

BALTIMORE'S TRANSIT FUTURE

March 5, 2024

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chair, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Re: Support for Senate Bill 0943 — the Better Bus Service Act of 2024

Dear Chair Smith and Committee Members,

On behalf of the Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) and the Greater Washington Partnership (the Partnership), co-leads of the Baltimore's Transit Future coalition, we are writing to express our support for Senate Bill 0943, which prohibits driving or parking in a designated bus lane, authorizes automated enforcement of bus lanes, and establishes a working group on curb space management.

More than 100,000 trips are taken each day on the Maryland Transit Administration's (MTA) bus network, connecting residents to jobs, healthcare, education, and more.¹ With the redesign of the Baltimore area bus network in 2018, the region added 5.5 miles of dedicated lanes on high volume corridors.² However, bus lanes are not effective if other vehicles drive, park, or stand in the lane. Many metropolitan areas — including Washington, DC³, Philadelphia, and New York — are now using automated bus cameras to allow for consistent enforcement without adding large operating expenses or draining police resources.

When buses are stuck in congestion, it reduces their reliability and increases their operating costs. Research indicates that the inverse is also true, as travel times get faster, bus ridership tends to increase.⁴ With more than 90% of MTA bus riders living in households earning less than \$50,000 per year, and more than 80% identifying as Black or African American, prioritizing the efficient movement of buses advances regional goals for economic inclusion.⁵ Automated bus lane enforcement enhances both resource stewardship and equity. However, in the longer term, we encourage a regular review of the penalty levels for driving in bus lanes, as high fines can have a disproportionately negative effect on low-income drivers and decrease public support for this important policy tool.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on SB043. Thank you for your consideration and shared commitment to reducing barriers to opportunity by prioritizing strategic investments and policies to create a more competitive transit network.

Sincerely,

Nick Henninger-Ayoub, Director of Policy & Research, Greater Baltimore Committee
Thomas J. Maloney, Vice President, Policy & External Affairs, Greater Washington Partnership

¹ MDOT MTA, [Performance Improvement](#) Dashboard, 2023.

² MDOT MTA, [Infrastructure Improvements Dedicated Bus Lanes](#).

³ DCIST, [D.C. To Start Fining Drivers In Bus-Only Lanes Starting Jan. 29](#), Jan. 24, 2024

⁴ Greater Washington Partnership, [Rethinking the Bus: Five Essential Steps for Improving Mobility](#), 2018.

⁵ Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) [2020-2023 Title VI Implementation Program](#).

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About the Baltimore's Transit Future Campaign

The [Greater Baltimore Committee](#) and [Greater Washington Partnership](#) launched the Baltimore's Transit Future campaign to call attention to the urgent business imperative and need for the Greater Baltimore region to create a world-class public transit system that helps create shared economic prosperity and catalyzes inclusive growth. Since June 2022, more than 70 business, civic, and non-profit organizations, including many of the largest employers in the State, have joined the campaign encouraging regional focus on six priorities:

1. Address the transit system's repair backlog and operator shortage.
2. Establish frequent, reliable transit service to regional job centers.
3. Support regional coordination, decision making, and funding.
4. Implement a 10-year rapid transit expansion program.
5. Prioritize regional rail investment.
6. Catalyze equitable development at transit and rail stations.

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The time for action is now. The residents and businesses of Maryland's largest city and surrounding suburbs deserve a world-class transit system. These six strategic priorities will set the course for a more equitable transportation system, making the Baltimore region a more attractive place to live, work, play, and build a business.

We Support Baltimore's Transit Future

