

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2021 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 869
 Finance

(Senator Corderman, *et al.*)

Statewide Transit Plan – Western Maryland MARC Rail Extension Study

This bill requires the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) to conduct a study and develop recommendations on the feasibility, including the cost, of extending Maryland Area Regional Commuter (MARC) rail service to Western Maryland. MDOT must report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly by July 1, 2023. The Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) must incorporate the recommendations of the study into the Statewide Transit Plan.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Transportation Trust Fund (TTF) expenditures increase by \$900,000 in FY 2022 and by \$1.1 million in FY 2023 to conduct the study. Any project costs incurred in future years cannot be predicted, as discussed below. Revenues are not directly affected.

(\$ in millions)	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
SF Expenditure	0.9	1.1	0	0	0
Net Effect	(\$0.9)	(\$1.1)	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0

Note: () = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate increase; (-) = indeterminate decrease

Local Effect: Affected local governments can participate in the study as necessary using existing budgeted resources. Revenues are not directly affected.

Small Business Effect: Potential meaningful.

Analysis

Bill Summary: In conducting the required study, MDOT must:

- examine existing commuter rail facilities in the State and current transportation options in Western Maryland;
- explore up to three potential routes for expanding rail service to western Maryland;
- identify the possibilities and challenges related to establishing and operating MARC rail service in Western Maryland;
- study the public transportation needs of Allegany and Washington counties in the vicinity of interstates 70 and 81;
- confer with specified stakeholders, including specified local governments;
- identify infrastructure needs;
- perform a cost analysis of the capital and operating costs of extending MARC rail service to Western Maryland;
- identify all potential stops and estimate the potential ridership for each stop;
- study and compare the potential ridership for rush-hour-only service and all-day service;
- develop recommendations on the potential starting and end points of a MARC extension; and
- explore the potential effect that extending MARC rail service to Western Maryland would have on CSX.

MDOT's recommendations must address the feasibility of planning, financing, constructing, and operating a MARC line that extends commuter rail service to Western Maryland. The recommendations must be incorporated into the Statewide Transit Plan. Regardless of any alteration or postponement of the Statewide Transit Plan, MDOT must conduct the study in the manner required by the bill.

Current Law: MTA operates a comprehensive transit system throughout the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan area, including more than 50 local bus lines in Baltimore and other services such as the light rail, Baltimore Metro subway, commuter buses, MARC trains, and mobility/paratransit vehicles. MTA is also responsible for hundreds of transit stations.

MARC commuter train service operates three different lines that serve several Maryland counties; Washington, DC; and Martinsburg, West Virginia: (1) the Brunswick Line; (2) the Camden Line; and (3) the Penn Line. In December 2013, MARC began to offer weekend service on the Penn Line; the other lines offer service only on weekdays and select holidays. MARC train service on the Brunswick Line operates between

Brunswick, Maryland and Union Station in Washington, DC. This line also includes an extension to Frederick, Maryland and Martinsburg, West Virginia. Stops along the Brunswick Line include areas surrounding Washington, DC, such as Gaithersburg, Rockville, and Silver Spring, Maryland. MARC service is provided by running State-owned MARC trains on existing Amtrak railways owned by CSX.

State Expenditures: MDOT has 21 months to conduct the required study pursuant to the timeframe established by the bill. In addition, the study is likely to be extensive and involve significant research, data collection, stakeholder outreach and collaboration, surveys, and analysis. Accordingly, MDOT must rely considerably on consultant assistance. As a result, TTF expenditures increase by \$900,000 in fiscal 2022 and by \$1.1 million in fiscal 2023 to conduct the study.

Incorporating the recommendations of the study into the Statewide Transit Plan may have an effect on transportation spending for transit projects in future years; however, any such impact depends on the outcome of the study and cannot be predicted.

Small Business Effect: Given the scope, scale, and timeframe of the study, MDOT anticipates needing considerable contractual assistance. As a result, some small businesses may experience increased business to assist MDOT with the study.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: HB 1367 of 2020, a similar bill, passed the House with amendments and received a hearing in the Senate Finance Committee, but no further action was taken.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of Transportation; Maryland Municipal League; Department of Legislative Services

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rh/lgc

Analysis by: Richard L. Duncan

Direct Inquiries to:
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510