

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2017 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Enrolled

House Bill 1568 (Prince George's County Delegation)

Environment and Transportation Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

**Workgroup on Transportation for Middle and High School Students in Prince
George's County**
PG 415-17

This bill establishes a Workgroup on Transportation for Middle and High School Students in Prince George's County. Prince George's County Public Schools must provide staff for the workgroup. The workgroup must report its findings and recommendations to the Prince George's County Senators and House Delegation by August 31, 2017.

The bill takes effect June 1, 2017, and terminates June 30, 2018.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None.

Local Effect: The Prince George's County school system can staff the workgroup using existing resources.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The workgroup must identify where Prince George's County public school buildings and bus routes intersect with bus routes of the Prince George's County Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT) and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA). The workgroup must also identify the software systems currently in use by or available to the Prince George's County Public Schools, DPWT, and WMATA to operate and monitor their bus systems.

The workgroup must estimate the potential cost savings to the Prince George's County Public School System and the cost increases to DPWT and WMATA from enabling public school students to be transported in vehicles operated by DPWT and WMATA. Further, the workgroup must determine the feasibility and cost of implementing a system utilizing Global Positioning System technology and text messages to inform parents of when a bus is expected to arrive and provide notification if a bus will be delayed. Finally, the workgroup must identify a range of options for transporting Prince George's County Public Schools middle and high school students, as well as the cost of each option.

Background: The Office of Legislative Audits has prepared a [financial management practices audit report for Prince George's County Public Schools](#) dated February 2014. The report contains 23 findings, as well as both the school system's response to the findings and the auditor's comments on the response. A major finding of the report is that the school system should implement certain steps to improve cost-effectiveness, including steps to enhance bus transportation efficiency. The audit report found, among other things, that the school system failed to use its automated routing software to promote efficiency in the use of its school bus fleet and that certain data in the automated system appeared to be questionable.

According to the Maryland State Department of Education, during the 2014-2015 school year, Prince George's County expended more per pupil on student transportation than any other local school system in Maryland. During that school year, student transportation costs in Prince George's County averaged \$1,061 per student, which was 30.7% higher than the statewide average (\$812 per student) and 22.0% higher than in neighboring Montgomery County (\$870 per student). Only two local school systems in rural areas of the state (Garrett and Somerset counties) had per pupil student transportation costs similar to the amounts in Prince George's County. The per student transportation costs averaged \$1,031 in Garrett County and \$1,056 in Somerset County. **Exhibit 1** provides a comparison of student transportation indicators for Montgomery and Prince George's counties.

Exhibit 1
Student Transportation Indicators
2014-2015 School Year

Indicator	Montgomery County	Prince George's County
Number of School Vehicles	1,138 publicly owned 0 private contractor	1,104 publicly owned 6 private contractor
Total Miles Traveled	19,240,249	19,605,431
Students Transported	98,481	83,815
Students Transported As Percent of Enrollment	65%	67%
Per Student Transportation Cost	\$870	\$1,061

Source: Maryland State Department of Education

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: HB 1486 of 2016 received a hearing in the House Environment and Transportation Committee, but no further action was taken.

Cross File: None.

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

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