

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2006 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

Senate Bill 655
Finance

(Senator Jones, *et al.*)

Citizens' Advisory Council for the Baltimore Corridor Transit Study - Red Line

This bill establishes a Citizens' Advisory Council for the Baltimore Corridor Transit Study for the Red Line. One purpose of the council is to ensure that the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) studies all options available for the Red Line Project, including a rail system in a tunnel.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2006.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Staffing for the council and additional council expenses could be handled with existing resources. If the study of a rail system in a tunnel is interpreted to mean light rail only, there would be no additional expenditures; however, if it is interpreted to mean heavy rail, there would be additional costs and delays. Transportation Trust Fund (TTF) expenditures would increase by \$2 million in FY 2007 and 2008 for studies connected to heavy rail subway construction. The need to study heavy rail would result in delays; accordingly TTF and federal fund expenditures could decrease in FY 2010. TTF and federal fund expenditures would subsequently increase in FY 2011 due to costs associated with construction delays.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The council consists of 15 members. Twelve members (three each) are to be selected by the State senators from Legislative Districts 10, 41, 44, and 46. Of the three remaining members, one member is selected by the MTA or the Governor, one is selected by the County Executive of Baltimore County, and one is selected by the Mayor of Baltimore City. Members are to serve a two-year term and do not receive compensation. The council must meet at least once every three months, and eight members constitutes a majority. MTA is to staff the council.

The purpose of the council is to ensure that, among other things, MTA:

- studies all options available for the Red Line Project, including a rail system in a tunnel, and develops information that allows the community to fully weigh the options;
- employs and engages members of the community to act as liaisons to the project, including programs to allow affected businesses to bid on contracts, and programs to exceed disadvantaged business hiring goals;
- to the extent practical, avoids options that require purchase of multiple adjacent properties or negatively affect property values;
- seeks to mitigate construction impact and restores damage to private property during construction of the Red Line; and
- upholds the principles of environmental justice.

The council is to report to the Governor and the General Assembly on its activities by September 1 of each year.

Current: MTA has jurisdiction over planning, developing, acquiring, financing, and operating certain transit facilities, including the Baltimore mass transit system. MTA may not establish or abandon any route without a public hearing. In addition, MTA must prepare plans to meet the transit needs of the Metropolitan Transit District, which must include the transit facilities to be established, the areas to be served, and the type of equipment to be used. MTA must maintain a copy of the proposed plan for public viewing and hold one public hearing. MTA must consider evidence and commentary presented at the hearing.

Background: The proposed Red Line is a 10.5 mile east-west corridor connecting sections of Baltimore County, Edmondson Village in Baltimore City, West Baltimore, downtown Baltimore, and the Inner Harbor East. The Red Line would connect to Baltimore's existing transit system – Metro Subway, light rail, and MARC lines – and

would serve major employers such as the Social Security Administration, the Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services, and the downtown central business district.

Options being considered for the project are enhanced bus service, bus rapid transit, and light rail transit. In addition, the impact of not building is being considered. MTA is working on a draft environmental impact statement, and preliminary engineering. MTA has spent \$9.5 million on planning through fiscal 2005. MTA's capital budget for the Red Line contains \$6.1 million for planning in fiscal 2006 and \$7 million for planning in fiscal 2007.

MTA established five community working groups for the Red Line Project. All have held scheduled meetings, the last of which was in May 2005. In addition, MTA held five community workshops in November 2005.

State Expenditures: MTA advises that staffing for the council would necessitate hiring one regional planner (grade 18) and one part-time administrative assistant (Grade 11). DLS advises that staffing the council and any incidental expenses related to the council could be handled with existing resources.

The bill does not delineate between light rail and heavy rail when discussing the need to study a rail system in a tunnel. If rail system in a tunnel is intended to mean light rail only, there would be no additional expenditures or delays as this option is already being studied. However, if it is interpreted to mean heavy rail subway, MTA advises that it has not conducted any engineering or environmental studies related to a heavy rail subway system. Accordingly, MTA advises that the cost of performing the studies would be approximately \$4 million, divided equally between fiscal 2007 and 2008. The Department Legislative Services (DLS) concurs with this assessment if heavy rail is intended to be studied. TTF expenditures could therefore increase by \$2 million in both fiscal 2007 and 2008.

In addition, MTA advises that scheduled construction on the Red Line is to begin in fiscal 2010. Studying heavy rail subway would delay that construction by approximately one year and result in higher construction costs due to the delay. MTA advises that construction costs would increase by approximately 3.5% from fiscal 2010 to 2011. Depending on whether MTA ultimately selects enhanced bus, bus rapid transit, or light rail, that delay could cost between \$5 million and \$60.4 million over the construction of the Red Line. If MTA were instead to select a heavy rail option, that cost would be even higher. Construction is expected to take five years; accordingly, the cost in fiscal 2011 would be between \$1.1 and \$12.1 million. Construction costs are expected to be split with the federal government.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

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

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 15, 2006
ncs/ljm Revised - Updated Information - February 17, 2006

Analysis by: Nora C. McArdle

Direct Inquiries to:
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510