

Department of Legislative Services

Maryland General Assembly

2002 Session

FISCAL NOTE

Senate Bill 566

(Senator Della)

Judicial Proceedings

Vehicle Laws - Traffic Control Signal Monitoring Systems - Yellow Signals

This bill requires that the agency with jurisdiction at locations where a traffic control signal is used in conjunction with a traffic control signal monitoring system must ensure that a steady yellow signal is displayed for at least four seconds immediately before a steady red signal is displayed.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill would not directly affect State operations or finances.

Local Effect: Local jurisdictions that operate traffic control signal monitoring systems could incur minimal costs to inspect and/or adjust traffic signals. Fine revenues could decrease minimally.

Small Business Effect: Potential minimal.

Analysis

Current Law: On highways under its control, the State Highway Administration (SHA) must place and maintain those traffic control devices it considers necessary to carry out the provisions of the Maryland Vehicle Law to regulate, warn, or guide traffic.

Local authorities may place or maintain a traffic control device on a highway under SHA jurisdiction with the permission, and under the direction, of SHA. A local authority must place traffic control devices on highways under its jurisdiction that it considers necessary

to carry out the provisions of Maryland Vehicle Law and local traffic ordinances or to regulate, warn, or guide traffic. All such devices must conform to SHA specifications.

A “traffic control signal monitoring system” is a device with one or more motor vehicle sensors working in conjunction with a traffic control signal to produce recorded images of motor vehicles entering an intersection against a red signal indication. The driver of a motor vehicle is subject to a civil penalty if the motor vehicle is recorded by a traffic control signal monitoring system while failing to stop for a red light.

Background: SHA follows the specifications and guidelines for traffic control devices that are contained in the nationally recognized *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* (MUTCD). For a steady yellow signal immediately before a steady red signal on a traffic control signal, the MUTCD recommends a duration of between three to six seconds. SHA reports that it further refers to guidance from the Institute of Transportation Engineers to set the exact duration of any given yellow signal that takes into account traffic speed and whether the approach to the intersection is uphill, downhill, or flat. SHA advises that for all traffic signals under its control the duration of the yellow signal is a minimum of 3.5 seconds. The State does not operate any red light cameras at this time.

Several local jurisdictions, including Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Howard, Montgomery, and Prince George’s counties, currently operate traffic control signal monitoring (“red light camera”) systems. Baltimore and Howard counties each report 2001 revenue of \$1.2 million from their red light camera programs (Baltimore operates 12 cameras and Howard operates 27 cameras), Montgomery County reports revenues of \$2.7 million operating 25 cameras, Prince George’s County reports revenues of \$1.7 million operating 17 cameras, and Anne Arundel has four cameras that generated \$338,000 in 2001.

Howard County reports that all yellow signals subject to the bill are already at least four seconds in duration. Montgomery County estimates a cost of \$2,000 in engineering and technician time to review the timing of signals at 25 locations and implement changes. Montgomery County also reports a potential decrease in citations and revenues as a result of meeting the bill’s requirements.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Frederick County, Montgomery County, Howard County, Charles County, Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts), Department of Transportation, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 21, 2002
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