



Montgomery County

Office of Intergovernmental Relations

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SB 693

DATE: March 1, 2023

SPONSOR: Senator Waldstreicher

ASSIGNED TO: Judicial Proceedings

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POSITION: Support (Department of Transportation)

Transportation – Assaults on Public Transit Operators – Report

The Montgomery County Department of Transportation strongly supports Senate Bill 693, which would require the Maryland Transit Administration to submit an annual report on assaults on public transit operators to each county executive and county state's attorney and relevant House and Senate Committees. This annual report would outline the nature, type, location, police involvement and investigative outcomes of these assaults. In addition, the report would compare assault data with at least two other states with similar transit systems and other similar demographic characteristics.

As repeat supporters of legislation introduced in prior years to strengthen the penalties for these types of assaults, Senate Bill 693 reflects an organized approach to better understanding the magnitude and severity of assaults on public transit operators. This is a good first step that should better inform a path forward. And, one is necessary.

Montgomery County's Ride On bus system, pre-COVID, operated 81 routes and served 20 million passengers a year. While it is now operating at about 82% of its 2019 capacity, it remains a very large locally operated transit system and is not immune to the problems that other large – and often smaller – transit systems face. Between fiscal 2015 and 2022, Ride On recorded 115 operator assaults. Metrobus, which also serves Montgomery and Prince George's County has also reported double digit numbers of assaults in each of the past few years. There are consequences, including depressing ridership for those that would otherwise take a bus but feel unsafe and have to find less efficient modes of travel to get to work or school or to access daily travel destinations.

For these reasons, the Department urges the Committee to take this first reasonable step toward gathering the data to better understand how to improve the overall safety of transit operators and their riders, by passing Senate Bill 693.