



Statement of the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 689

SB 281 - Metro Funding Modification Act of 2026 - Favorable Report

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

February 3rd, 2026

Nearly 50 years ago, Metro opened the doors of its rail system to the region. Since then, I can confidently say that no single organization or piece of infrastructure has done more to culturally and economically tie together and connect the nation's capital area. Metro's bus, rail, and paratransit services stick deep into Maryland and help drive incalculable amounts of economic growth and productivity, but the service was built with structural weaknesses. Its lack of dedicated funding meant that every year, it was at the mercy of its funding jurisdictions. It seemed like every month WMATA was in the news with safety incidents, broken down equipment, delays and rider complaints. Luckily, negotiations by dedicated legislators 8 years ago led to the first dedicated capital funding agreement in its history. The District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia collectively pledged \$500 million of consistent and bondable revenue which was written into statute in each jurisdiction. That money allowed WMATA to tackle a massive state of good repair backlogs. Unfortunately, that money was not set to increase or adjust for inflation. It did not account for global supply chain shocks. It was also not expected to permanently end capital funding discussions or questions of future dedicated revenues.

I had the pleasure of serving on the DMV Moves Community Partner Advisory Group for a year and half. The room was filled with serious transit advocates, experts, community members, and representatives of the business community. Many of us were very disappointed with the trajectory the discussions went. DMV Moves was launched as a once in a generation rethinking of capital area transit cooperation, collaboration, and planning for the future. It was the first of its kind since the 1997 Regional Mobility Panel. We had proposals for joint procurement, shared workforce training, expanded bus service, new funding mechanisms, and more. Over time the financial realities and narrowed ambitions forced the once impressive agenda to winnow down until all that was on the table was capping the state of good repair backlog to industry standard levels with expanded capital funding, cost efficiencies through automating rail operator jobs, and politely asking regional partners to develop their own bus rapid transit programs.

The DMV Moves plan was an agreement made out of compromise between funding partners, not one to boldly expand transit to meet the needs of the region in 2050. The money that was allocated to Metro in 2018 has all been bonded to pay for essential projects. WMATA now faces another capital funding cliff if legislators do not act again, but this time explicitly aiming to future proof the capital funding so that it does grow at a predictable 3% rate. In short, SB 281 will help ensure the long term financial stability of WMATA's capital budget. Legislators must pass it to safeguard the region's existing investments in transit.

I want to draw attention to the specific language that withholds additional capital funding from WMATA if it fails to enter into a workforce transition agreement with its unions representing impacted workers whose positions may be eliminated due to rail automation. We took particular issue with DMV Move's focus away from operations funding issues, because it argued the efficiencies of GoA4 rail automation would lead to cost savings. Let's be clear what that means. Thousands of Maryland workers have their jobs at stake. Thousands of workers may lose their jobs at Metro to balance the budget. Local 689 believes that this language is necessary to safeguard workers during one of the first major high profile automation transitions the state of Maryland will see. It guarantees that WMATA will bargain in good faith over a fair transition agreement that respects the dignity of these workers who have served the system and region for so long.