

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
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FISCAL NOTE

House Bill 327 (Delegate Doory)
Commerce and Government Matters

Fire and Rescue Vehicles - Global Positioning System - Feasibility Study

This bill requires each county, by January 1, 2003, to prepare and submit to the Secretary of Public Safety and Correctional Services an assessment of the feasibility and cost of installing a Global Positioning System receiver in county fire and rescue vehicles. The bill requires each assessment to include any information that would be of use to the State in determining whether to mandate the installation of such a system in all county fire and rescue vehicles. The bill also requires the Secretary to assist in the preparation of the assessments and to report to the Governor and the General Assembly on or before January 31, 2003.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) could assist in the preparation of the assessments and produce the report with existing budgeted resources.

Local Effect: Expenditures for local governments will vary and may include costs for consultant fees. Revenues would not be affected. **This bill may impose a mandate on a unit of local government.**

Small Business Effect: To the extent that outside consultants are used by local governments in performance of the feasibility study required under this bill, some small businesses may derive additional business and benefit. Any subsequent benefits that may accrue to small businesses from the actual purchase and installation of GPS receivers should the State choose to mandate such systems in all county fire and rescue vehicles cannot be determined at this time.

Analysis

Current Law: There is no statutory requirement relating to GPS receivers in emergency vehicles.

Although all of Maryland's counties were required by law to have an enhanced 911 system in place by July 1, 1995, currently no county has completed enhanced wireless 911 services. Only Baltimore County's dispatch center has successfully linked with wireless carriers, but dispatchers see cell phone numbers on their screens only about 20% of the time. There are over 5,000 emergency 911 centers nationwide.

"Enhanced 911" means a 911 system that provides: (1) automatic number identification; (2) automatic location identification; and (3) after July 1, 1995, other future technological advancements that the board may require. The Emergency Number Systems Board is responsible for establishing criteria for a request for the reimbursement of costs for enhancing a 911 system by any county or counties, and the procedures to review and approve or disapprove the request. The definition of enhanced 911 includes "other future technological advancements that the board may require."

Background: GPS was developed by the U.S. Department of Defense to provide all-weather round-the-clock navigation capabilities for military ground, sea, and air forces. Since its implementation, GPS has also become an integral asset in numerous civilian applications and industries around the globe, employing 24 spacecraft in 20,200 km circular orbits inclined at 55 degrees. The full 24-satellite system was completed on March 9, 1994.

GPS receivers use triangulation of the GPS satellites' navigational signals to determine location. GPS satellites are controlled at the GPS Master Control Station (MCS) located at Falcon Air Force Base outside Colorado Springs, Colorado. The accuracy using a typical civilian GPS receiver is typically about 100 meters.

A 911 system automatically connects a person dialing the digits 911 on a telephone to a public safety answering point from which police, fire, ambulance or other public safety services may be dispatched on a 24-hour basis. Since July 1, 1985, all counties and Baltimore City have had a 911 system installed.

When 911 operators receive a landline call, the address pops up on their computer. With cellular phones, a blank screen results. By October 1, 2001, wireless carriers were supposed to have solved that problem by rolling out technology to pinpoint cell phone callers. AT&T Wireless, Verizon Wireless, Sprint, Cingular Wireless, Qwest Wireless and Alltel Communications, which together handle most cellular traffic in the United States, have asked the Federal Communications Commission for more time. In their

filings, carriers blame everything from third-party equipment makers to 911 dispatch centers for the delay. Most carriers say they won't have enhanced 911 fully in place until 2005.

More than one in four 911 calls arrive via cell phone, according to the National Emergency Number Association. Public safety officials expect that figure to more than double in the next five years. In some dispatch centers, wireless calls account for as much as half of call volume.

Local Expenditures: Montgomery County reports that the county is in the last stage of a multi-year, \$65 million Public Safety Mobile Data System project that includes the installation of Automatic Vehicle Locators (AVL) in all county sheriff, police, fire, and rescue vehicles, including all volunteer fire and rescue vehicles. AVL is a send and receive system that uses GPS and broadcast location information over an 800 MHz bandwidth. The county's fiscal 2003 budget has allocated \$370,700 to complete the equipping of the emergency vehicles, which is expected to be completed and operational in fiscal 2003.

Prince George's County reports that this bill probably would involve the hiring of a consultant to assist in sifting through various complexities, at a cost of \$25,000 to \$35,000. Dorchester County reports that the bill does not provide sufficient information to construct a fiscal estimate.

Additional Comments: Legislative Services notes that this bill could involve seeking out the expertise of the State Fire Marshal within the Department of State Police and/or the Public Safety Technology Task Force co-chaired by the Secretaries of DPSCS, the State Police, and the Department of Budget and Management. It is assumed that any involvement of the State Fire Marshal or the task force in the feasibility study could be handled with existing budgeted resources.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Montgomery County, Prince George's County, Garrett County, Dorchester County, Baltimore County, Anne Arundel County, Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, Department of Legislative Services

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