

**Testimony on SB 199 –
Maryland Transit Safety & Investment Act
Budget & Taxation**

Position: Favorable

Bus Workgroup14 supports SB 199, the Transit Safety & Investment Act.

Try to Imagine living in a household where no one has a car. This is the case for members of one in three Baltimore City households.

For bus-dependent riders, each trip—to work, school, day care (many working parents drop off and pick up their children by bus), grocery stores, medical appointments, family outings—is a logistical challenge.

According to MTA’s own data, more than one of every four buses fails to arrive on time, and the on-time performance data does not even include scheduled buses that MTA “pulls” to fill other routes, sometimes because of bus breakdowns. MTA has the worst record among comparable agencies in other states for the major mechanical failure of buses. Most regular bus riders have been on an MTA bus when it broke down.

Many of us who commute to work by bus catch the scheduled bus two buses before the one that should get us to work on time, in order not to be late. A high school teacher in Bus Workgroup14 documented the personal experiences of dozens of his students getting to and from school late due to unreliable MTA and dedicated school “tripper” buses.

Waiting for buses that come too early or late, or fail to arrive at all, or taking an earlier bus to avoid being late, results in lost time—time on the job, time in school, homework time, family time, leisure after a day’s work. The time spent waiting outside at a bus stop, which can be 40 or 50 minutes or more, maybe with a toddler in tow, is a different, more tiring experience than sitting in a car in traffic, with the heater or air conditioner running. The time lost waiting for late or missing buses is taken away from bus riders and the public by a state agency that advertises a schedule and fails to deliver.

The answer is not for everyone to get a car, but to create an effective public transit system that we can all use. And that requires investment. MTA has many competent professionals who are capable of running effective transit systems, but the agency must have the necessary resources to do so, and it does not.

Bus Workgroup14 (BW14) strongly supports SB 199, which will ensure adequate funding for MTA’s core transit services for the coming decade.

BW14 is a grassroots group of neighborhood leaders in Baltimore City’s 14th Councilmanic District. We came together in 2017 to give input on bus route changes proposed by MTA through its Baltimore Link project. For many months we held public forums with bus riders, met with neighborhood associations, and talked with riders waiting at bus stops. And as bus riders ourselves, we have first-hand experience with MTA’s transit system.
