

Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1300

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Proudly representing the transit workers of the MTA!



2026 Legislative Position on All Regional Transportation Authority Bills Update to Our 2025 Position Statement

HB 916 - Transportation - Regional Transportation Authorities
SB 674 - Transportation - Regional Transportation Authorities

INFORMATIONAL

February 26, 2026

ATU Local 1300 represents over 3,000 transit workers at the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA). This includes bus operators, bus mechanics, rail operators, rail maintenance workers, and more. Our members keep Maryland moving every day.

ATU Local 1300 strongly supports efforts at finding additional revenue that could help support the transportation operations and infrastructure of Maryland. It is an urgent need that can not be ignored. With that in mind, we applaud the multiple bills introduced in 2026 that seek to expand the taxing authority of different regions to fund additional transportation projects and services. Unfortunately, we have concerns that pursuing these approaches may pit regional transit systems against each other and undermine the collective bargaining power of existing or future transit workers. We hope to explain some of those concerns below.

Are These Regional Transportation Authorities Operators or Funders?

2026's legislation appears to emphasize that these entities are 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." This may be bog standard authority language, but it leaves open possibilities we are concerned about.

The nation's capital region had a fully unified bus system in 1972, just fifty years later there are more than a dozen transit operators working and often competing with each other in the same region. We must oppose any possibility that these transportation authorities could be new entities that actually operate and maintain or contract with entities to operate and maintain transit service until there has been enough time to understand the long term consequences of this approach.

We believe that 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. In short, we believe that Maryland suffers from a lack of frequent and reliable transit service, not from a shortage of independent transit operations authorities.

Are the Workers at these Authorities Able to Unionize?

As it is written, these transportation authorities are bodies politic and corporate and are instrumentalities of the state. Yet, because they were not named in the state's Public Employees Relations Act (PERA) of 2023 and are excluded from the National Labor Relations Act, these 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.

How Does This Interact with Section 13C Urban Mass Transportation Act Protections?

13C Overview 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 how would it impact the existing transit workforces protected by these Federally mandated arrangements?

Why Does It Explicitly Allow for Recommending Public Private Partnerships?

The broad powers granted to these authorities by “(10) CREATE, OWN, CONTROL, OR BE A MEMBER OF A CORPORATION, LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY, PARTNERSHIP, OR OTHER ENTITY, WHETHER OPERATED FOR PROFIT OR NOT FOR PROFIT;” seems to permit public-private partnerships for project delivery without requiring state oversight. After Maryland's disastrous experience with the Purple Line construction and delivery, it seems absurd to enshrine this type of approach in law.

How Would Other State Entities Interact with these New Bodies?

What happens to the potential new Baltimore Core Services Board of the Maryland Transit Administration? What happens to the Washington Suburban Transit Commission? Who is responsible for MARC transportation projects when it spans multiple regional transportation authorities? As the bill is currently written, I don't have answers.

Conclusion

Thank you for your patience and understanding. We cannot emphasize enough how important the revenues that these entities could raise are to the future of transportation in Maryland. Unfortunately, before we could support such a proposal we need firm answers to our concerns.