

CSG Support for Crossover SB 943 Better Bus Servic

Uploaded by: Cheryl Cort

Position: FAV

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,

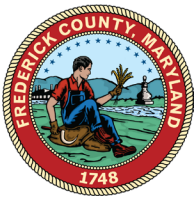
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cheryl Cort', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Cheryl Cort
Policy Director

SB 943 FAV FCG Transit LS24 ET.pdf

Uploaded by: Jaime McKay

Position: FAV



FREDERICK COUNTY GOVERNMENT

TRANSIT SERVICES DIVISION

Jessica Fitzwater
County Executive

Roman Steichen, Director

SB 943 – Vehicle Laws - Bus Obstruction Monitoring Systems (Better Bus Service Act of 2024)

DATE: April 2, 2024
COMMITTEE: House Environment and Transportation Committee
POSITION: Favorable
FROM: The Office of Frederick County Executive Jessica Fitzwater

As the Deputy Director of Transit Services of Frederick County, I urge the committee to give SB 943 – Vehicle Laws – Bus Obstruction Monitoring Systems (Better Bus Service Act of 2024) a favorable report.

Transit agencies statewide are aware that boarding or alighting into the street presents significant accessibility considerations; prohibiting the deployment of a ramp, creating a significant step up or down between bus, street, and curb, and more issues that create slip, trip, and fall hazards. These hazards are especially significant for our older adults and people with disabilities who rely on public transportation. When the bus is unable to pull up to the curb and board or alight a passenger safely due to the presence of a vehicle blocking the bus stop or bus lane, it is not only an inconvenience. It can easily and quickly become a safety hazard, which is easily mitigated through effective enforcement, including the type noted in SB 943.

Transit Services has been working diligently with municipalities throughout Frederick County to ensure safe, accessible paths of travel to and from bus stops, as well as accessible locations to board. Through targeted efforts to connect the curb line to the sidewalk, Transit Services is allowing a sturdy, paved location to lower the ramp onto, to kneel the bus down adjacent to, or to step on and off the bus. However, these efforts are immediately canceled out when a vehicle is parked at the bus stop, and the bus is forced to pick up or drop off passengers in an unsuitable location. These built environment modifications come at a great expense; one that is rendered ineffective the moment a personal vehicle parks in a bus stop and remains there.

The ability to enforce no stopping or parking in bus stops through the use of technology is also beneficial to our law enforcement, who are often tasked with ticketing but are short-staffed or focusing their essential efforts on other significant duties. SB 943 would assist local jurisdictions with bus obstruction monitoring and allow staff to have a greater capacity by automating this system.

Thank you for your consideration of SB 943. I urge you to advance this bill with a favorable report.

Jaime McKay

Deputy Director, Transit Services



SB943_MDSierraClub_2April2024.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Lindsey Mendelson

Position: FAV



P.O. Box 278
Riverdale, MD 20738

Committee: Environment and Transportation

Testimony on: SB 943, Vehicle Laws - Bus Obstruction Monitoring Systems (Better Bus Service Act of 2024)

Position: Support

Hearing Date: April 2, 2024

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club supports SB 943, which would authorize local jurisdictions to use a bus lane monitoring system to enforce the prohibition against driving a motor vehicle in a designated bus lane.

An authorized bus lane monitoring system would record images of vehicles traveling in a dedicated bus lane where there is a prohibition of unauthorized vehicles using such a lane. The bill specifies the training that monitoring system operators would need to complete, and the information that should be included with the citation which would be mailed to the registered owner of a vehicle caught violating the prohibition. Violators would be subject to a civil penalty that may not exceed \$75. Failure to pay the fine could result in suspension of the motor vehicle registration.

Bus lane monitoring systems are needed to allow dedicated bus lanes to work as intended. Buses traveling in dedicated lanes carry upward of four times more travelers per hour than a general traffic lane. Dedicated lanes allow buses to travel two or three times faster than usual bus speeds by avoiding traffic congestion often caused by single-occupancy vehicles. The biggest challenge to having dedicated bus lanes work as intended is finding effective enforcement mechanisms to keep unauthorized users out of those lanes.

