

RP00
Maryland Public Broadcasting Commission

Capital Budget Summary

State-owned Capital Improvement Program
(\$ in Millions)

Projects	Prior Auth.	2017 Request	2018 Est.	2019 Est.	2020 Est.	2021 Est.	Beyond CIP
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Maryland Public Television – Transmission Systems Replacement	\$0.800	\$0.150	\$0.550	\$1.950	\$1.150	\$0.000	\$4.600
Maryland Public Television – Studio A Renovation and Addition	0.000	0.000	0.600	3.220	4.620	0.000	8.440
Total	\$0.800	\$0.150	\$1.150	\$5.170	\$5.770	\$0.000	\$13.040

Fund Source	Prior Auth.	2017 Request	2018 Est.	2019 Est.	2020 Est.	2021 Est.	Beyond CIP
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GO Bonds	\$0.800	\$0.150	\$1.150	\$5.170	\$5.770	\$0.000	\$13.040
Total	\$0.800	\$0.150	\$1.150	\$5.170	\$5.770	\$0.000	\$13.040

CIP: Capital Improvement Program

GO: general obligation

Summary of Recommended Bond Actions

1. Maryland Public Broadcasting Commission

Approve the \$150,000 in general obligation bond funding for the Maryland Public Broadcasting Commission Transmission Systems Replacement.

Budget Overview

Replacement Transmission Equipment

The Maryland Public Broadcasting Commission (MPBC) has six digital transmitter sites for its Maryland Public Television (MPT) broadcasting. The equipment is located in Owings Mills, Annapolis, Salisbury, Frederick, Hagerstown, and Oakland.

MPBC replaced much of its transmission equipment as part of the digital conversion project, which started in calendar 2000. That equipment is now nearing the end of its useful life and must be replaced. Many of the transmission system's components are beyond their useful lives, and replacement components do not exist and must be custom built. For other components, original manufacturers do not provide technical support. These factors mean that it is more effective to replace rather than repair the transmission systems.

Without replacing the transmitters, MPT risks going off air for the estimated 20% of viewers who obtain the station via the over-the-air signal and for cable and satellite customers. An outage leading to an unplanned replacement could result in a lengthy period without a broadcast signal, which in turn, could lead to a loss of the rights to the channel under the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) regulations.

The fiscal 2015 budget included \$400,000 to begin replacing equipment at the MPT sites in Owings Mills and Annapolis. The agency has purchased radio parts, interconnection equipment, and an uninterruptable power supply. The fiscal 2016 budget included another \$400,000 to continue with purchases for larger transmission replacement in Owings Mills and Annapolis, and begin replacing equipment connecting various transmitter sites and the uninterruptable power supply at the Hagerstown location. The fiscal 2017 allowance includes \$150,000 to replace exciters at the Hagerstown location. The cost for this piece of equipment is \$50,000 with the remainder of the funds being used to replace outdated equipment such as fiber cables, waveguide, receivers, and broadcast dishes.

MPT's request included the replacement of several broadcasting antenna in fiscal 2020. However, there is uncertainty regarding the replacement of these antennae. First, the federal government is conducting an auction of low-frequency broadcasting channels. FCC has planned these auctions in order to use these lower frequencies for Wi-Fi connections. Broadcasters like MPT will

therefore be shifted to a higher broadcasting frequency. This process is referred to as the “repacking” process. Upon completion of the auctions (which will take place in March 2016), proceeds obtained will be distributed to broadcasters to replace some equipment, including antennae, as necessitated by the repacking process. MPT spread its fiscal 2019 request into fiscal 2020 because MPT will also replace the towers that extend from the transmitter base. This is a part of the overall transmission system. As a result of this federal repacking process, there is the potential for federal funds to replace antennas in two to three years. Because the amount of this funding is unknown, the antennae replacement is not included in the Capital Improvement Program.

Summary of Other Projects in the Capital Improvement Program

There is an additional project to expand Studio A, which is the largest MPT studio. There are several issues with the studio that warrants renovation including restrooms that do not meet the ADA guidelines, and there is insufficient seating for live performances or town hall meetings. There is also a need for mechanical; electrical; and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning repairs. The loading dock for the studio combined with the low ceilings complicate equipment transfers and prohibit full functionality.

GO Bond Recommended Actions

1. Approve the \$150,000 in general obligation bond funding for the Maryland Public Broadcasting Commission Transmission Systems Replacement.