

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2009 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

Senate Bill 866

(Senator Pipkin)

Finance

Rules and Executive Nominations

Chesapeake Bay Bridge - Required Study

This bill requires the Maryland Transportation Authority (MDTA) to complete a study on utilization of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge. MDTA must submit a report of its findings to the Governor and the General Assembly by January 1, 2010.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2009, and terminates June 30, 2010.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: MDTA already has some of the data to complete the required study and can collect and analyze the comparison data with existing resources. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The study must include the following information:

- a historical review of the utilization of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge by vehicles of various classes;
- a historical review of accident data on the Chesapeake Bay Bridge by class of vehicle;
- a review of utilization of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge by large vehicles at various times of the day and days of the week;

- a comparison of the volume of large truck traffic on bridges similar to the Chesapeake Bay Bridge in other parts of the country at various times of the day and days of the week; and
- the impact that variable toll pricing for large vehicles has had on existing toll facilities nationally and on the volume of large vehicle traffic at various times of the day.

Background: The Chesapeake Bay Bridge connects Maryland's Eastern Shore with the metropolitan areas of Baltimore, Annapolis, and the District of Columbia. The original two-lane bridge was constructed in 1952, and the second three-lane bridge was constructed in 1973. The existing bridge is the only roadway crossing of the Chesapeake Bay in Maryland; approximately 27 million vehicles crossed the bridge in 2007. Traffic congestion on the bridge can be particularly severe, due in part to factors such as a lack of shoulder room to perform maintenance.

The 2004 *Bay Bridge Transportation Needs Report* estimates that, by 2025, traffic will increase on the bridge by at least 41% over 2001 levels on both weekdays (61,000 vehicles in 2001, increasing to 86,000 in 2025) and summer Saturdays (95,000 on an August Saturday in 2001, set to increase to 135,000 in 2025). In fiscal 2008, total truck traffic crossing the bridge was just over 1 million vehicles.

On August 10, 2008, a three-vehicle crash occurred on the Chesapeake Bay Bridge resulting in a tractor-trailer going through a concrete jersey wall and into the water below, killing the truck driver. The accident closed down the older, two-lane eastbound span of the bridge and prompted questions about the bridge's safety. An investigation after the accident revealed corrosion in some of the bolts that anchor the concrete jersey walls. Portions of the bridge were closed for weeks while inspectors assessed the problem and repairs were made.

In September 2008, Governor Martin O'Malley announced the establishment of a peer review group, composed of nationally recognized experts, to examine MDTA's bridge and tunnel inspection program and identify and evaluate best practices used throughout the United States. The peer review group is expected to submit a report containing findings and recommendations in April 2009.

The 2009 inspection of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge is currently underway and nearly complete. In fall 2008, MDTA hired a new consultant to complete the annual bridge inspection.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: HB 1375 (Delegates Smigiel and Sossi) - Rules and Executive Nominations.

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

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