Faster travel in dedicated bus lanes encourages greater use of transit, which is much better for our environment and public health, and can lessen traffic congestion by reducing the number of vehicles on the road. Transportation is the largest source of climate-disrupting greenhouse gases in Maryland today, so getting more people out of their gas and diesel-fueled vehicles and onto mass transit is critically important. Tailpipe emissions from fossil-fuel powered vehicles are also hazardous to human health, and are linked to cancers, heart disease, asthma, emphysema, other respiratory diseases, and premature death.

In summary, this proposal would enable dedicated bus lanes in our state to work as intended, which would allow buses to be faster and attract more ridership. This bill would bring about positive change, and we urge a favorable report on it.

Jane Lyons-Raeder
Chair, Transportation Committee
janelyons@gmail.com

Josh Tulkin
Chapter Director
Josh.Tulkin@MDSierra.org

Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America's oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.

BTF - SB 943 - Better Bus Service Act of 2024 - Ho

Uploaded by: Michael Jerakis

Position: FAV

BALTIMORE'S TRANSIT FUTURE

April 2, 2024

The Honorable Marc Korman
Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee
Maryland House of Delegates

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

Dear Chair Korman 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 SB0943. 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,

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](#).

BALTIMORE'S TRANSIT FUTURE

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

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; and
6. Catalyze equitable development at transit and rail stations.

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.

Better Bus Service Act Maryland op-ed.pdf

Uploaded by: Ronza Othman

Position: FAV

For the Disabled Community, the Better Bus Act is Revolutionary

Vehicles illegally parked at bus stops prevent Marylanders with disabilities from safely accessing transit buses, keeping us from reaching jobs, schools, healthcare appointments and more on time – if at all. This is a major problem that has gone unrecognized for a long time – but help is finally on the way thanks to Del. Robbyn Lewis and Sen. Arianna Kelly.

To combat this problem, last year WMATA launched its Clear Lanes program to enforce illegal parking at bus stops with bus-mounted cameras. However, this program operates only in Washington, DC and must be turned off when a MetroBus goes into Maryland because there is no law allowing such critical enforcement there yet.

Across Maryland, blocked bus stops are an everyday problem. When street parking is difficult, many are tempted to park at a bus stop. It might seem harmless, but it's not: the consequences of this illegal parking for people with disabilities are dire.

The Better Bus Service Act of 2024, introduced by Del. Lewis and Senator Kelly would reduce illegal parking at bus stops by enabling transit agencies operating in Maryland to enforce these impediments to safe and reliable transit service with cameras mounted on buses. This bill is essential to improving safety and transportation access for Marylanders with disabilities.

There is a reason buses are designed to pull parallel and even to a bus stop curb – to make boarding and exiting the bus safer and prevent riders from having to step down into an active road, which is critically important for blind and low vision people. A bus stop is a physical feature, so a blind or low vision rider can independently and safely locate the bus stop using a long white cane, guide dog or other technique. Blind and low vision riders depend on the audible bus announcements to identify the bus number, route, and even the destination, as most cannot see the signs on the bus. But if the bus stop is blocked, the bus can't pull up where a blind or low vision rider is waiting. The rider may not know the bus is nearby, causing the rider to miss the bus, which means they are late or miss their appointments or work. Many individuals on dialysis take the bus to their appointments, and if they miss the bus because the bus stop is blocked, they could literally die.

For people using wheelchairs and other mobility devices, blocked bus stops can make it impossible for wheelchair ramps to safely reach the curb, and those riders could be prevented from boarding or exiting at their stop. Bus stops are specifically designed to have enough clearance from the bus door to the end of the ramp without obstructions. But if the bus stops somewhere other than at the bus stop, then individuals using mobility devices have to rush to get to where the bus has stopped, often through obstacles not conducive to those using wheelchairs and other mobility aids, like tree roots and stoops. The bus ramp may also not have sufficient clearance for the rider to get on the bus safely if the bus has to stop somewhere other than the designated bus stop.

In a recent study, Philadelphia showed that this is an urgent issue. The Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) found that on an average weekday, over half of bus stops on two key routes were blocked at least once.

Some bus stops were blocked up to 30 percent of the time – meaning that 30 percent of the time, a disabled person may not be able to safely board or exit the bus. [This recent video from Liberty Resources](#), the Center for Independent Living in Philadelphia, highlights the severe consequences of blocked bus stops for people with disabilities.

This is a crisis in Maryland too. And it is unacceptable. The illegal parking status quo makes our streets more dangerous not just for people with disabilities, older Marylanders and bus riders – but everyone. A blocked bus can delay traffic when it can't pull into a stop, and unloading passengers in the street creates risks for everyone who utilizes the roadway.

