



## Statement of the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 689

SB 943– Better Bus Service Act of 2024

March 6th, 2024

**TO: The Honorable William C. Smith and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee**

**FROM: Matthew Girardi, Political & Communications Director, ATU Local 689**

ATU Local 689 strongly supports SB 943 and urges the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee to issue a favorable report. This bill is a commonsense measure that would make Maryland roads easier to navigate for operators, trips quicker for the riding public, and streets safer for all.

At Local 689, we represent over 15,000 transit workers and retirees throughout the Washington DC Metro Area performing many skilled transportation crafts for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), MetroAccess, DASH, and DC Streetcar among others. Our union helped turn low-wage, exploitative transit jobs into transit careers. We became an engine for the middle-class of this region.

Local 689 supports HB 107 because, as we have already seen in Washington DC, dedicated bus lanes are good for transit, and ticketing reckless drivers is good for public safety. When lanes are clear, it means that operators are able to navigate through traffic easier, faster, and safer. Likewise, for the riding public, it means that buses are able to come on time more often and get them to their destinations without having to sit in traffic. Thankfully, most people see the logic in this. However, too often, the recklessness of a few individuals illegally obstructing bus lanes has eclipsed the need of the greater riding public. Ultimately, we see this as a matter not only of fairness but also of common sense.

All jurisdictions should have the authority to collect fees on reckless bus lane obstruction as they see fit—including with a bus lane monitoring system akin to that just enacted in Washington DC. Doing so would provide real time incentive for individuals to stay out of dedicated bus lanes and allow for traffic to flow as intended, and a guarantee that drivers would face consequences.

Already, we have seen an uptick in reckless driving over the past few years. Traffic fatalities in Maryland reached 600 in 2023, the highest in nearly two decades. Marylanders deserve better. Keeping bus lanes clear and swiftly penalizing reckless drivers obstructing bus lanes is good for transit workers, the riding public, and our whole transportation network.

We thank Senators Kelly and Lam and for introducing this measure and urge the committee to issue a favorable report.