



ATU applauds Senate Stimulus Bill, \$25 billion in critical emergency funding for public transit

Union urges House to pass bill

Silver Spring, MD – Citing the \$25 billion in critical emergency funding for public transportation systems, the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) applauds the Senate \$2 trillion stimulus package amid the coronavirus pandemic.

“The ATU commends the Senate for including \$25 billion in critical emergency funding for transit systems,” says ATU International John Costa. “The House needs to pass this before another transit worker is needlessly exposed.”

“Since the coronavirus pandemic began, transit workers have been reporting for duty every day to provide critical transit service, all while worrying that they are putting themselves and their families at risk of contracting COVID-19,” Costa continued. “Many are doing this without the proper equipment needed to keep them safe. This bill will help them get the protection they need to keep themselves and their essential-service riders safe, and it will help save the jobs of thousands of transit workers temporarily out of work due to closures and lockdowns.”

The \$25 billion will provide much needed funding for transit agencies suffering as COVID-19 rips into ridership numbers and the local sales tax revenues that funds many systems.

“Make no mistake, the Senate didn’t go from \$0 to \$25 billion out of the goodness of their hearts. Transit workers did double duty, digitally mobilizing to put pressure on elected officials while working some of the most terrifying shifts of their lives,” Costa said.

This bill accomplishes many of the union’s goals. It:

- allows all transit agencies maximum flexibility so that they can use the funding for operating assistance to pay workers and to keep service running for frontline workers in other industries.
- allows agencies to use funds to purchase additional cleaning supplies and personal protective equipment for workers.
- provides 100% federal funding with no state match requirements.
- requires the money to be distributed within seven days.

In a letter to Congress earlier this week, Costa also called for a national freeze on mortgage, rent, student loan, and other payments; implementation of universal basic income; and a mandate that school districts maintain school-based transportation payroll to protect school bus drivers. He also called for relief to the motor coach industry. While the bill didn’t go that far, ATU supports its broader relief components, calling them “a good start.”

The package includes expansion and reform of the unemployment insurance (UI) program, which is critical for laid off workers in every industry. The extended UI program in this agreement increases the maximum unemployment benefit by \$600 per week and ensures that laid-off workers, on average, will receive their full pay for four months, instead of three.

The bill also provides American households with direct payments of \$1,200 per adult and \$500 per qualifying child, with the amount reduced for households with income above \$75,000 or \$150,000 if filing jointly, as well other tax benefits.

“It’s time to pass this bill as quickly as possible to ensure our transit workers can safely continue to do their job and keep our transit systems running which is critical in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic,” said Costa.