

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2004 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 36 (Chairman, Finance Committee)
 (By Request – Departmental – Transportation)

Finance

Electric Regulation - High Voltage Lines

This departmental bill alters the definition of high voltage lines to exclude cables that are inherently safe.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Special fund expenditures could decrease by \$85,000 in FY 2005. Future year expenditures reflect inflation and the elimination of one-time training costs. Revenues would not be affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2005	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
SF Expenditure	(85,000)	(105,000)	(110,300)	(115,800)	(121,600)
Net Effect	\$85,000	\$105,000	\$110,300	\$115,800	\$121,600

Note:() = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate effect

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) has determined that this bill has minimal or no impact on small business (attached). Legislative Services concurs with this assessment.

Analysis

Bill Summary: Inherently safe cables are defined as those cables that: (1) are covered with a continuous auxiliary semiconductor shield in combination with suitable metallic drainage and supported on and cabled together with an effectively grounded bare

messenger; (2) are insulated, nonshielded, operated at not over 5 KV phase-to-phase or 2.9 KV phase-to-ground, and supported on and cabled together with an effectively grounded bare messenger; or (3) provide the necessary electrical safety by alternative means set forth in the most recent National Electrical Safety Code standards for such cables.

Current Law: The current definition of high voltage lines includes lines that are installed above ground-level and have a voltage of more than 750 volts between conductors or from a conductor to a ground.

Background: The High Voltage Act was first codified in 1968 and updated in 1991. The Act requires clearing distances between older high voltage cables.

State Expenditures: MDOT notes that while utility companies regulated by the Public Service Commission are exempt from the provisions of this article, State Highway Administration (SHA) employees are not. If an older utility line is within a certain distance of electrical wiring in use by SHA, SHA employees may not service their own cables without increasing the clearance. Because utility companies are exempt from provisions of the Act, utilities can run shielded and grounded high-voltage lines within feet of SHA traffic signals and/or wiring. SHA cannot then repair or service its own lines without being in violation of the Act. Conforming to the Act as it currently exists requires SHA to acquire additional rights-of-way and erect poles for wiring that absent the Act's outdated requirements could be placed on existing poles.

SHA estimates that this bill would reduce the need for wiring adjustments by \$100,000 each year. In addition, one \$15,000 course for 200 SHA field staff will be required to educate staff on which lines may be serviced safely under the new law and which lines would still require additional clearance. This \$75 per person course could be absorbed within existing resources in future years for new employees.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of Transportation, Public Service Commission, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 3, 2004
mh/hlb

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