



---

**Statement of the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 689**  
**HB 439 – Vehicle Laws – Fully Autonomous Vehicles – Human Safety Operators and Reporting**  
**Requirements**  
**February 6th, 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 strongly supports HB 439 and urges the House Environment and Transportation Committee to issue a favorable report. This bill is a necessary measure for ensuring that autonomous vehicles do not endanger public safety on public transit.

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, MTA Commuter Bus, 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.

Our members at WMATA, MTA Commuter Bus, and MetroAccess carry thousands of Marylanders around every year. Whether it be in our downtown urban cores in DC, along the beltway, or through suburban backroads, we are proud to make sure that we keep this region moving. As such, our members know that driving is a job that takes training, caution, and care. After all, we have precious cargo aboard.

Driving especially on highways presents risks for bus transportation. Being able to understand highway routes well, being knowledgeable on the roads through lived experience, and being able to read human signals and interactions are all key. These factors are amplified by decreased reaction times, increased reckless driving at high speeds, and the uptick in deadly crashes due to increased personal automobile sizes. Bus operators understand and have experience in these unique circumstances while artificial intelligence simply does not. As such, the Union believes that it would be a tremendously unwarranted and nonsensical gamble to allow autonomous vehicles to be transporting passengers in large vehicles without human presence at the wheel.

Thankfully, this bill, in addition to regulating AI usage in vehicles, does exactly that. HB 439 would ensure that all buses traveling on state highways have bus operators at the helm to ensure that passengers aboard make it safely to their destinations.

We thank Delegate Stewart for introducing this necessary measure and urge the committee to issue a favorable report.