



## Statement of the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 689

HB 1014– Fair Share for Maryland Act of 2025

February 22nd, 2024

**TO: The Honorable Vanessa E. Atterbeary and Members of the Ways and Means Committee**

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

ATU Local 689 supports HB 1014 and urges the House Ways and Means Committee to issue a favorable report. This bill is a necessary, fair, and progressive measure for ensuring fiscal stability in the state of Maryland.

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.

Even as our region has faced unprecedented challenges over the past few years, transit workers have faithfully stayed on the job and kept our region afloat. They showed up every day even through the worst pandemic in a century and spikes in violence both towards themselves and their riders. They are friends, neighbors, and pillars of the community around this region.

To start, the Union notes that over 9,000 of our members are hardworking WMATA employees. Going into Fiscal Year 2025, Metro stated that it faced an estimated \$750 million gap. Had that need gone unmet, proposals were floated where 108 of the 135 Metrobus routes would have been eliminated or cut; where Metrorail would have run less frequently and less often with entire stations being shuttered; where fares would have increased 25%; and where over 2,300 full time jobs would have been cut, including highly demanded CDL drivers. Thankfully, this body and the whole Government of Maryland prioritized rebaselining its share of operations funding.

However, the model that Metro had run pre-Covid 19 is not working. Since early 2020, ridership has decreased across all mass transit not only here but across the country. Although the numbers are trending in the right direction, fare revenues have not returned to the levels they were at in 2019. Moreover, historic inflation pushed up costs and emergency federal funding infusions that had papered over the resulting structural gap in the operating budget have run out and we should not expect this federal administration to provide assistance. We must ensure that Metro is fully funded this year and then provide dedicated funding thereafter as a region.

In Fiscal Year 2026, Maryland is facing major fiscal challenges. The budget and the Transportation Trust Fund alike are structurally unbalanced, with the problem getting worse the longer the state waits. Thankfully, Governor Moore's proposed budget raised necessary revenue as a first step to ensuring that Maryland is on the path to a responsible and sustainable financial footing. We must build on this progress to ensure that we finish the job. Likewise, we know that in the state of Maryland, multi-billionaires are still paying less in taxes than our members or even the most vulnerable riders we serve. The Union finds this to be an unacceptable fiscal stance.

The Fair Share for Maryland Act is a smart way to close corporate loopholes, increase taxes on the ultra-rich, and give working families a needed tax cut. Everyone is just starting to get over inflation. This would put money

back in the pockets of the working families hit hardest by inflation. We are especially excited about a corporate transit fee, modeled after the successful policy in New Jersey where corporate entities brought in over \$1 billion for NJ Transit. Likewise, it would directly raise over \$1.6 billion for vital programs be them schools, housing, transportation, and more. In short, it ensures that our budget is not balanced on the backs of working class people.

The Union thanks Delegate Palakovich Carr for introducing this worthy measure and urges the committee to issue a favorable report.