



WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSIT AUTHORITY

Public Testimony – Favorable with Amendment Support of SB943

Vehicle Laws – Bus Obstruction Monitoring Systems (Better Bus Service Act of 2024)

Before the House Environment and Transportation Committee

April 2, 2024

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today. For the record, my name is Charlie Scott and I am the Senior Government Relations Officer for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA). I am here to urge your strong support for Senate Bill 943.

At Metro, we have recently launched a program, in partnership with the District of Columbia, to begin automated enforcement of bus lane and bus stop parking violations. A portion of our bus fleet is now equipped with cameras to detect and record vehicles that are blocking bus lanes or bus stops. Any warnings or tickets are issued by the District of Columbia. The bus stop enforcement began in late 2023 and ticketing of vehicles in dedicated bus lanes started earlier this year.

This legislation will enable this program to expand to routes we serve in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties.

As amended, though, SB943 would allow vehicles to make brief stops in dedicated bus lanes for picking up and dropping off passengers. Fundamentally, blocking a bus lane for such purposes, and requiring a bus to move in and out of the adjacent lane of traffic, is less safe and less efficient for all traffic. A better solution is for jurisdictions to create designated pick up/dropoff zones or for motorists to use an intersecting street for such stops.

Metro has reviewed whether we could implement a bus lane monitoring system that could account for vehicles picking up or dropping off passengers. There are drawbacks to any solution we could implement:

Option 1: Human reviewers at a local jurisdiction's enforcing department would examine each video and try to determine if passengers are embarking/disembarking from car. However, this would be a difficult

judgement call to make and would open the program up to citizen complaint. This solution is also not cost effective for the locality.

Option 2: The Clear Lanes system could use a “5-minute” or similar business rule that would require cars to be observed by two buses with Clear Lanes equipment within a certain amount a time. However, this option has two drawbacks.

1. Option 2 allows cars to continue to block and slow down buses. Metro’s highest-frequency routes in Maryland arrive every 12 minutes, essentially allowing motorists to park in bus lanes for 12 to 23 minutes without recording a violation.
2. It requires dedicated bus fleets that are 100% camera-equipped on Maryland routes, which increases capital and operating costs for the program.

I urge this committee to approve the Better Bus Service Act of 2024 without a provision to allow passenger pick up and dropoff in dedicated bus lanes.

Additionally, as I have testified previously, inclusion of bus stop enforcement in the Better Bus Service Act of 2024 is of significant importance to customers with visual impairments or other mobility needs. Enforcement of bus stops and bike lanes is provided in SB943 and I encourage those provisions to remain.

For these reasons, I urge the Committee to provide a favorable with amendment report to SB943, and thank Senator Kelly for her sponsorship of this important legislation.