

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2008 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 507

(Southern Maryland Delegation)

Environmental Matters

Finance

Commission to Study Southern Maryland Transportation Needs

This bill extends the statutory authority of the Commission to Study Southern Maryland Transportation Needs from June 30, 2007 to June 30, 2009. The bill also extends the commission's reporting deadline from November 1, 2006 to June 30, 2008. Finally, the bill authorizes the commission to elect to reconvene to study and make alterations to drafts of its recommendations and to study its findings.

The bill takes effect June 1, 2008.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The Department of Budget and Management and the Maryland Department of Transportation could handle the bill's requirements with existing budgeted resources. Any expense reimbursements for commission members are assumed to be minimal and absorbable within existing resources.

Local Effect: The Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland could handle the bill's changes with existing resources.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Chapter 14 of 2006 established the commission and charged it with: (1) reviewing studies and plans prepared by State transportation agencies; (2) studying the current and future impact of traffic congestion in Southern Maryland, including traffic levels at specified intersections; (3) assessing barriers to transportation improvements

(roadway and mass transit); and (4) making recommendations for the amount of funding needed to reduce congestion and possible funding mechanisms. The commission is authorized to hold public hearings, conduct site visits, and request information from CSX Corporation regarding existing rail lines.

The State agencies represented on the commission provide staffing and TCC provides technical and staff support. The commission is required to coordinate with TCC's Regional Infrastructure Advisory Committee.

The commission was to expire on June 30, 2007; however, per a decision by the Attorney General regarding the veto of Senate Bill 281 of 2005 and the subsequent override, the reporting date and termination date were extended by 18 months to February 2008.

Background: TCC is responsible for the regional transportation planning, regional transit service coordination, the regional transportation plan development and implementation, commuter assistance, and air quality planning for Charles, St. Mary's, and Calvert counties. The Southern Maryland Transportation Strategy is the region's transportation plan, which provides a vision and general direction through 2010. The Governor's proposed fiscal 2009 budget includes \$50,000 for TCC from MDOT.

Southern Maryland is experiencing tremendous growth due to population and commuter patterns, as well as the expansion of the Patient River Naval Air Station in St. Mary's County. As a result, major arterials are clogged during rush hour. Vehicular traffic in the region also grows steadily, especially in Charles County, due to commercial truck drivers who wish to avoid the Capital Beltway and congested interstates by using U.S. 301.

Several projects aimed at alleviating congestion in Southern Maryland are in the State capital program, including a study of the U.S. 301 corridor, continued studies and monitoring of MD 5 and MD 4, and studies involving the Southern Maryland Mass Transportation Analysis.

State Expenditures: DBM and MDOT provide staffing to the commission, while TCC offers technical support. MDOT advises that it has spent \$270,000 out of a budget of \$460,000 for analyses to support the commission's work and that no additional consultant funds should be needed to meet the extended deadline.

The Maryland Transit Administration advises that funding related to the commission is currently provided in two MTA contracts, both of which are funded through the MTA capital budget. The contracts, with a combined balance of \$5.9 million, provide funds for this and other MTA studies.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: SB 200 (Senators Dyson and Middleton) – Finance.

Information Source(s): Commission to Study Southern Maryland Transportation Needs, Maryland Department of Transportation, Department of Budget and Management, Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland, Department of Legislative

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