

March 29, 2024

The Honorable Delegate Marc Korman
Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Support with amendment SB 943: Vehicle Laws - Bus Obstruction Monitoring Systems (Better Bus Service Act of 2024)

Dear Chair and committee members:

Please accept this testimony in support of SB 943 on behalf of the Coalition for Smarter Growth (CSG). CSG is the leading organization advocating for walkable, bikeable, inclusive, transit-oriented communities as the most sustainable and equitable way for the Washington, DC region to grow and provide opportunities for all. We work extensively in suburban Maryland, focused on Montgomery and Prince George's Counties.

Prohibiting unallowed stopping and parking in dedicated bus lanes, and enabling local jurisdictions to enforce this prohibition, including with fixed or onboard cameras, will make bus service faster and more reliable for riders and allow jurisdictions to maximize the benefits of their investments in better service. This legislation will help improve transit operations by prioritizing buses on our roadways. We also support the prohibition on blocking bike lanes, which will increase safety and encouragement for bicycle transportation.

We ask that the committee to strike the language inserted into this version of the bill which permits vehicles to make a “brief” stop in the bus lane for the purpose of dropping off or picking up a passenger, as follows (amendment in strikeout):

The following vehicles may be driven, ALLOWED TO STAND, OR PARKED in a dedicated bus lane:...

~~A VEHICLE MAKING A BRIEF STOP FOR THE SOLE PURPOSE OF DROPPING OFF OR PICKING UP A PASSENGER;~~

Permitting this exception will substantially undermine the use of a dedicated transit lane and make enforcement much more difficult.

Enforceable dedicated lanes deliver more reliable, faster service to riders. It provides more cost-effective operations by reducing the amount of time buses are delayed by traffic. Better transit attracts more riders, helping reduce traffic and pollution, including greenhouse gas

emissions. A recent [analysis](#) by the Urban Institute showed that well-enforced bus priority lanes could enable greater jobs access gains at lower costs.

Prioritizing buses on our roads also advances a more racially and economically equitable transportation system as the majority of bus riders are low income, and the great majority of bus riders are people of color.

This legislation is needed to support plans for tactical bus lanes on Silver Hill Road in Prince George's County, and Georgia Avenue in Montgomery County. Without the ability to deter violations, and enforce prohibitions against stopping or parking in dedicated bus lanes, we cannot realize their full value.

For the above reasons, we ask for your support, with the amendment, for SB 943. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cheryl Cort', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Cheryl Cort
Policy Director