

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2003 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Joint Resolution 7 (Senator Forehand)
Finance

Regional Conference on Creation of a Regional Transportation Authority

This joint resolution urges the Governors of Maryland and Virginia and the Mayor of the District of Columbia to convene a regional conference to discuss the creation of a Maryland, Virginia, and District of Columbia Multi-Jurisdictional Regional Transportation Authority. The conference would include representatives from the legislative bodies of all three jurisdictions and would host discussions of long-term regional transportation solutions, potential funding sources for regional transit projects, and the feasibility of establishing a regional transportation authority.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Compliance with this resolution could be handled with existing resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: None applicable.

Background: The President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Delegates created a legislative transportation commission in 2000 to address transportation concerns in the Washington Metropolitan Area and appointed 12 members of the General Assembly to serve on the commission. The commission also includes members of the Virginia General Assembly and the Council of the District of Columbia.

In the 2001 session, the General Assembly endorsed HB 10 (Chapter 632), which called for a report to be conducted by the commission to evaluate the feasibility of creating a regional transportation authority. The transportation consultant who prepared the report (released in 2003) observed that the Washington region's population is projected to grow by 29% by 2025 and that decentralized development has accelerated the number and distance of vehicle trips in the area. Further, the reliability and efficiency of the existing regional system is rapidly decreasing, and the region has no dedicated source of funding for transportation projects. Approximately \$1.7 billion is needed annually to maintain the current system and provide adequate new capacity, according to the National Capital Transportation Planning Board.

The report indicated that the region has a mixed record for solving regional transportation issues collaboratively and lacks a permanent cooperative framework for planning and delivering interstate projects. However, without an approved regional funding source or project, the consultant concluded that a regional transportation authority would not be useful; authorities are generally used to administer projects that have already been approved. The consultant also stated that the Washington region should improve existing frameworks for interstate cooperation on regional projects.

Two regional authorities are active in the Washington region – the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), which handles the regional subway system, and the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority, which operates and manages capital improvements to the Reagan National and Washington Dulles airports. The Virginia legislature created the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority in 2001 that has the authority to issue bonds for transportation projects and is responsible for recommending funding priorities for regional projects. A statewide referendum in 2002 to increase the Virginia sales tax by 0.5 cents to provide additional funding for transportation projects failed.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: HJ 12 (Delegate Hurson, *et al.*) – Rules and Executive Nominations.

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

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