



Statement of the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 689

SB 59– Transportation and Climate Alignment Act of 2026

February 25th, 2026

TO: The Honorable Guy Guzzone and Members of the Budget and Taxation Committee

FROM: Brian Wivell, Special Projects Director, ATU Local 689

ATU Local 689 supports SB 59 and urges the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee to issue a favorable report. This bill would be a transformative measure both for Maryland’s transportation system and for working-class Marylanders.

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, Fairfax Connector, and DASH 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.

As such, we know that climate pollution often affects working class people first, including Black and brown communities, immigrants, and frontline workers. It hurts our members and our riders alike. Unfortunately, transportation is Maryland’s primary source of climate pollution, and that pollution must be addressed if the state is serious about meeting its goal of reducing emissions by 60% by 2031. The Transportation and Climate Alignment Act of 2026 (TCA) is the vehicle to do just that: aligning expanded transportation with lower emissions options, like extensive, reliable, and accessible mass transit.

Specifically, SB 59 would require the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) and regional transportation planning agencies to measure and mitigate any increases in climate pollution and vehicle travel caused by major planned highway expansion projects. The Union knows that major highway expansion is not a way to mitigate traffic, create good-paying and sustainable jobs, or increase accessibility. Per a 2026 report by the Central Maryland Transportation Alliance, outside of Baltimore, only 7.5% of jobs in Maryland are accessible within an hour of public transit. This directly undercuts all of the state’s efforts to bring people into the middle class, to create walkable and livable communities for working class people, and to increase usage of our public transportation systems.

However, the Union notes that investing in transit is a win-win. In fact, every \$1 billion invested in public transportation supports and creates approximately 50,000 jobs. Many of these are good-paying unionized jobs either directly running transit like our members, building transit systems like our brothers and sisters in the building trades, or unlocking access to jobs for workers. Under the TCA, preferred mitigation options would include improving and expanding public transportation, creating bike and pedestrian infrastructure, expanding broadband access, or other smart growth strategies- exactly what is necessary.

Transit workers effectively serve as the frontline workers to the frontline workers. Likewise, many of our members are blue-collar people, Black or brown, and immigrants. Unfortunately, we have seen time and time again that the places where climate pollution hits the worst are the places where we live. It is time to change that and build a better, healthier, more equitable, and more sustainable transportation system.

In sum, passage of SB 59 would protect our health, reduce traffic congestion, and put our strained transportation dollars where they matter most. Creating good jobs for working class Marylanders, reducing pollution in overburdened and neglected communities, and increasing access are what the State should be doing. That means reducing pollution, increasing equity, and expanding transportation choices.

Local 689 thanks Senator Hettleman for introducing this worthy measure and urges the committee to issue a favorable report.