In addition to Washington, DC, New York City Transit has been using this technology to combat bus lane violations for years. The camera system forwards video evidence for parking authority officers to determine if a violation occurred.

And it is a proven method of reducing dangerous parking violations. In New York City, 86 percent of drivers who receive a ticket for parking in a bus lane never commit a second offense.

By reducing illegal parking at bus stops, camera-assisted transit zone enforcement will significantly improve safety for transit riders with disabilities. According to a study by the University of Louisville, boarding and exiting is the most dangerous part of the bus journey for wheelchair users. Keeping bus stops clear for buses will go a long way towards removing the danger.

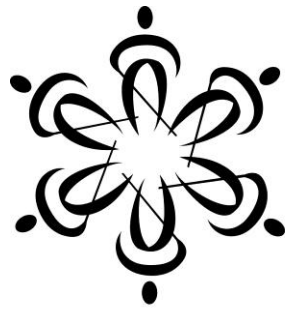
The Maryland legislature must immediately pass this legislation and bring this much-needed technology to the Free State. It's time we put safety and accessibility first.

Ronza Othman is the President of the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland

SB0943 Better Bus Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Ronza Othman

Position: FAV



NATIONAL FEDERATION
OF THE BLIND
MARYLAND

Live the life you want.

Subject: Support to SB0943 Vehicle Laws – Bus Obstruction Monitoring Systems (Better Bus Service Act of 2024)

From: Members of the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland

To: House Environment and Transportation Committee

Contact: Ronza Othman, President
National Federation of the Blind of Maryland
15 Charles Plaza, #3002
Baltimore, MD 21201
Phone: 443-426-4110
Email: President@nfbmd.org

Date: April 2, 2024

Members of the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland urge the House Environment and Transportation Committee to support SB0943 and to resist amending it to conform with the version E&T previously adopted as HB0107, as the House version perpetuates discrimination against individuals with disabilities. The Senate version of the bill will create a statewide bus lane monitoring system to keep vehicles from parking in bus lanes and block curb cuts, which is critical to independent and safe travel for individuals with disabilities.

The House bill should be amended to conform with the Senate Bill. The House bill has no provision for protection for individuals with disabilities when vehicles obstruct a bus stop and curb cut. It is baffling why E&T would remove those provisions – the most important from the perspective of the disability community, as the rest of the bill is basically meaningless to our community; instead, the House bill not only perpetuates obstruction of bus stops and curb cuts, but removal of coverage for those aspects of public transportation is a tacit agreement to continue to endanger the safety and independent movement of individuals with disabilities. Persons with disabilities have been removed from the House version of the bill, changing the House version from a pro-disability bill to an anti-disability bill. This is a serious problem which you can remedy by conforming the House bill to the Senate bill.

THE PROBLEM

Blind and low vision Marylanders rely on public transportation to get to work, medical appointments, worship services, and other places. The public transportation system in Maryland is riddled with problems, including inconsistent and late fixed route bus service. The impact of these challenges on riders is significant — from losing their jobs to missing dialysis and other critical medical appointments to missing religious services, and more. This problem is exacerbated by drivers who stop, drive, and park in bus lanes, which effectively slow down buses and block access to bus stops for those with disabilities. In addition, many with disabilities can only get on and off buses at a bus stop due to accessibility barriers that exist elsewhere, and those who drive, stop, and park in the bus lane prevent riders with disabilities from being able to access the buses on which those riders depend to move about their communities.

PROPOSED ACTION

The House Environment and Transportation Committee should make sure that the House bill says exactly what the Senate bill says. Discrimination against persons with disabilities must be eliminated.

The House Environment and Transportation Committee must pass the Senate version of the Better Bus Service Act of 2024, which will implement prohibitions on driving, stopping, and parking in dedicated bus lanes state-wide.

BACKGROUND

In 2022, the Maryland General Assembly passed legislation, specific only to Baltimore City, that prohibited drivers from using dedicated bus lanes and established a bus lane monitoring system that captured vehicle information for drivers that violated this law. However, the current legislation expands the prohibition state-wide and clarifies which vehicles are covered. The 2022 law was intended to clear Baltimore City's dedicated bus lanes of non-bus traffic to make sure buses could travel without obstructions. In addition, the law decreased the number of instances when a non-authorized vehicle blocked a bus stop, resulting in passengers with disabilities being able to get on and off buses safely and accessibly. This bill was intended to deter misuse of bus lanes and improve on-time rates for Baltimore City buses while ensuring accessibility for riders with disabilities. The problem persists state-wide, however, and thus the law needs to be expanded throughout Maryland.

