
March 22, 2022

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chairman, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Letter of Support – House Bill 53 – Vehicle Laws – Dedicated Bus Lanes – Enforcement

Dear Chairman Smith and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) supports House Bill 53 as it allows for increased efficiencies and enforcement of dedicated bus lanes (DBLs).

House Bill 53 prohibits a person from driving a motor vehicle in a DBL without local approval and authorizes the local jurisdiction to implement a bus lane monitoring camera system to enforce the prohibition. This legislation is modeled after the report required by CH 340 of 2019, in which the MDOT Maryland Transit Administration (MTA), jointly with the Baltimore City Department of Transportation (BCDOT), examined best practices and technologies used by selected peer transit agencies and proposed an action plan for enforcement of DBL violations in Baltimore.

The MDOT MTA currently operates a 13-mile network of dedicated lanes on high volume bus corridors in Downtown Baltimore City. DBLs are implemented in heavily used transit corridors; for example, each of the dedicated bus lanes in Baltimore City carry more people per lane than the adjacent general-purpose travel lanes. As MDOT MTA buses operate on streets owned and maintained by the City of Baltimore, the City's partnership is essential.

In February 2019, the MDOT MTA released a study on the effectiveness of dedicated bus lanes, with traffic data reported both before and after the implementation of the lanes. During peak travel periods, improvements in travel times were found for 79% of the bus lanes. Travel time savings ranged from 4.7% on Baltimore Street, to 31.7% on Hillen Street/Guilford Avenue, with an average benefit of 9.3% per corridor. In addition, data demonstrates that these lanes have improved traveler safety by reducing the number of bus-involved crashes by nearly 12%, which benefits riders and non-riders alike.

Dedicated bus lanes offer the potential for increased speed, safety, reliability, and on-time performance for transit vehicles, minimizing delays, particularly during rush hours. The MDOT MTA's joint report with Baltimore City found that in other jurisdictions across the country, automated lane enforcement has become a vital tool for assuring the efficiency of traffic in these lanes, as constant police monitoring requires additional resources, may cause greater challenges, and may further contribute to transit delays.

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The MDOT MTA Central Maryland Regional Transit Plan (CMRTP) set a goal to build 18 miles of dedicated bus lanes by 2025 and 30 miles by 2045. Through the MDOT MTA's Fast Forward Program and RAISE Grant Award, the MDOT MTA and Baltimore City have identified potential locations for new dedicated bus lanes to improve reliability and travel times throughout the BaltimoreLink system. The Fast Forward Program will utilize Pilot treatments of dedicated bus lanes in order to implement improvements faster. The RAISE Grant will bring 10 miles of dedicated bus lanes to the CityLink Blue and Orange routes in Baltimore which will improve east-west transit service.

The MDOT MTA Police, the Baltimore Police Department, and BCDOT's Safety Division have been actively patrolling dedicated bus lanes and issuing citations to those that are not authorized to travel in the lanes. Between January 1, 2018, and November 30, 2021, the MDOT MTA Police issued 5,579 citations and 531 warnings. In addition, the City of Baltimore issued over 26,000 violations for No Parking/Standing in Bus Stop/Bus Lane during the same time period. Currently, when a violation occurs, police enforcement typically requires the blocking of the dedicated lane for an extended period to write tickets, check information, and if necessary, make an arrest. If the stop results in an arrest, the vehicle then must be towed and impounded, which prolongs the amount of time the bus lane is blocked.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee grant House Bill 53 a favorable report.

Respectfully submitted,

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