



ATU 2026 Transportation Policy Legislative Priorities

ISSUE #1: Protect Transit Workers from Assault

Each year, incredibly, there are more than **16,000** reported incidents of transit workers being attacked on the job. That's more than **40 assaults each day**. Our members are under constant attack. They get spit on, punched, stabbed, shot, hijacked, sexually assaulted, and more. When transit workers get attacked, especially when the bus is in motion, everyone inside and outside the vehicle is put in danger.

ATU SUPPORTS: The *Bus Operator Safety and Security Act* (H.R. 6635, Reps. Figures and Van Drew), requiring new transit buses to be equipped with fully enclosed bus operator workstations, from ceiling to floor. (Included in HR 8870, *The BUILD America 250 Act*.) We also support a provision providing \$10 million for bus barriers included in the FY 2027 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, (THUD) and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill.

ISSUE #2: Require a Fallback Safety Driver on Autonomous Transit Buses

Autonomous bus technology is unproven. Many autonomous vehicles have been in tragic accidents. When technology fails, resulting in an autonomous bus barreling down the street or highway at a high rate of speed, on the verge of killing someone, there needs to be a fallback safety driver ready to step in before it is too late. In transit, just one mistake is all it takes to ruin multiple lives. Bus drivers also do amazing things, assisting elderly passengers and people with disabilities, handling unruly passengers, and stepping up during emergencies. The Federal Transit Program should not be used as a weapon to strip away good union jobs that working families rely upon to survive.

ATU SUPPORTS: Requiring a qualified human operator to be located on board Automated Driving Systems (ADS)-equipped commercial motor vehicles transporting public transportation and motorcoach passengers. The House Surface Transportation Bill (*BUILD America 250 Act*) requires a human operator on board autonomous school buses and hazmat vehicles, but NOT transit.

ISSUE #3: Enhance Public Transit Safety

The overwhelming majority of assaults on transit workers come about over fare disputes or enforcing of rules. Unruly passengers often disrupt service operations, discouraging transit dependent people from riding the bus or train. Transit workers are generally on their own as they attempt to keep buses and trains rolling on time, even as chaos breaks out all around them. Transit systems need more eyes and ears. Bus operators cannot and should not be sitting ducks who ride alone. Additional staff is needed on specified lines at designated times to monitor activities and deter disruptive behavior from occurring within the system.

ATU SUPPORTS:

1. H.R. 6069, the *Rapid Intervention and Deterrence for Enhanced Rider Safety Act* or the "RIDER Safety Act," (Rep. Simon) providing funding for "transit support specialists," personnel responsible for performing a variety of duties designed to provide an added sense of security to transit patrons, deterring and reporting disruptive behavior within transit systems. We also support H.R. 6298, the *Safe and Affordable Transit Act*, (Rep. Friedman) authorizing operating grants for crime prevention and security. (Pieces of both bills are included in the *BUILD America 250 Act*).
2. Preservation of the groundbreaking labor-management safety committees which are charged with developing and approving Congressionally mandated Public Transportation Agency Safety Plans (PTASPs) authorized in the IJA. (These committees are reauthorized in the *BUILD America 250 Act*).

ISSUE #4: Increase Public Transit Funding

The FY 2027 House THUD Appropriations bill significantly cuts public transit funding compared to the FY 2026 enacted levels. The bill provides \$16.5 billion for public transit in FY 2027, a cut of \$4.6 billion (-22 percent) from the FY 2026 enacted level. President Trump's budget requests \$16.3 billion (-23 percent) for public transit in FY 2027. The President's Budget does not request to continue any advance appropriations under the IIJA, which results in substantial cuts to key transit programs. Every \$1 invested in public transit generates \$5 in long-term economic returns. Working families all across the U.S. count on the bus or train to get to work, the grocery store, the doctor, and other destinations.

ATU SUPPORTS:

1. Continuation of advance appropriations for public transit.
 2. Funding levels in the *BUILD America 250 Act*, which invests nearly \$88 billion for transit over five years, an increase from the nearly \$70 billion allocated in the IIJA (without advance appropriations).
 3. Providing public transit systems the flexibility to use their funds for operating assistance as needed to avoid service cuts and expand transit options, including the *Stronger Communities through Better Transit Act* (H.R. 3449, Rep. Johnson), the *Moving Transit Forward Act*, (S. 3455, Sen. Van Hollen), and *Transit Funding Flexibility Act*, (H.R. 5024, Rep. Lawler).
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ISSUE #5: Provide for Transit Workforce Development

Transit bus mechanics now require new skills and knowledge, including electric motor repair, computer literacy, and diagnostic troubleshooting. The new skillset has changed the bus maintenance role from that of a traditional mechanic to a technician role, using software and electronic equipment to diagnose and address bus engine error codes. Mechanics also need to learn high-voltage safety procedures to protect employees from the new safety risks presented by battery electric and hydrogen fuel cell electric bus technology. Additional training is also needed for bus operators, depot staff who use battery chargers, dispatchers who monitor bus charge and reroute buses to meet service needs, and route planners who configure bus routes to accommodate range limitations.

ATU SUPPORTS:

1. The *National Transit Frontline Workforce Training Act* (S. 4178 -Van Hollen/ H.R. 8068 - Rep. Wilson), which codifies the Transit Workforce Center at the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Since 2021, TWC has provided direct technical assistance to transit agencies to advance workforce development to train and retain frontline transit workers. (Included in *BUILD America 250 Act*).
2. The *Transit Workforce Development Act* (H.R. 8362, Rep. Wilson), which increases the amount that transit systems must set aside for workforce development training (including registered apprenticeships and other labor-management training programs) under the Low or No Emission Bus Grant Program from 5% to 10%, and applies such requirements to the entire Bus and Bus Facilities Program. (*BUILD America 250* does apply the training requirements to the entire Bus Program, but only at the 5% level).