

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2006 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 757 (Delegate Cryor, *et al.*)
Environmental Matters

Transportation - Passenger Railroad Service Lines - Station Closures

This emergency bill establishes requirements that the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) must meet before it can close a passenger railroad service line station that is either a State or federal historic landmark, or has been determined by the political subdivision in which the station is located to be of community value. MTA must hold a public hearing to solicit comments from persons impacted by the closing and must consider and give due regard to the information it receives from the public.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Potential increase in Transportation Trust Fund (TTF) expenditures of up to \$16,300 for each hearing held; however, as MTA has no plans to close any train stations at this time, current TTF expenditures would not change.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: MTA has the authority to plan, develop, construct, acquire, finance, and operate transit facilities, including passenger rail service stations. In addition, MTA has jurisdiction over services performed by transit facilities owned or controlled by MTA. MTA may sell, convey, or otherwise dispose of any property no longer required for the purposes of MTA. MTA cannot establish or abandon any route until a public hearing is held. Any person served by or using the transit facilities may request a public hearing on any service rendered by the transit facilities owned or controlled by MTA, as can the

People's Counsel to the Public Service Commission, and any private carrier operating in the district.

Background: MTA recently attempted to close four stations on March 6, 2006 – the St. Denis, Dickerson, Jessup, and Boyds stations, which are on the Brunswick and Camden lines. The average daily ridership at these stations is approximately 36 to 46 people. In contrast, the average daily ridership at other MARC stations is approximately 671.

The Montgomery County Council opposed the closing and argued for increased advertising and trains placed on the routes to attract more riders at the affected stations. Although MTA held public hearings on the matter due to public requests for hearings, the initial decision to close the stations was made less than one day after all public comment was due. MTA reversed its decision and announced that it would not close the stations on February 10, 2006.

State Fiscal Effect: MTA advises that the cost to hold a public hearing is approximately \$16,250. This includes, but is not limited to, advertising, printing costs, location rental, and a foreign language translator. If more than one meeting is scheduled at a time, the costs for advertising the meetings is shared and is, therefore, lower per meeting.

MTA advises that the St. Denis, Dickerson, Jessup, and Boyds stations are the only ones it sought to close, and it has no plans to close any other stations. MTA already held public hearings on the closing of the four stations and, therefore, no additional public meeting costs would be incurred based on current MTA priorities. Legislative Services advises that, should MTA seek to close stations in the future, public hearings would have to be held.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

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

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ncs/ljm

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