

Amalgamated Transit Union Local 689

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Statement of the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 689

HB438/SB463 - Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority - Funding Formulas - Alteration
(WMATA Dedicated Funding Amendment Act of 2022)

February 11th, 2022

TO: The Honorable Guy Guzzone and Members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

TO: The Honorable Maggie McIntosh and Members of the House Appropriations Committee

FROM: Brian Wivell, Political & Communications Director, ATU Local 689

Local 689 Urges Favorable Report

ATU Local 689 strongly supports HB438/SB463 and urges the committee to issue a favorable report. We believe that this bill will help strengthen WMATA's ability to bond its capital funding, allowing the authority to better plan its future capital projects and gain access to necessary investment for important projects.

In 2018, the General Assembly made history by passing the Maryland Metro Transit Funding Act. In the years that immediately followed, WMATA made impressive improvements in eliminating its maintenance backlog and ridership even began to climb before dropping during the pandemic. The dedicated funding allowed WMATA to take on long term projects without fear that the money might not be there. The pandemic has completely upended public transit across the country and WMATA is no exception. Only federal assistance through Department of Transportation grants were able to keep the system afloat. As WMATA looks towards its FY2024 budget, it is clear that the system may face a massive deficit that could lead to service cuts and layoffs. It is essential that WMATA have the financial tools and resources necessary to avoid the worst possible outcomes and we believe that HB438/SB463 might be a part of that solution, by allowing them better access to predictable increases to its capital budget.

There are some reasons for optimism but we still have a long way to go. It's going to take years to restore public confidence in our system. A lot of damage was done. Now we must contend with ridership recovery from the pandemic that could stretch out over years. We hope that other WMATA funding jurisdictions take up similar acts in order to implement this legislation as quickly as possible.

We appreciate your consideration of our views and would be pleased to answer any questions.

Amalgamated Transit Union Local 689 is comprised of more than 15,000 members and retirees performing occupations within the many skilled transportation crafts for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), MetroAccess, DASH, Fairfax Connector, and the DC Circulator and Streetcar among others. A member of the Amalgamated Transit Union (AFL-CIO/CLC), the largest labor organization representing transit workers in the United States and Canada. Local 689 was established on January 19, 1916. For more information please visit our website at atulocal689.org. In addition, ATU Local 1300 in Baltimore represents about 3,000 transit workers at the MTA.