

Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1300

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Proudly representing the transit workers of the MTA!



HB 1144 - State Public Transit Service and Stations - Exclusion for Assault and Bodily Injury House Environment & Transportation Committee February 20th, 2025

ATU Local 1300 represents over 3,000 transit workers at the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA). This includes bus operators, bus mechanics, rail operators, rail maintenance workers, and more. Our members keep Maryland moving every day.

For years, transit workers from across the state have come to the Maryland General Assembly and asked for your help to keep us safe from assaults. Over the last decade, attacks on our members have dramatically increased, with no end in sight. Transit workers have public facing roles on the front lines at the intersections of a public health, mental health, poverty, and drug crisis.

This year, we come back to the General Assembly with a proposed solution. Ban passengers that attack transit workers or other passengers from using the service. These people have proven themselves incapable of using the transportation services safely and are a risk to others.

Since the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law included language requiring the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to study the issue of transit worker assaults, we finally have the data to prove what our members have said for years. When publishing its historic “General Directive 24-1: Required Actions Regarding Assaults on Transit Workers,” former FTA Deputy Administrator Veronica Vanterpool stated, “No American should go to work and worry they will not return home safely. That is particularly true for the transit workers who were valuable frontline workers in our nation’s time of need. Transit workers experienced a significant increase in assaults over the years, which is unacceptable... We will continue to take action to ensure that our nation’s transit workers are safe and secure while running our nation’s trains, buses, and transit facilities.”

The FTA conducted extensive research on the issue and found that one of the most effective policies to keep transit workers safe were bans and service exclusions.¹ The report explicitly commended these policies, noting:

- *“Bus operator perspective—increased perception of security and management support for operators; lets bus operators know that management is serious about their security.*
- *Customer perspective—lets customers know that the agency is serious about security and might not allow violations of their codes of conduct.*
- *Does not require significant investments in equipment or security personnel.”*

Though the FTA also highlighted that one of the largest impediments to adopting service exclusions was that agencies were unclear on whether they had the authority to implement these policies. That is part of the reason we are here to support HB 1144. We believe the General Assembly should make its position on transit safety clear - if you can’t ride the service safely, you cannot use the transit service.

¹ Federal Transit Administration. “Report on Practices to Protect Bus Operators from Passenger Assault.” Transit Cooperative Research Program: Synthesis 93.

In January 2023, an MTA Mobility Link driver was shot and killed while at work². Just a few days later, a WMATA worker was killed while trying to prevent a mass shooting.³ In 2021, there were three shooting deaths of transit workers.⁴ In 2019, Marcus Parks, a 20 year operator and one of our members was shot and killed. Dozens of incidents of attacks, assaults, harassment, and verbal confrontations never make the public news but are experienced by our transit workers every year.

With our testimony today we have invited several transit workers to share their experiences and perspectives. We hope you hear their stories today and recognize that the people here today represent just a small fraction of our members who have been through something similar. We have also included additional information on transit service exclusions and transit assault data.

We urge the committee to issue a favorable report for HB 1144.

² WMAR. "MTA mobility driver killed in "violent crime" during work shift." January 30, 2023.

³ BBC News. "Washington DC metro worker who died tackling gunman is a 'hero'" February 3, 2023.

⁴ Justin George, "Third killing of a transit worker in Baltimore sparks calls for improved security." Washington Post. August 27, 2021.

Similar Legislation

Virginia - Passed in 2023 - Originally bill HB 2330 – Section F: "The sentence of such person upon conviction shall also prohibit such person from entering or riding in any vehicle operated by the public transportation service that employed such operator for a period of not less than six months as a term and condition of such sentence."

Illinois - Passed in 2023 - Originally bill HB 1342 – Allows transit agencies to pass regulations that allow them to ban passengers or confiscate their ride cards if they verbally or physically threaten a transit worker. This is a lower bar than actual physical assault – just threats or yelling would qualify.

