

Department of Legislative Services

Maryland General Assembly

2001 Session

FISCAL NOTE

House Bill 1212 (Delegate Giannett)

Commerce and Government Matters

State Highway Administration - Sound Barriers - Cost Considerations

This bill prohibits the State Highway Administration (SHA) from constructing a sound barrier on any highway under its jurisdiction if the cost of constructing the barrier exceeds \$10,000 for each residence benefited by the barrier.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: It is expected that Transportation Trust Fund (TTF) expenditures budgeted for sound barrier construction would be re-allocated to other transportation projects.

Local Effect: Significant decrease in expenditures to the extent that the local government contribution required for some sound barriers would decline or be eliminated.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Current Law: Construction of sound barriers is funded under SHA's capital budget and is subject to the limits of that budget. However, individual sound barriers are not subject to a specific cap. SHA's policy for construction of a sound barrier near a new highway requires that:

- the majority of the affected residences existed prior to the date of approval of the proposed highway improvements;
- the sound barrier not cost more \$50,000 per residence that benefits;

- predicted future noise levels equal or exceed 66 decibels or exceed existing noise levels by 10 decibels; and
- the sound barrier would reduce noise levels by seven to ten decibels for the residences most severely affected.

Its policy for constructing sound barriers near existing highways requires that:

- the conditions for new highway sound barriers be met;
- 75% of the affected residents support the project;
- the local jurisdiction has enacted local controls to address impacts for future noise sensitive development adjacent to State highways and will contribute 20% of the costs; and
- any required rights-of-way are donated to the State.

State Expenditures: SHA advises that imposing a \$10,000 per residence limit on sound barrier construction would eliminate most of the sound barrier projects in the Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP). While sound barrier costs vary widely by project, the average cost per project is \$2 - \$3 million and the average per home cost is \$28,000. SHA expects to spend \$16 million on noise barriers in fiscal 2002 (including \$5.7 million in federal aid) and \$18.3 million annually from 2003 to 2006 for projects that benefit 106 communities. SHA advises that State and federal funding that would normally be applied to sound barrier construction would be reallocated to other State transportation projects.

Local Expenditures: Local governments are required to contribute 20% of project costs for sound barriers that block noise from existing highways (the requirement does not apply to new highway construction). Expenditures would thus decrease to the extent that projects are not funded by the State. SHA estimates that many of the projects affected by the bill will be for communities near existing highways. Expenditures could increase significantly if local jurisdictions seek to construct sound barriers without the current level of State aid.

Small Business Effect: SHA advises that the only related noise barrier contracts for small business are for landscaping. The potential loss of revenue is expected to be minimal.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Transportation (State Highway Administration),
Department of Legislative Services

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