

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2011 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

House Bill 602

(Delegate Summers, *et al.*)

Environmental Matters

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Environment - Recycling at Transit Stations - Study

This bill requires the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) and the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT), in consultation with the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, to jointly study and make recommendations relating to the establishment of a program to place collection bins for recycling adjacent to collection bins for garbage at transit stations in Maryland. The recommendations must identify transit stations where recycling would be the most practicable and economically feasible. A report of the recommendations must be submitted to the Presiding Officers and specified legislative committees by December 1, 2011.

The bill takes effect June 1, 2011.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Given the State's fiscal difficulties, agency budgets have been constrained. Thus, the requirement to conduct the study and make recommendations in a short timeframe may not be absorbable within the existing budgeted resources of MDOT/MTA. Instead, Transportation Trust Fund (TTF) expenditures may increase minimally in FY 2012 only for contractual assistance to complete the study by the December 1, 2011 deadline.

Local Effect: The bill does not directly affect local operations or finances.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: In 1988, the Maryland Recycling Act required each county to submit a recycling plan. Jurisdictions with more than 150,000 residents were required to reduce their solid waste by 20%, and jurisdictions with less than 150,000 residents were required to reduce their solid waste by 15%. According to MDE, by 2000, every county had met or exceeded their percentage requirements under the Maryland Recycling Act. Further legislation enacted in 2000 established a voluntary statewide diversion goal of 40% by 2005. MDE indicates that this goal has also been met each year.

Counties have flexibility to determine the best way to reach the required recycling rates. However, the county recycling plan, revised on a triennial basis, must address specified issues such as the feasibility of composting mixed solid waste, methods for the separate collection and composting of yard waste, and methods of financing county recycling efforts, among other issues. Chapters 264 and 265 of 2009 added to this list a strategy for collecting, processing, marketing, and disposing of recyclable materials from county public schools, and Chapter 430 of 2010 added to this list a strategy for the collection and recycling of fluorescent lights containing mercury. Chapter 408 of 2009 requires the State to place a recycling bin at all State-owned and -operated office buildings and devise a system for the recycling of aluminum, glass, paper, and plastic.

The State Recycling Trust Fund is used to provide grants to local jurisdictions to support local recycling activities.

“Transit station” means any facility, the primary function of which relates to the boarding and alighting of passengers, from transit vehicles. The term includes platforms, shelters, passenger waiting facilities, parking areas, access roadways, and other real property used to facilitate passenger access to transit service or railroad service.

Background: According to the U.S Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), in 2009 (the most recent year for which data are available) 54.2% of the municipal solid waste stream was discarded in landfills, 25.2% was recycled, 11.9% was recovered as energy through combustion, and 8.6% was composted. MDE reports that, in 2009, Maryland had a recycling rate of 39.1% (down from 43.9% in 2008) and a waste diversion rate of 42.6% (down from 47.5% in 2008).

In addition to the issue of landfill diversion, recycling is encouraged due to the potential for significant reductions in virgin material extraction, energy use, and emissions of greenhouse gases. For example, according to EPA, nationwide recycling and composting activities in 2008 prevented the equivalent of 182 million tons of carbon dioxide emissions; this is the same level of emissions produced by 33 million cars.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Montgomery County, Baltimore City, Maryland Department of the Environment, Maryland Department of Transportation, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Legislative Services

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