

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2024 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**  
**First Reader - Revised**

Senate Bill 153

(Senator Jackson)

Judicial Proceedings

---

**Maryland Department of Transportation - Child Exploitation and Human  
Trafficking Awareness, Training, and Response**

---

This bill requires the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT), in conjunction with human trafficking survivors and advocates, to develop or identify and implement a training program, including a curriculum, on the identification and reporting of suspected child exploitation and human trafficking. MDOT must administer the training program to (1) specified MDOT employees (including employees under contract); (2) taxicab drivers; and (3) transportation network operators. The Public Service Commission (PSC) may not issue or renew a taxicab driver's license or issue a transportation network operator's license or provisional authorization, as specified, unless the applicant has completed the training program. Each employer of an affected employee must (1) certify to MDOT that its employees have completed the training program by October 1 annually beginning in 2025; (2) provide a new employee with the training prior to the first day of employment; and (3) establish a child exploitation and human trafficking reporting procedure and a prevention policy, as specified. Finally, MDOT must disseminate information and resources about child exploitation and human trafficking by developing and displaying signs and by requiring frequent public service announcements.

---

**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** Special fund expenditures for PSC increase by \$103,900 in FY 2025; future year expenditures (which range from \$61,800 in FY 2026 to \$70,400 in FY 2029), reflect ongoing operating costs. Special fund revenues for PSC increase correspondingly from assessments imposed on public service companies. Transportation Trust Fund (TTF) expenditures increase potentially significantly beginning in FY 2025; although a reliable estimate cannot be made, TTF expenditures likely increase by at least hundreds of thousands of dollars just to post signs, with additional training costs, as discussed below.

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

**Small Business Effect:** Meaningful.

---

## Analysis

### **Bill Summary:**

#### *Applicability*

The bill applies to an employee who is (1) a State employee who works at a transit station, airport, port facility, or highway rest stop; (2) employed under a contract with the State, including a hospitality employee, who works at a transit station, airport, port facility, or highway rest stop; (3) a State employee who provides transit service; or (4) employed under a contract with the State to provide transit service. It also applies to the employer of one of those employees, a taxicab driver, and a transportation network operator.

#### *Child Exploitation and Human Trafficking Awareness Training*

The training program developed or identified by MDOT must include a video presentation that (1) is provided in a digital video or Internet-based video format; (2) is not less than 15 minutes in length; and (3) includes specified information, including an overview of human trafficking, experiences of human trafficking victims, and guidance on how to identify individuals who are most at risk of human trafficking. Training materials, including the video presentation, must be provided in English and Spanish. A transportation network company may offer the training through its online platform.

#### *Requirements for Employers*

By October 1, 2025, and each October 1 thereafter, each employer must certify to MDOT that their employees have completed the training program. New employees must complete the training prior to the employee's first day of employment.

Each employer, in consultation with MDOT, must (1) establish a procedure for employees, contract employees, taxicab drivers, and transportation network operators to report suspected incidents of child exploitation or human trafficking to appropriate security staff, law enforcement, or the National Human Trafficking Resource Center hotline and (2) implement a child exploitation and human trafficking prevention policy for employees, contract employees, taxicab drivers, and transportation network operators by providing information on how to recognize potential victims, respond to an individual who may be or is a victim, and connect an individual who may be or is a victim with available resources.

### *Limitations on Liability*

An employer, employee, contract employee, taxicab driver, or transportation network operator may not be held civilly or criminally liable for reporting or responding in good faith to a suspected incident of child exploitation or human trafficking.

### *Dissemination of Information and Resources*

MDOT must develop a sign displaying information and resources for child exploitation and human trafficking victims and require the sign to be displayed at transit stations, airports, port facilities, and highway rest stops.

MDOT must also require frequent public service announcements with safety information for child exploitation and human trafficking victims to be made, in both English and Spanish, at transit stations, airports, port facilities, and highway rest stops.

### *Taxicab and Transportation Network Operator Licensing*

PSC may not issue or renew a taxicab driver's license unless the applicant has completed the training program provided by MDOT. PSC also may not issue a temporary or permanent transportation network operator's license or authorize operation on a provisional basis unless the applicant has completed the training program provided by MDOT.

## **Current Law:**

### *Human Trafficking Training*

Numerous government entities and licensed businesses in the State are required to provide, approve, and/or receive training on the identification and reporting of human trafficking. For example:

- the Maryland State Department of Education is required to collaborate with the Maryland Department of Health to provide awareness and training for Directors of Student Services in local education agencies on human trafficking, including strategies for the prevention of trafficking of children;
- a commercial driver's license training school is required to include, as part of its curriculum, education and training on the recognition, prevention, and effective reporting of human trafficking; and
- each innkeeper must provide a new employee with an annual training for the accurate and prompt identification and reporting of suspected human trafficking (any such training program must be approved by the Governor's Office of Crime

Prevention and Policy (formerly the Governor’s Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services) and the Maryland Department of Labor).

### *Public Service Commission*

In addition to its better-known role in the regulation of electric and gas utility rates, PSC also regulates persons engaged in the public transportation of individuals for-hire in such as cars, vans, limousines, and buses. This includes issuing relevant permits for the vehicles and issuing related licenses to authorize drivers to operate those vehicles for hire.

Generally, a person may not operate a motor vehicle for-hire in the State under a permit or authorization to transport passengers issued by PSC or the appropriate local authority unless the person holds a for-hire driver’s license or a transportation network operator’s (e.g., an Uber driver) license issued by PSC. There are limited exceptions. PSC only issues permits for taxicabs in Baltimore City and a few local jurisdictions.

