

SB693_PGCEX_FAV.pdf

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Position: FAV



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

BILL: Senate Bill 693 - Assaults on Public Transit Service Operators - Reports

SPONSOR: Senator Waldstreicher

HEARING DATE: March 1, 2023

COMMITTEE: Judicial Proceedings

CONTACT: Intergovernmental Affairs Office, 301-780-8411

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS Senate Bill 693 - Assaults on Public Transit Service Operators - Reports**, which would require the Maryland Transit Administration to submit annual reports on assaults on public transit operators to the following: (1) the local executive authority of each county; (2) the State's Attorney for each County; (3) the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee; (4) Senate Finance Committee; and (5) the House Judiciary Committee. **Senate Bill 693** also requires the report to include information on the nature of each assault, the mode of transit involved, the location of the assault, whether the police were involved in responding to the assault, and the outcome of any investigation.

The Prince George's County Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPW&T) operates TheBus fixed-route and Call-A-Bus paratransit systems, and public transit services open to all County residents. DPW&T's transit services are located at 8401 D'Arcy Road, Forestville, MD 20747. In 2021 DPW&T served 905,056 riders. TheBus has experienced an increase of over 400% in bus operator assaults in 2021 versus 2020. Although, we have been fortunate to not have severe or fatal incidents, operators have become victims of more harsh and sometimes violent behavior.

DPW&T uses every available resource to provide safe reliable service and has made great efforts to train our drivers to avoid conflict. However, occurrences of assault against drivers have been both increasing and escalating in nature. According to the Federal Transit Administration's National Transit Database, assaults on transit operators have increased fourfold since 2009. An average of 174 operator assaults that the Federal Transit Administration considers "major incidents" occurred each year during that period, according to the government database. In Maryland, we have seen three shooting deaths of bus drivers in the City of Baltimore in less than a year.

Assaults on drivers not only endanger the driver but also put the lives of other passengers and pedestrians at risk as drivers are forced to confront attacks while trying to safely operate their vehicles. Providing for the mandated reporting of violence against transit operators will allow the

Maryland General Assembly to enact penalties that will be an effective deterrent and numerous localities and states have already enacted stiffer penalties for such incidents.

According to a Transportation Association of Maryland member survey conducted in 2020, 53% of Maryland transit organizations have experienced multiple physical assaults in the previous year and over three out of four describe their drivers as regularly experiencing verbal threats and intimidation.

According to the Transit Cooperative Research Program, sponsored by the Federal Transit Administration, operator assaults can have significant consequences for the victimized operators, for their coworkers and families and for bus operations in the form of injury-related claims, absences, diminished productivity, and union grievances. Operators may experience increased levels of anxiety and stress, which can cause them to become distracted while on duty or less calm under pressure. When asked about issues experienced by bus operators or operations as a result of violence against bus operators, 68% of the 50 respondents to this question reported that they have had injury related claims, and more than half reported that their operators showed increased anxiety and stress. Twenty-eight percent reported that their bus operations were affected by absenteeism and diminished productivity and 20% reported union grievances. Small agencies were less likely to report that their operators have been showing increased anxiety or stress. Larger agencies tended to report more injury-related claims and absenteeism or diminished productivity than midsize agencies, and midsize agencies were more likely to report absenteeism or diminished productivity than small agencies.

For the reasons stated above, the Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS Senate Bill 693** and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report.

SB693_CharlieScott_fav.pdf

Uploaded by: Charlie Scott

Position: FAV



WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSIT AUTHORITY

Public Testimony in Support of SB 693

Transportation – Assaults on Public Transit Operators – Report

Before the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

March 1, 2023

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 693.

When a transit employee is assaulted, it not only jeopardizes the safety of a WMATA employee, but fellow riders and the public at large. These situations can occur on both our Metrorail and our Metrobus systems and due to the closer interactions between customers and bus operators, Metro encounters most of these types of issues on its bus system. The offenses our operators encounter vary and include: spitting on operators; striking operators with closed fists, sticks, bricks and poles; assaults with deadly weapons (for example, guns and knives); fondling and attempting to undress female operators.

These altercations not only put our operators in harm's way, they also put passengers on the bus and pedestrians and motorists on the public streets in jeopardy. We shudder to think of the injuries that may result from an operator losing control of a vehicle after being hit by a brick – or some other object – while operating his or her vehicle.

Metro has taken many actions to deter such assaults – all Metrobuses are equipped with security cameras and plexiglass shields to protect the operator. Additionally, we deploy undercover Metro Transit Police officers dedicated to riding buses and have additional scout cars patrolling troubled bus routes.

These actions have been helpful, but alone are not enough. In the past few years, we have experienced a significant increase in assaults on Metro employees. Specifically in Maryland, the number of assaults on station managers, train operators and bus operators has increased from a total of 16 in 2020 to 37 in 2021 and 33 in 2022. Adding other employees to the tallies of assaults, in Maryland alone our employees are assaulted on almost a weekly basis.

