

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2009 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 891
(Senator Forehand)
Finance

Transportation - Highways - Lighting

This bill authorizes the State Highway Administration (SHA) or a political subdivision to install or replace specified outdoor highway lights (1) only if reducing speed limits or installing specified means of passive or reflective lighting do not address safety concerns; and (2) only with lights designed to maximize energy conservation, minimize light pollution, glare, and light trespass, and with an adequate illuminance. However, this provision does not apply if SHA determines, on a life-cycle cost analysis, that lights satisfying the bill's requirements are less cost effective than lights that do not satisfy the bill's requirements. SHA, political subdivisions, and electric companies are authorized to install or replace permanent outdoor highway lights only with new specified lights with a rated output of more than 1800 lumens if the light is a specified type; SHA and political subdivisions are authorized to waive this requirement for specified reasons.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Since the lighting requirements may be waived if implementation costs exceed available resources, the bill is not expected to have a significant impact on State finances but may result in operational delays.

Local Effect: Since the lighting requirements may be waived if implementation costs exceed available resources, the bill is not expected to have a significant impact on local finances but may result in operational delays.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The bill applies to electric companies only when they install lights the State or a political subdivision pays to operate.

For each waiver granted, SHA and political subdivisions are required to document in writing the lighting plan, efforts to comply with the bill's requirements, and reasons for the waiver. To obtain a waiver, electric companies are required to provide written notice, which includes the lighting plan, efforts to comply with the bill's requirements, and reasons for the waiver, to SHA or a political subdivision that controls the highway where the light is located at least 30 days before installing or replacing specified highway lights.

Current Law: SHA is responsible for more than 5,200 miles or approximately 16,800 lane miles of road, 2,500 bridges, 3,500 small stream crossing structures, and 80 miles of sound barriers. It also has responsibility for planning, designing, constructing, and maintaining these roads and bridges to safety and performance standards while considering sociological, ecological, and economic concerns.

Background: A primary purpose of lighting a roadway at night is to increase the visibility of the roadway and its immediate environment to help drivers maneuver more efficiently and safely. Visibility or the ability to detect an object depends on several factors, such as the contrast between the object and the background, the adaptation of the eye, glare, and the visual acuity of the driver. Many factors must be taken into account when selecting road lighting fittings, such as shape, distribution of luminous intensity in relation to the surroundings, type of fitting, and the height of the fitting.

Road lighting contributes to light pollution and energy demand. Light pollution is artificial light that shines in an undesirable direction, such as upwards or into an open landscape. A significant amount of energy is dedicated to lighting along roads. To promote energy efficiency and reduce light pollution, road lighting is often adjusted to reduce the level of illumination.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: HB 816 is designated as a cross file; however, it is not identical.

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

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 5, 2009
mlm/ljm

Analysis by: Amanda Mock

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