### **State Fiscal Effect:**

#### *Maryland Department of Transportation*

MDOT can likely handle the development and implementation of the reporting procedure, the prevention policy, and public service announcements using existing resources. However, MDOT is likely to incur potentially significant costs to implement the bill’s provisions relating to training and to post signs at its facilities, as discussed below.

*Training for Taxicab Drivers and Transportation Network Operators:* PSC advises that the bill’s training requirement likely applies to more than 58,500 taxicab drivers and transportation network operators. This analysis assumes that the training requirements apply for existing transportation network operator licensees upon the expiration of their licenses. [Current PSC regulations](#) for these individuals do not include a renewal process and transportation network operator licenses are only valid for three years, meaning that these licenses are reissued rather than renewed.

MDOT does not have any existing regulatory relationship with taxicab drivers and transportation network operators, as they are licensed by PSC, making administering the training for these individuals complex and challenging. Due to this complexity and the number of individuals that likely need training from MDOT, the increase in TTF expenditures resulting from the bill is likely to be significant – beginning as early as fiscal 2025 – although actual costs depend on the process ultimately implemented by MDOT.

Even if MDOT chooses to identify an existing training that can be used (as authorized by the bill), MDOT is still responsible for *administering* the training. In addition, the bill does not authorize MDOT to charge a fee for administering the training. As a result, MDOT incurs administrative costs related to the tracking and managing of the training process for taxicab drivers and transportation network operators (even if a fully Internet-based training is developed or identified) and may also incur costs to pay for the training for these individuals.

Even though the bill authorizes a transportation network operator to receive the required training from the transportation network company through its online platform, it is unclear whether this is possible since the bill requires MDOT to administer the training.

*Training for Maryland Department of Transportation Staff and Contractors:* MDOT can likely develop a training for its own employees and contractors in-house using existing resources or at minimal cost. To implement the program, training for *new* employees can be added to existing trainings and orientations at no additional cost; however, TTF expenditures may increase in fiscal 2025 as a result of additional overtime needed to conduct the training for hundreds, if not thousands, of *existing* employees and contractors. Since there is no explicit timeframe by which the training must be completed, and only a requirement that employers certify to MDOT that the training has been completed by October 1, 2025, MDOT may be able to conduct the training for existing employees/contractors on a staggered basis to avoid or reduce overtime costs.

MDOT advises that the Maryland Aviation Administration (MAA) currently provides human trafficking training for its employees through a partnership with the Department of Homeland Security and its [Blue Lightning Initiative](#). However, this training may not meet the bill's requirements because the online training materials do not appear to be available in Spanish, and it is unclear whether this training would be deemed sufficient by the human trafficking survivors and advocates MDOT must consult regarding the training program.

*Signage:* TTF expenditures increase significantly in fiscal 2025, likely by hundreds of thousands of dollars, to post signs at MDOT's transit stations, airports, port facilities, and highway rest stops. The bulk of the cost is anticipated for the Maryland Transit Administration, which has more than 4,000 bus stops, 33 light rail stops (most of which lack any place to display signs), and 14 metro stations; however, MAA and the Maryland Port Administration may incur thousands of dollars in increased costs as well, depending on how many signs are placed at the ports and airports. *For illustrative purposes only*, at an estimated cost of \$100 to develop and post each sign, placing a single sign at each bus stop alone costs \$400,000. In future fiscal years, signage costs are likely minimal and absorbable, as MDOT only needs to replace signs as needed.

*Maryland Transportation Authority*

Nonbudgeted expenditures for the Maryland Transportation Authority are not anticipated to be materially affected.

*Public Service Commission*

PSC advises that it requires additional staff to implement the bill. Accordingly, special fund expenditures for PSC increase by \$103,898 in fiscal 2025, which accounts for the bill's October 1, 2024 effective date. This estimate reflects the cost of hiring one administrator to coordinate with MDOT, handle the additional workload generated by the bill related to the issuance of licenses, and ensure compliance. It includes a salary, fringe benefits, one-time start-up costs, and ongoing operating expenses. The estimate also includes a one-time computer programming cost of \$50,000 for PSC to integrate the training requirement into its database of drivers.

Position	1.0
Salary and Fringe Benefits	\$46,642
Computer Programming	50,000
Operating Expenses	<u>7,256</u>
<b>Total FY 2025 PSC Expenditures</b>	<b>\$103,898</b>

Future year expenditures reflect a full salary with annual increases and employee turnover as well as annual increases in ongoing operating expenses. Special fund revenues increase correspondingly from assessments imposed on public service companies.

*Other Agencies*

The University System of Maryland advises that some of its universities have localized transit services for students and may be affected by the bill. However, any impact is anticipated to be minimal and absorbable with existing budgeted resources due to the relatively small number of affected employees. Other institutions of higher education that provide transit service could likewise be affected.

**Small Business Effect:** To the extent taxicab companies/drivers are considered small businesses, these individuals are required to receive additional training under the bill and are not able to renew their licenses if the training is not completed. Accordingly, such entities could be meaningfully affected by the bill's changes.

## **Additional Information**

**Recent Prior Introductions:** Similar legislation has been introduced within the last three years. See SB 203 and HB 1053 of 2023.

**Designated Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland Department of Transportation; Public Service Commission; Baltimore City Community College; University System of Maryland; St. Mary's College of Maryland; Department of Homeland Security; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - January 29, 2024  
rh/lgc Revised - Correction – February 7, 2024

---

Analysis by: Richard L. Duncan

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