Employee Assaults (M - 2021)	
Employee Type	#
Bus Operator	26
Contract Employee	3
Other Employee	8
Bus Supervisor	2
Car Maint. Employee	1
Plant Maintenance	1
Radio Technician	1
Rail Training Instructor	1
Station Manager*	1
Construction Supervisor	1
Train Operator	6
Station Manager	5
Total:	48

Employee Assaults (MD - 2022)	
Employee Type	#
Bus Operator	27
Contract Employee	4
Other Employee	12
Fare Tech	1
Bus Operator*	2
Custodian	3
Electrical Mechanic	1
Elevator/Escalator Tech	1
Mechanic	1
Power Tech	1
Special Police Officer	1
Station Manager*	1
Station Manager	6
Total:	49

**Bus Operator and Station Manager within the "Other Category" were not performing their specific duties while assaulted and therefore categorized as "Other employee".*

Coupled with the actions we are taking, I believe this legislation is a step in the right direction towards bringing greater public awareness to the environment our employees face as they serve our riding public. We hope that shedding more light on these assaults will lead to greater penalties for offenders.

I thank Senator Waldstreicher and members of this Committee for providing leadership on this important issue and thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of SB 693.

SB 693 - Transportation - Assaults on Public Trans

Uploaded by: Donna Edwards

Position: FAV



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**SB 693 - Transportation - Assaults on Public Transit Operators - Report
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
March 1, 2023**

SUPPORT

**Donna S. Edwards
President**

Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO

Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 693. My name is Donna S. Edwards, and I am the President of the Maryland State and District of Columbia AFL-CIO. On behalf of Maryland's 300,000 union members, I offer the following comments.

Assault on our public employees is an assault on all of us. In January, an MTA Mobility Link driver was shot and killed while at work¹. Just a few days later, a WMATA worker was killed while trying to prevent a mass shooting.² In 2021, there were three shooting deaths of transit workers.³ Dozens of incidents of attacks, assaults, harassment, and verbal confrontations never make the public news but are experienced by our transit workers every year.

We support SB 693, but we believe sufficient data already exists to support past bills like 2022's SB 208, which made assaulting a public transit operator who was performing their duties a felony. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law already requires the Federal Transit Administration to collect data on transit worker assaults.⁴ Additional data collection and reporting will help transit workers make the case for expanded protections.

Transportation workers interact with the public on a daily basis. These workers are the face of our transportation system – providing top-notch service to everyone who utilizes public transportation – and they deserve the same respect and protection afforded to other public employees who are at risk of being assaulted on the job.

We encourage a favorable report for SB 693.

¹ WMAR. "MTA mobility driver killed in "violent crime" during work shift." January 30, 2023.

² BBC News. "Washington DC metro worker who died tackling gunman is a 'hero'" February 3, 2023.

³ Justin George, "Third killing of a transit worker in Baltimore sparks calls for improved security." Washington Post. August 27, 2021.

⁴ Federal Register, "National Transit Database Safety and Security Reporting Changes and Clarifications." February 23, 2023.

SB 693_TAM_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: John Duklewski

Position: FAV



Bill: Senate Bill 693: Transportation – Assaults on Public Transit Operators – Report
Position: SUPPORT

Dear Chair Smith, Vice-Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee:

I write on behalf of the Transportation Association of Maryland. support of Senate Bill 693, which would require additional reporting and state assistance on behalf of transit operators who daily face the risk of assault.

Our members represent every local jurisdiction operating transit service in Maryland, and the concerns that both they and their drivers have expressed to us are many. Many drivers feel that they are targets as a result of their positions, where they operate alone, strapped into a seat, handling money, and expected to enforce compliance on a variety of rules. According to a TAM member survey conducted in 2020, 53% of Maryland transit organizations have experienced multiple physical assaults in the previous year and over three out of four describe their drivers as regularly experiencing verbal threats and intimidation.

Occurrences of assault against drivers have been both increasing and escalating in nature. According to the Federal Transit Administration’s National Transit Database, assaults on transit operators have increased fourfold since 2009. An average of 174 operator assaults that the Federal Transit Administration considers “major incidents” occurred each year during that period, according to the government database.

Operator assaults can have significant consequences for the victimized operators, When asked about issues experienced by bus operators or operations as a result of violence against bus operators, 68% of the 50 respondents to this question reported that they have had injury related claims, and more than half reported that their operators showed increased anxiety and stress. Twenty-eight percent reported that their bus operations were affected by absenteeism and diminished productivity, and 20% reported union grievances. A recent study by New York’s MTA shows that harassment of MTA bus drivers accounts for three-quarters of all transit worker assaults in recent years, including threats and spitting, among other offenses.

SB 693 creates a long overdue statewide database of driver assaults. We approve especially of the requirement that the MTA recommend best practices in technology and assault prevention to local systems, and encourage the study and eventual adoption of a statewide local transit safety officer to provide guidance.

Drivers provide a unique and critical public service. Assaults against them are not only injuries to a private citizen, they are attacks upon the passengers they transport and the community they serve. This is a problem that deserves the fullest attention of the Maryland Transit Administration.

We fully support Senate Bill 693’s efforts to study this problem and provide support to local transit operators.

