

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2002 Session

FISCAL NOTE
Revised

Senate Bill 653

(Senator Roesser, *et al.*)

Finance

Environmental Matters

Task Force to Study Moving Overhead Utility Lines Underground

This bill creates a 22-member Task Force to Study Moving Overhead Utility Lines Underground. The bill is effective January 1, 2003 and remains effective until December 31, 2003.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. Any expense reimbursements for task force members and staffing requirements are assumed to be minimal and absorbable within existing budgeted resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The bill creates the Task Force to Study Moving Overhead Utility Lines Underground and directs it to make recommendations that identify: (1) the best possible means of facilitating and reducing the costs of placing overhead utility lines underground; and (2) a process for coordinating construction, maintenance, and repair projects near roadways in municipal corporations, including moving utility lines underground. The task force must report its findings to the Governor and the General Assembly by December 31, 2003.

Members are not entitled to receive compensation but are entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the standard State travel regulations. The bill requires the Maryland

Office of Smart Growth, with assistance from PSC to provide oversight and coordination. The Department of Legislative Services will provide staff support.

Current Law: PSC regulates gas, electric, steam heating, telephone, water, and sewage disposal companies and has the authority to issue a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity for construction of new generating stations or transmission lines of a certain capacity.

Background: In 2000, the Governor announced that overhead power lines in four communities would be buried underground as part of a pilot program to minimize power outages caused by storms. The project costs were to be shared by the State, local governments, and the utility companies. Communities in Maryland and other states have also relocated lines to reduce their visual impact. Moving overhead utility lines underground is often extremely expensive because of the need to protect the lines in conduits or pipes and to coordinate the lines for each utility. Federal transportation and community development funds may be available in some cases to help pay for utility relocation.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: HB 1089 (Delegate Boutin, *et al.*) – Environmental Matters.

Information Source(s): Public Service Commission, Department of Natural Resources, Office of Smart Growth, Scenic America, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 22, 2002
mld/jr Revised - Senate Third Reader - March 22, 2002
Revised - Enrolled Bill - April 23, 2002

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