

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2010 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

House Bill 644
Ways and Means

(Prince George's County Delegation)

Prince George's County - Transportation of Public School Students - School Buses
PG 404-10

This bill requires that, in Prince George's County, school buses be used to transport public elementary school students who live more than 0.25-mile walking distance from their schools and public middle or high school students who live more than 1-mile walking distance from their schools.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2010.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. State school transportation aid is not based on ridership.

Local Effect: Beginning in FY 2011, Prince George's County Public Schools transportation expenditures increase an estimated \$9.3 million per year. **This bill imposes a mandate on a unit of local government.**

Small Business Effect: Minimal. Prince George's County uses publicly owned school buses for almost all of its student transportation services.

Analysis

Bill Summary: "Walking distance" is defined as the most direct route to walk between the property line of a student's home and the property line of a student's school that meets an acceptable level of safety as determined by the Transportation Office of the Prince George's County Public Schools.

Current Law: Local school systems may adopt policies and procedures that do not conflict with existing federal and State statutes, rules, regulations, policies, and procedures, which includes determining the appropriate walking distances to and from school.

Background: Exhibit 1 shows the distance a student must live from his or her school to be provided transportation by the local school system. High school students living in Montgomery and Prince George’s counties have to walk the farthest (2.0 miles), while high school students in Calvert, Carroll, St. Mary’s, and Worcester counties need only live 1.0 mile from school to be eligible for school transportation services. For elementary school students, Dorchester County will honor any request that transportation be provided; while in Prince George’s County, an elementary school student must live at least 1.5 miles from the school to be provided transportation.

Exhibit 1
Distance a Student Must Live from Their School to be Provided Transportation
(in Miles)

<u>County</u>	<u>Elementary Walk Distance</u>	<u>Middle School Walk Distance</u>	<u>High School Walk Distance</u>
Allegany	1.0	1.5	1.5
Anne Arundel	1.0	1.5	1.5
Baltimore City	1.0	1.5	1.5
Baltimore	1.0	1.0	1.5
Calvert	0.5	1.0	1.0
Caroline	1.0	1.5	1.5
Carroll	0.0	1.0	1.0
Cecil	1.0	1.0	1.5
Charles	1.0	1.0	1.5
Dorchester	0.0	1.0	1.5
Frederick	1.25	1.75	1.75
Garrett	0.5	1.0	1.5
Harford	1.0	1.5	1.5
Howard	1.0	1.0	1.5
Kent	1.0	1.0	1.5
Montgomery	1.0	1.5	2.0
Prince George’s	1.5	2.0	2.0
Queen Anne’s	1.0	1.5	1.5
St Mary’s	0.5	1.0	1.0
Somerset	1.0	1.5	1.5
Talbot	1.0	1.0	1.5
Washington	1.0	1.5	1.5
Wicomico	1.0	1.5	1.5
Worcester	1.0	1.0	1.0

Note: Some counties have a lower walking threshold for kindergarten students than for other elementary students.
Source: Anne Arundel County Public Schools statewide school walk distance survey, September 2009.

For fiscal 2010, Prince George's County will spend an estimated \$122.1 million on school transportation including employee benefits.

Local Expenditures: Beginning in fiscal 2011, Prince George's County school system expenditures increase an estimated \$9.3 million. This estimate is based on the following information and assumptions.

- Based on data from December 2009, reducing the distance a student must live from his or her school to be provided transportation by Prince George's County Public Schools as required by the bill will increase the number of students that the county must transport from 84,206 to 108,926. Thus, the number of students Prince George's County must transport will increase by an estimated 24,720 students.
- Prince George's County Public Schools estimates a cost of \$375.03 per student transported in fiscal 2010.
- Therefore, it will cost approximately \$9.3 million to transport 24,720 additional students.

To the extent existing school buses can be used to transport additional students, expenditures may be somewhat lower.

Additional Comments: MSDE advises that the new buses may not be able to be purchased in time for the 2010-2011 school year because most jurisdictions submit their orders for new buses by February.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Department of Education, Maryland Department of Transportation, Prince George's County, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 9, 2010
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