



Statement of the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 689

HB 1370– Transportation - Regional Transportation Authorities

March 4th, 2025

TO: The Honorable Marc Korman and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee

FROM: Matthew Girardi, Political & Communications Director, ATU Local 689

ATU Local 689 is providing only informational testimony on HB 1370. While we fully support the ideas of regional transportation authorities, this bill raises several important questions.

At Local 689, we represent over 15,000 transit workers and retirees throughout the Washington DC Metro Area performing many skilled transportation crafts for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), MetroAccess, DASH, and DC Streetcar among others. Our union helped turn low-wage, exploitative transit jobs into transit careers. We became an engine for the middle-class of this region.

Due to this, Local 689 is highly supportive of measures that raise revenue and create avenues for doing so for funding transit and transportation. There is a massive structural deficit in the transportation trust fund that must be filled or else the essential infrastructure that is responsible for moving working Marylanders stands at risk. Like our sister local, ATU 1300, we applaud the multiple bills introduced in 2025 that seek to expand the taxing authority of different regions to fund additional transportation projects and services.

However, like Local 1300, we have concerns that pursuing some of these approaches may pit regions against each other and undermine the collective bargaining power of our members. As such, our testimony echoes much of their statement.

HB 1370 sets out that its regional transportation authorities would be solely for financing the construction of transit projects and advice, but we have concerns with the broad language around entering into contracts or creating and being members of corporations that could leave the door open for these transportation authorities to one day become transit operators themselves. For example, 10.5-206 (A)(9) states that the authority may, “fix and collect rates, rentals, fees, royalties, and charges for services and resources it provides or makes available.”

When the Washington D.C. area consolidated multiple failing bus services into MetroBus in 1972, it was a major achievement for a unified region. Today, because of multiple jurisdictions opting out due to anti-urban and anti-worker bias, that crowning jewel has been fractured. Likewise, the perhaps greatest flaw in the WMATA compact is the fact that it was never given either dedicated funding nor taxing power itself. Thus, we are wary about creating a competing authority that would potentially further balkanize transportation both in our region and across the state.

Again, like our brothers and sisters of Local 1300 state: a simple fix to this problem is to explicitly add language barring the transportation authorities from operating or maintaining transportation service, or entering into contracts to do the same.

Furthermore, as it written, because these transportation authorities are bodies not named in the state’s Public

Employees Relations Act (PERA) of 2023 and are excluded from the National Labor Relations Act, workers employed by these Authorities would have no rights to unionize. Maryland already has too many workers excluded from these basic rights. We encourage you to correct this oversight, by applying the PERA article to them as well.

We also note that Section 13C of the Urban Mass Transportation Act is at play here as well. From the Federal Department of Labor:

“When federal funds are used to acquire, improve, or operate a mass transit system (public transportation), federal law requires arrangements to protect the interests of mass transit employees. 49 U.S.C. § 5333(b) (formerly Section 13(c) of the Urban Mass Transportation Act). Section 5333(b) specifies that these protective arrangements must provide for the preservation of rights and benefits of employees under existing collective bargaining agreements, the continuation of collective bargaining rights, the protection of individual employees against a worsening of their positions in relation to their employment, assurances of employment to employees of acquired transit systems, priority of reemployment, and paid training or retraining programs. 49 U.S.C. § 5333(b)(2). The Department of Labor (DOL) must certify that protective arrangements are in place and meet the above requirements for all grants of assistance under of the Federal Transit Law before the Department of Transportation’s Federal Transit Administration (FTA) can release funds.”

If these new transportation authorities are created, we are unsure of how they would impact the existing transit workforces protected by these Federally mandated arrangements.

Worryingly, the language in HB 1370 also explicitly states that the authorities can recommend “public-private transportation projects.” While we are excited at the prospect of new transit projects, Purple Line construction and delivery through public-private partnership concerns us over these types of endeavors.

Local 689 sincerely thanks you for your patience and understanding. The Union is highly supportive of measures to raise necessary revenue for critical transportation projects. Unfortunately, before we could support such a proposal we need firm answers to our concerns.