

Department of Legislative Services

Maryland General Assembly

2001 Session

FISCAL NOTE

House Bill 1351 (Delegate Pitkin)

Commerce and Government Matters

Task Force and Pilot Project on Child Pedestrian Safety

This bill creates an eight-member Task Force on Child Pedestrian Safety to designate two counties, or Baltimore City and a county, as target areas for a pilot project that focuses on child pedestrian safety, particularly on school routes. The task force must develop an action plan that includes suggestions for improving the safety and encouraging the use of child pedestrian routes to schools and submit the action plan to the Department of Transportation (MDOT) by December 1, 2002. The bill directs MDOT to budget sufficient federal, State, or other available funds to implement the plan by June 1, 2002.

The task force must evaluate what benefits were achieved by the plan over a 12-month period and submit a final report of its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly by June 1, 2003. The bill is effective June 1, 2001.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Transportation Trust Fund expenditures would increase by approximately \$100,000 to \$150,000 in FY 2002 only to implement the action plan required under the bill. Revenues would not be affected.

Local Effect: Minimal. The bill would only affect the two jurisdictions involved in the pilot project.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: None applicable.

Background: Approximately 847 child pedestrians (age 0-16) were injured in Maryland in 1999, and 12 children were killed in pedestrian accidents. Data are not available regarding the relationship between school route usage and pedestrian accidents; however, SHA advises that the safety record for children in school areas is good. SHA also advises that two groups -- the Pedestrian Safety Task Force and the School Zone Traffic Safety Task Force -- work to enhance child pedestrian safety, in addition to regional and local groups.

The School Zone Traffic Safety Task Force was established to provide a safer journey to and from school for school children throughout Maryland by promoting consistency and uniformity in traffic controls and school bus and pedestrian procedures across all levels of schools.

Recently, the task force updated its booklet, "Traffic Safety Recommendations for School Zones: Guidelines and Resources," and its brochure, "Guidelines for your Child's Safety while Traveling to and from School." that were distributed to all public and private schools in Maryland.

According to the Johns Hopkins Center for Injury Research and Policy, elementary school-age children are at greatest risk for pedestrian injuries, often during after-school or early evening hours. The injury rate is declining, which may be due to reduced walking time. The center is studying the environmental factors that make a particular neighborhood more risky for child pedestrians and designing a prevention strategy to protect child pedestrians in an urban setting. The center is focusing its study on Baltimore City, which has the highest percentage of pedestrian accidents in the State.

State Expenditures: Transportation Trust Fund expenditures could increase by \$100,000 to \$150,000 in fiscal 2002 only to implement the action plan and for other work associated with the pilot project. Task force members would be eligible for reimbursement under the Standard State Travel Regulations.

SHA advises that it would need to hire a consultant to help the task force prepare the action plan and evaluate its benefits. It further advises that the agency is unlikely to be able to fully implement all of the improvements that the plan recommends by the June 1, 2002 deadline.

The Department of Legislative Services advises that the task force should be able to evaluate the benefits of the plan with existing resources and that the funds needed for the pilot project depend on the target areas chosen; a high-population area with more schools would require more resources than a rural area with fewer schools. Legislative Services further advises that using existing task forces and studies by nonprofit research institutions could reduce expenditures and provide operational efficiency.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Transportation (State Highway Administration), Johns Hopkins Center for Injury Research and Policy, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader – March 7, 2001
mld/jr

Analysis by: Ann Marie Maloney

Direct Inquiries to:
John Rixey, Coordinating Analyst
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510