Last year WMATA launched its Clear Lanes program to enforce illegal parking at bus stops with bus-mounted cameras. However, this program operates only in Washington, DC and must be turned off when a Metro Bus goes into Maryland. We, in Maryland, deserve the same safety benefits as our neighbors in DC.

Please find enclosed in this testimony, an op ed that was published earlier this session concerning the problems individuals face and why the senate version of the bill should be adopted rather than the House version.

Below is a link to a news story also capturing the problem.

<https://www.wusa9.com/article/news/local/maryland/maryland-delegate-pushing-bill-enforce-illegal-parking-bus-lanes/65-152720a3-bfef-47e9-868a-915100732844>

CONCLUSION

To ensure passengers with disabilities throughout Maryland can get on and off buses safely and without obstruction, and to improve on-time performance of the public transportation system, the House Environment and Transportation Committee should vote in favor of SB0943 and resist amending it like this Committee amended HB0107, which changes the bill from a pro-disability to an anti-disability bill.

SB0943-ET_MACo_SUP.pdf

Uploaded by: Sarah Sample

Position: FAV



Senate Bill 943

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

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Environment and Transportation
Committee

Date: April 2, 2024

From: Sarah Sample

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 943. This bill expands, statewide, the authority of a county to install and manage bus lane monitoring systems. It also clarifies acceptable and prohibited activities in designated bus lanes as well as the designated bus stops and curb spaces.

SB 943 is enabling legislation, providing counties with an additional tool in maintaining motor vehicle compliance and safety in neighborhoods and communities. This opportunity also helps counties enhance the reliability and safety of public transportation for residents. With an automated option for enforcing motor vehicle laws and violations, there is great potential to divert costs associated with law enforcement personnel, who would typically be tasked with motor vehicle monitoring. These savings can be reinvested in other areas, while maintaining compliance and safety in neighborhoods via the automated monitoring system.

Counties welcome the additional means to provide the accommodations necessary to maintain safe streets and dependable transportation for all and doing so in a way that is sensitive to the constant demands on taxpayer dollars and county budgets. For these reasons, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE** report for SB 943.

SB943_CharlieScott_favwa.pdf

Uploaded by: Charlie Scott

Position: FWA



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.

SB 943 Crossover FWA_CMTA Bikemore.pdf

Uploaded by: Eric Norton

Position: FWA



**Transportation
Alliance**



Bikemore

April 2, 2024

**Testimony on SB 943 –
Better Bus Service Act of 2024 –
Environment and Transportation Committee**

Position: Favorable With Amendments

The Central Maryland Transportation Alliance and Bikemore support SB 943, which expands the ability of local jurisdictions to enforce dedicated bus lanes.

Dedicated bus lanes can be an effective tool to move people more efficiently through our most crowded and economically productive corridors. Public education and enforcement are critical to the effectiveness of dedicated bus lanes. But bus riders regularly report that lanes are blocked by parked or standing cars and trucks. These impediments seriously undermine the effectiveness of the lanes, worsen travel times for riders, and disrupt the transit system's on-time performance. However, better and more consistent enforcement should reduce incidents of cars or trucks stopped or standing in bus lanes, lower travel times for bus trips, improve reliability for scheduled bus arrivals, and move more people per hour through our busiest corridors.

Despite our overall support for the bill, we are requesting one amendment to remove language that would allow people to make "a brief stop" in a bus lane when dropping off or picking up passengers. While it's understandable that many of us when driving would like to be able to pull over for a quick drop-off/pick-up, we are concerned that such an exception is simply too big of a loophole and would essentially make the lanes unenforceable.

We encourage a FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENT report for Senate Bill 943 that removes the language in Section 21-1133 (b)(6) that exempts "A VEHICLE MAKING A BRIEF STOP FOR THE SOLE PURPOSE OF DROPPING OFF OR PICKING UP A PASSENGER".

