendations.

This legislation builds upon previous legislation which authorized Baltimore City to conduct automated enforcement of driving in DBLs. The MTA and the Baltimore City Department of Transportation (BCDOT) have partnered to plan, design, and install approximately 17 miles of DBLs throughout MTA's Core Bus service area. These lanes minimize traffic delays for buses to increase speed and service reliability, reduce merging and yielding conflicts between buses and other vehicles and establish a clear path for emergency responders.

Nationwide, data has shown that wayside and on-board automated enforcement has been successful at reducing bus lane incursions and improving transit travel times. Nearly 400 fixed cameras in New York City (NYC) issue over 500,000 citations per year and 600 onboard cameras in NYC have issued 328,000 citations since October 2019. The Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) found nearly 4,000 violations per week during a Spring 2023 pilot on two routes. Additionally, automated enforcement of bus lanes in the San Francisco Bay Area has yielded travel time and on-time performance improvement of up to 20%. Both New York and San Francisco have found that automated enforcement discourages repeat bus lane violators. These successes are leading more cities to implement automated enforcement, with Los Angeles and Washington D.C. beginning programs this year.

As amended, Senate Bill 943 allows vehicles to stop in DBLs for a brief period for dropping off or picking up passengers. Allowing drop-off and pickup in DBLs, without a defined timeframe, has the potential to impact the effectiveness and efficiency of DBLs. Current law prohibits standing in bus lanes, which is defined in law "to halt a vehicle, whether or not it is occupied,

The Honorable Marc Korman
Page Two

other than temporarily...for the purpose of and while actually engaged in receiving or discharging passengers.” Additionally, it could be difficult for automated monitoring systems to have enough context to determine the brevity of a stop; should footage be recorded by an onboard camera, the full length of a stop may not be recorded, and it may not show whether or not passengers were actually picked up or dropped off.

MTA is currently partnering with Baltimore City on their plans to implement automated bus lane enforcement. To better understand the state of the market for camera enforcement of DBL violations, MTA conducted a Request for Information (RFI) from bus lane monitoring system vendors in the fall of 2023. MTA can share relevant information from this with Baltimore City and County governments, so that if Senate Bill 943 is to pass and automated enforcement extends statewide, local governments can use this information to inform their enforcement plans.

MDOT would like to note for the Committee that, in instances where equipment would be mounted to or utilize State Highway Administration (SHA) infrastructure or right-of-way, SHA must maintain approval or permitting processes. SHA would seek to recover costs from sponsor agencies for engineering review and permit approvals.

Additionally, MDOT is identified as staffing the Workgroup on Curb Space Management. It is possible that consulting services could be used to provide technical evaluations and other support for the Workgroup.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests that the Committee consider this information when deliberating Senate Bill 943.

Respectfully submitted,

Pilar Helm
Director of Governmental Affairs
Maryland Department of Transportation
410-865-1090

Melissa Einhorn
Director of Government Affairs
Maryland Transit Administration
410-767-0820