New Jersey - Passed in 2022 - Originally bill HB 4071 - "developing a new policy that will ban riders who assault drivers or other NJ Transit employees, with a lifetime ban possible for assault with a deadly weapon...the policy is part of a law passed last year, the Motorbus and Passenger Rail Service Employee Violence Protection Act (VPA), that also raised fines for assaulting transit workers.

Oregon - Effective Since 2017 - ORS 166.116 Interfering with public transportation - "TriMet has allowed long-term bans since 2017 for people who commit assaults on board that rise to the level of a felony, but those who commit misdemeanors were banned for a maximum of 90 days." Since 2022 - A person who has committed three or more violations would become eligible for a ban of six month or longer, regardless of the level of their offense."

California - Effective for some time, but most recently updated in September 2024 - Certain transit operators are given authority to ban passengers. For example, VTA received permission in Assembly Bill 1735 in 2024. The Sacramento Regional Transit District, the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, the Fresno Area Express, and the San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District are also permitted under state law to issue prohibition orders.

Massachusetts - "In Boston, police officers are allowed to bar a person from a particular bus or line for a maximum of 24 hours, said Richard Sullivan, superintendent of transit police at the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority. A stay-away order for anything longer than that must come from a judge as part of the arraignment process or sentencing."

Montgomery County - "Individuals who violate the disruptive behavior rule by engaging in prohibited behavior are subject to a 90-day suspension of service and/or fines or imprisonment for up to 6 months. Prohibited behaviors include interfering with the operation of the vehicle, eating/drinking/smoking, fighting, spitting, yelling, threatening the driver or others on board, tossing or throwing articles or projectiles, and unwanted touching or conversation with another passenger. The exclusion is enforced by transit supervision with assistance from local law enforcement when needed."

National Transit Database - Transit Worker Assault Data

The Federal Transit Administration requires that major transit systems report safety data to the National Transit Database (NTD). Incidents are broken down into major (i.e. someone required transportation to a hospital) and non-major. Non-major incidents are aggregated and not reported individually.

In 2024, the NTD reported the following data for WMATA, MTA, RideOn, & The Bus:

- 33 assaults on operators (major events - requiring transport to hospital)
- 62 other major events (e.g. assault on non-operator, assaults on passengers)
- 191 non-major physical assaults on operators & 204 non-major assaults on other transit workers.

2023 MTA Report - Assaults on Public Transit Operators (Transportation Article §7-714)

Section 7-714, Maryland Annotated Code for Transportation requires that the MTA compile a report on transit assaults in the state. The last report was published in 2023.

Table 1: Findings Summary Table

| Field | MTA | WMATA (Maryland Only) | LOTS | Total |
|----------------------------------|-------|--------------------------|------|------------|
| Assaults (Total) | 95 | 46 | 15 | 156 |
| <i>Assaults (Percentage)</i> | 60.9% | 29.5% | 9.6% | 100% |
| Assault Type | | | | |
| <i>Simple</i> | 76 | 35 | 8 | 119 |
| <i>Aggravated</i> | 17 | 8 | 6 | 31 |
| <i>Threat</i> | 2 | 3 | - | 5 |
| <i>Unknown</i> | - | - | 1 | 1 |
| Mode | | | | |
| <i>Bus</i> | 79 | 35 | 15 | 129 |
| <i>Metro</i> | 9 | 10 | - | 19 |
| <i>Demand Response</i> | 6 | 1 | - | 7 |
| <i>Light Rail</i> | 1 | - | - | 1 |
| <i>Commuter Rail</i> | - | - | - | 0 |
| <i>Commuter Bus</i> | - | - | - | 0 |
| Employee Type | | | | |
| <i>Bus Operator</i> | 79 | 35 | 15 | 129 |
| <i>Station Manager/Attendant</i> | 1 | 8 | - | 9 |
| <i>Demand Response Operator</i> | 6 | 1 | - | 7 |
| <i>Metro Operator</i> | 4 | 2 | - | 6 |
| <i>Unknown</i> | 4 | - | - | 4 |
| <i>Light Rail Operator</i> | 1 | - | - | 1 |