

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2009 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 29 (Delegate Sossi)
Environmental Matters

Task Force to Study Traffic Accident Clearance Procedures

This bill establishes a Task Force to Study Traffic Accident Clearance Procedures. The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) must provide staff support for the task force. The task force must submit a report of its findings and recommendations to the General Assembly by December 31, 2009.

The bill takes effect June 1, 2009 and terminates May 31, 2010.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Given the State's fiscal difficulties, agency budgets have been constrained. Thus, the requirement to staff the task force is not absorbable within the existing budgeted resources of MDOT. Instead, Transportation Trust Fund expenditures may increase minimally in FY 2010 for contractual staff to support the task force. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The task force is charged with:

- identifying and studying traffic accident clearance policies and procedures followed in Maryland and other states; and

- identifying improvements to State policies and procedures that will improve response times, reduce traffic delays and secondary incidents, and improve safety and air quality.

Members of the task force may not receive compensation but are entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the standard State travel regulations.

Background: Delays associated with poor traffic incident response and vehicle recovery times are a major cause of traffic congestion. The Federal Highway Administration notes that about 25% of congestion can be attributed to traffic incidents. Improving interagency coordination and communication is important to expediting detection of, response to, and recovery from traffic incidents. The main participants in incident management are emergency response teams, law enforcement agencies, the private towing and recovery industry, and state highway agencies.

In Maryland, the Coordinated Highways Action Response Team (CHART) program was developed as a joint effort between MDOT, the Maryland Transportation Authority, and the Maryland State Police, in cooperation with other federal, State, and local agencies. CHART's mission is to improve operations of Maryland's highway system by using real-time mapping technology to improve response time and to mitigate nonrecurring congestion, which accounts for approximately half of the State's highway traffic congestion. In 2006, CHART personnel responded to 16,000 incidents and assisted 23,000 stranded motorists on Maryland roads.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems, Department of State Police, Maryland Department of the Environment, Maryland Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Department of Legislative Services

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