

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2014 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 288 (Delegate O'Donnell)
Environmental Matters

Finance

Transportation - Metropolitan Planning Organizations - Notice and Public Hearing

This bill requires the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) to give notice to specified General Assembly members before beginning the process of establishing, altering, or eliminating a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for transportation planning purposes in an area in the State that is designated by federal law as an urbanized area. MDOT must hold a public hearing related to the MPO, if a member of the General Assembly who is provided such notice requests such a hearing within a specified timeframe.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: According to MDOT, proposed changes to MPOs are infrequent; accordingly, the bill's requirements are not anticipated to materially affect State finances in most years. When the bill's requirements are triggered, MDOT can implement the notice requirements with existing budgeted resources. To the extent MDOT is required to hold a public hearing as a result of the bill, however, Transportation Trust Fund expenditures increase by \$20,000 to \$50,000 per hearing.

Local Effect: The bill does not directly affect local government operations or finances.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The required notice must be delivered by certified mail, return receipt requested. The notice must be sent to each General Assembly member that represents a

State legislative district with any portion in an urbanized area that is affected by the MPO change or a State legislative district that is located within one mile of the border of an urbanized area that is affected by the MPO change.

MDOT must hold a public hearing in the designated urbanized area to address any issues related to the establishment, alteration, or elimination of an MPO if a member of the General Assembly who is provided notice pursuant to the bill requests such a hearing within 45 days of receiving the notice.

Current Law: The Secretary of Transportation is responsible for all planning activities of MDOT, as well as the development and maintenance of a continuing, comprehensive, and integrated transportation planning process.

Federal regulations require that each urbanized area, as a condition to the receipt of federal capital or operating assistance, have a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning process carried out by an MPO in cooperation with the State that results in plans and programs consistent with the development of the urbanized area. The regulations further specify that each MPO must consist of (1) local elected officials; (2) officials of public agencies that administer or operate major modes of transportation in the metropolitan area; and (3) appropriate State officials. An MPO designation remains in effect until otherwise redesignated. An MPO may be redesignated by an agreement between the Governor and units of local government that together represent 75% of the existing planning area population. The U.S. Census Bureau defines an urbanized area as a geographic location with a population of 50,000 or more.

Background: According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there are 43 urbanized areas in Maryland; 29 of these areas are located entirely in Maryland and 14 are partially located in one or more of Maryland's neighboring jurisdictions. About 5 million people live in these urbanized areas, and the average population density in all areas is 2,511 people per square mile. There are currently seven MPOs responsible for regional transportation planning in Maryland.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of Transportation, U.S. Census Bureau, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - January 31, 2014
mm/lgc

Analysis by: Richard L. Duncan

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