



Statement of the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 689

HB 1215- Transportation Funding Act of 2024

March 1st, 2024

TO: The Honorable Marc Korman and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee
FROM: Matthew Girardi, Political & Communications Director, ATU Local 689

ATU Local 689 supports HB 1215 and urges the House Environment and Transportation Committee to issue a favorable report with amendments. This bill is a common sense measure for raising revenue for the State of Maryland and holding rideshare companies accountable. However, we ask a friendly amendment to have surplus funds be transferred instead simply to the Transportation Trust Fund and not go exclusively to LOTS.

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.

However, as we have seen this year, the Transportation Trust Fund is in urgent need of reinforcement. The drastic proposed cuts to transportation across the state will not go away however, as the Transportation Trust Fund is facing a serious structural deficit that is set to grow. Make no mistake: without action for new revenues, our members are in danger of being repaid for their service through a pandemic and a rise in violence aboard transit with wage freezes and layoffs.

As Governor Moore said in his state of the state address, it is time that we look for new ways to fund transportation. We believe that this bill is one part of that process. Transportation network and retail delivery service companies have largely been allowed to operate while directly undercutting public transportation and exploiting workers in the process.

Local 689 knows that some of our members even drove for companies like Uber and Lyft. Unfortunately, their experiences were all too similar: having to pay for car upkeep, increased insurance costs, and gas prices. Crucially, they also saw decreasing compensation for their trips driven even while fares for the riding public increased. On any given trip, these companies take the majority, if not upwards of 60 percent of the fare, despite drivers being categorized as supposed independent contractors and receiving no benefits.

Local 689 supports HB 1215 because the Union knows that these companies are posing a direct threat to public transit, are overcharging consumers, and underpaying their workers. They have the funds to spare and should be appropriately assessed per trip. However, we believe that surplus exclusively going to LOTS, these funds should simply go into the TTF to shore up vital transportation infrastructure whether it be WMATA, MTA, the purple line, or commuter bus services.

We thank Delegate Korman for introducing this necessary measure and urge the committee to issue a favorable report with amendments.