



HB 107 – Vehicle Laws – Better Bus Service Act of 2024

Environment & Transportation Committee

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Position: Support

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. I am Joshua Feldmark representing Bike Maryland. We represent cyclists of all abilities across the state who ride 5 miles around the park with their families, for transportation, to a 100 mile ride. We believe that all cyclists should feel safe when they ride.

There is a reasonable chance, at this moment, you are wondering to yourself what the bike people are doing testifying on a bus bill. First and foremost it is important to note that we believe strongly in a transportation system that works effectively and safely for all modalities. We take particular interest in supporting users of options that, generally speaking, do not have adequate representation here in Annapolis and more often than not, are largely unable to represent themselves at hearings like this. Bus riders are clearly in that category and so we hope that we can adequately support their interests today.

In previous years this august body has supported the implementation of complete streets policies, Complete streets is an approach to planning and design of our roadways that enables safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders. However, complete streets will only work if “everyone stays in their lane.” In other words, in order to make this system work, the rules need to be enforced appropriately.

In a comprehensive study of this issue, the National Capital Regional Transportation Planning Board came to some rather unsurprising conclusions. Bus lanes provide an opportunity to eliminate some of the performance challenges our bus systems face as a result of traffic congestion. Bus lanes have the potential to significantly improve bus speeds and reliability. For transit agencies, bus lanes can result in shorter running times, which in turn lead to increased reliability, decreased schedule recovery times, and reduced operating cost. For bus passengers, bus lanes can decrease in-bus travel times as well as reduce average waiting times at stops and crowding resulting from the improved reliability – increasing the attractiveness of transit and potentially increasing bus ridership.

All of those benefits, however, can be negated without proper enforcement of the bus lane. Although practices vary across the country, enforcement of bus lane use is absolutely critical in ensuring that buses are not adversely affected by vehicle traffic. Several studies indicated that the perception of limited bus lane enforcement increases violation rates, diminishing the effectiveness of bus lanes and resulting in reduced bus speeds.

For these reasons, we urge this committee to issue a favorable report on HB 107.