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

SB 943 - MoCo_MCDOT_FWA (House) (GA 24).pdf

Uploaded by: Melanie Wenger

Position: FWA



Montgomery County

Office of Intergovernmental Relations

ROCKVILLE: 240-777-6550

ANNAPOLIS: 240-777-8270

SB 943

DATE: April 2, 2024

SPONSOR: Senators Kelly and Lam

ASSIGNED TO: Environment and Transportation

CONTACT PERSON: Melanie Wenger (melanie.wenger@montgomerycountymd.gov)

POSITION: Support with Amendment (MC Department of Transportation)

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

The Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) strongly supports Senate Bill 943, as it provides a critical and powerful tool to keep bus lanes clear of private vehicles. With the use of bus obstruction monitoring systems, buses in Montgomery County can increase reliability and travel speeds, as well as increase accessibility for bus passengers. Clear bus lanes and reliable bus service improves access to opportunity for thousands of bus passengers and encourages mode shift from private vehicles.

However, the addition of § 21-1133 (b) (6), which would allow private vehicles to load or unload passengers in a bus lane, presents a significant risk to the efficacy of the Better Bus Act and should be stricken from Senate Bill 943. Fundamentally, bus lanes should be reserved for bus travel and bus passenger loading; any other activity, however brief, stands to delay buses and compromise bus service. For the functional implementation of the Better Bus Act, the allowance of passenger loading threatens to undermine jurisdiction's ability to issue valid violations.

Automated camera-based enforcement technology cannot accurately and consistently capture people entering or exiting a vehicle. The provision would make it easier for drivers to contest violations, given that the photos would not clearly demonstrate whether the vehicle is accompanied by a driver and/or actively unloading a passenger. There are numerous circumstances in which the camera would not have a clear view as to the presence of passengers inside or outside the vehicle, such as low light, tinted windows, and obstruction from other pedestrian traffic. Even a secondary review of the photos by a reviewing officer or judge could not provide 100% certainty as to whether loading is occurring.

With the addition of private vehicle passenger loading, any driver that receives a violation (whether or not they were actually loading passengers) could appear in court in Montgomery County and testify to a judge that they were briefly stopped to pick up a passenger. The judge would not have sufficient photographic proof to disprove their claim, and therefore would almost certainly dismiss the violation. The risk is that drivers would use this provision to successfully

contest most or all tickets, therefore threatening the efficient and reliable operations of the bus lanes (not to mention increase the administrative cost for the operating entity).

MCDOT reiterates its support for the Better Bus Act, which stands to ensure the County's investment in bus lanes and Bus Rapid Transit can truly improve the quality and reliability of transit. The Department encourages the Committee to approve the Better Bus Bill, without the provision for passenger loading in bus lanes.

MGA 2024 Testimony Bill SB0943 (Better Bus Service

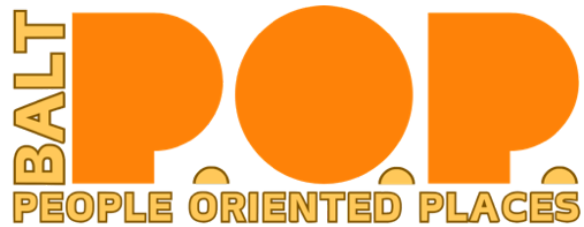
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Position: FWA

Bill: Senate Bill 0943

Bill Title: Better Bus Service Act of 2024

Position: **Favorable with Amendments**



Members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee,

In order for public transit to be more appealing for widespread use, it needs to perform better. The measures that this bill calls for (prohibiting unallowed stopping and parking in a dedicated bus lane and allowing automated enforcement of bus lane use, stopping, and parking violations) are a necessary step toward that better performance.

When passing this bill, please consider the following two provisions:

1. Please **retain** the provision that "a person may not stop, stand, or park a vehicle in a bike lane," as well as the similar "bus stop zone" prohibition.
2. Please **strike** the provision that "A vehicle making a brief stop for the sole purpose of dropping off or picking up a passenger" may stop in a bus lane. This would be difficult to enforce.

We hope the committee finds these points helpful and convincing and we urge its members to **vote for this bill (with amendments)**. Thank you for your time and attention.

[BaltPOP - Baltimoreans for People-Oriented Places](#)

Michael Scepaniak, Co-president

SB0943 - MTA - Vehicle Laws - Better Bus Service A

Uploaded by: Pilar Helm

Position: FWA

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,

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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,

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