Sincerely,

John Duklewski
Executive Director, Transportation Association of Maryland

Testimony SB-693 Assault on Transit Operators - Re

Uploaded by: Larry Kasecamp

Position: FAV

LARRY KASECAMP
Legislative Director

TOM CAHILL
Assistant Director

JOHNNY WALKER
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March 1, 2023

The Honorable William Smith, Chairman
Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

RE: SUPPORT SB693

REPRESENTATIVES

CUMBERLAND
Local 600
LAWRENCE KASECAMP

BRUNSWICK
Local 631
TOM CAHILL

EDMONSTON
Local 1470
KENZELL CRAWFORD

BALTIMORE
Local 610
JOHNNY WALKER

Local 1949
ERIC BILSON

As State Legislative Director for the SMART Transportation Division, I am urging your committee's support for SB693, "Transportation - Assaults on Public Transit Operators - Report."

We all recognize the importance of the vital public service the employees who would be covered under this law provide to the public. However, statistics show that these employees are increasingly being subjected to assaults as the number of reported assaults against them over the past several years continues to climb.

As we recover from the pandemic and with the improved state of the economy the use of public transit is growing. In fact, prior to the pandemic the United States experienced the highest public transit ridership in recent history. This is a good thing for our state and public transit should be promoted to grow our public transit systems even further.

It's unfortunate that the General Assembly hasn't passed legislation with a strong deterrent to address the increase in assaults and prevent these incidents from ever occurring. Although we believe the evidence is there to warrant legislation, we understand that some believe additional statistics are necessary. SB693 requires the collection of data and a report issued to hopefully provide support for future legislation to address the lack of serious consequences for these assaults.

We therefore urge your committee's **support** for SB693.

Sincerely,

Lawrence E. Kasecamp
MD State Legislative Director
SMART – Transportation Division

SB0693 - MTA - Transit Operator Assault - SUPP_FIN

Uploaded by: Patricia Westervelt

Position: FAV

March 1, 2023

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

Re: Letter of Support – Senate Bill 693 – Transportation - Assaults on Public Transit Operators - Report

Dear Chair Smith and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) supports Senate Bill 693 as it would highlight the risks that public transit operators encounter and may lead to increased protections for those that provide vital services to this State.

Senate Bill 693 requires the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) to submit an annual report on assaults on public transit operators, by December 1st of each year. The report must include data for MTA, the Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority (WMATA), and political subdivisions and must be submitted to each local executive authority, the State's Attorney for each county, and specified committees of the General Assembly. MTA currently collects the information outlined in Senate Bill 693 and is eager to share the data to a broader audience.

MTA is grateful for the service of our dedicated men and women who operate our buses, light rail, metro subway, MARC, and mobility vehicles. Transit operators drive our children to school each day, transport the vulnerable to medical appointments, and ensure that the essential workers of our State safely arrive at their place of employment on time. The recent COVID-19 pandemic has only further highlighted the vital nature of their work.

Since 2013, an average of 50 assaults against MTA operators are reported each year. In the past three years, MTA and WMATA have lost several operators to gun violence while in the course of delivering essential service to the public. Not only are these incidents an assault on our operators, they are an assault to the public's right to safe and reliable transportation. MTA believes that all assaults committed against public transit operators are reprehensible and that information about these acts should be readily accessible to all jurisdictions of our State.

For these reasons, the Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests that the Committee grant Senate Bill 693 a favorable report.

Respectfully submitted,

Holly Arnold
Administrator
Maryland Transit Administration
410-767-3943

Pilar Helm
Director of Government Affairs
Maryland Department of Transportation
410-865-1090

SB 693, FAV, FCG TransIT, LS23.pdf

Uploaded by: Victoria Venable

Position: FAV



FREDERICK COUNTY GOVERNMENT

TRANSIT SERVICES DIVISION

Jessica Fitzwater
County Executive

Roman Steichen, Director

Senate Bill 693: Transportation – Assaults on Public Transit Operators – Report

DATE: March 1, 2023
COMMITTEE: Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
POSITION: SUPPORT
FROM: Roman Steichen, Director, Transit Services, Frederick County Government

Thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 693: Transportation – Assaults on Public Transit Operators – Report. As the Director of the Transit Services Division in Frederick County, I urge the committee to give SB 693 a favorable report.

Transit Services provides fixed route and paratransit services to residents of Frederick County, and our drivers are our most important asset. They serve as first responders, heavy equipment operators, social workers, and sometimes, the only friendly and safe face an older adult may see. While the incidence of driver assaults is low in Frederick County, our colleagues statewide report more and more incidents where their operator safety is compromised. They deserve protection against assaults, both verbal and physical, and we must ensure that their safety is paramount in decision-making.

Public transit drivers provide a unique and critical public service to the Frederick community as well as statewide. Assaults against them are not only injuries to a private citizen, but they are also attacks upon the passengers they transport and against the community they serve. The safety of transit drivers is of utmost importance, and this is a problem that deserves the fullest attention of the MDOT MTA.

We support Senate Bill 693's efforts to study this problem, as well as provide support to local transit operators once the study has been completed.

Thank you for your consideration of SB 693. On behalf of Frederick County Government, I urge a favorable report.

Roman Steichen
Director, Transit Services of Frederick County

