

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2015 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

Senate Bill 867
Budget and Taxation

(Senator Peters, *et al.*)

Appropriations

**Prince George's County Board of Education - Public High Schools - Outdoor
Synthetic Turf Fields**

This bill requires the Prince George's County Board of Education to install an outdoor artificial turf field at each of 21 public high schools in the county by June 30, 2020 (fiscal 2020). It prioritizes the schedule for completion of the installation of fields by fiscal year and limits installation to no more than five fields in any fiscal year. The local share of the costs must be paid from Program Open Space (POS) under specified conditions. The board may also use donated funds, but it may not use general operating funds to implement the bill. All fields installed under the bill must be for joint use under the board's education facility master plan.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2015.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The bill applies only to Prince George's County.

Local Effect: Based on an estimated cost of between \$600,000 and \$750,000 to install an artificial turf field at four or five high schools each year, annual expenditures by the Prince George's County Board of Education may increase by approximately \$3.0 million each year from FY 2016 through 2020. However, to the extent that local POS funds and donated funds are not available, projects may not be funded because the board cannot use general operating funds. Using local POS funds for this purpose may result in other county funding priorities being delayed. **This bill imposes a mandate on a unit of local government.**

Small Business Effect: Potential meaningful for small businesses that manufacture and/or install artificial turf athletic fields.

Analysis

Bill Summary: In each fiscal year, total POS expenditures for turf fields may not exceed 50% of the total amount authorized for development projects in Prince George's County, not including funding authorized for development projects by municipal corporations in the county. Local matching funds are not required for the installation of turf fields using POS funding.

In addition to using POS funds for the projects, the county board may use funds (1) donated by a corporation; (2) raised by a school parent-teacher organization, a school parent organization, or a school athletic department; and (3) donated from any other source.

Before making any expenditures required by the bill, the county board must enter into a binding memorandum of understanding with the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission and with Prince George's County to provide shared public, nonschool use of the turf fields constructed under the bill.

Current Law: State law does not address the installation of turf fields at public high schools.

POS, established in 1969 and administered by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), provides funds for State and local acquisition and development of public outdoor recreational sites, facilities, and open space, which may include turf fields. In fiscal 2015, the local share of POS funding (\$18.6 million) made up 19% of approximately \$96.2 million in POS funding. The local share is allocated among the local governments according to a formula established in 1982 that is based on past grant amounts, population change, and transfer tax revenue collections in each jurisdiction. Counties must submit an annual program of proposed acquisition and development projects to DNR for approval each year. Legislators from each jurisdiction are given the opportunity to review and comment on the annual program before its approval. The annual program then becomes the basis for a grant agreement to each local governing body. Municipalities may also receive POS funding through their counties. They apply to the counties for the funds, and each county then considers municipal projects along with other county projects.

Background: Artificial turf fields are made of synthetic "blades" that are made to look like grass. "Crumb rubber," which is derived from shredded scrap tires or from the retreading process, is frequently used as infill between the turf fibers to provide stability, uniformity, and resiliency. The Synthetic Turf Council reports that artificial turf fields have been installed in approximately 4,500 locations. The cost of installing a field is estimated to range between \$600,000 and \$750,000. DNR advises that local POS funds have been used or approved to install more than 40 artificial turf fields statewide. Prince George's County's POS allocation for fiscal 2015 is \$3.7 million, which includes \$1.5 million for the installation of turf fields at Gwynn Park High School and Dr. Henry A. Wise, Jr. High School; under the bill, those two schools are slated for field installations in fiscal 2016. The Department of Legislative Services notes that both fields were originally slated to be installed using POS funding in fiscal 2014 but were delayed.

Artificial turf fields have advantages and disadvantages compared with natural grass fields. Artificial turf fields tend to have significantly lower maintenance costs compared with grass fields. Turf fields are also better suited to year-round use. However, older turf fields have been found to have elevated lead content, although both the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Consumer Product Safety Commission have found levels of lead and other contaminants in newer fields to be safe. Regarding injuries, a 2012 study published in the *American Journal of Sports Medicine* found that college football players were 1.39 times more likely to suffer knee injuries on artificial turf than on natural grass fields. However, the level of injuries on natural grass fields likely increases if they are poorly maintained, which is often the case with high school fields.

Local Fiscal Effect: As noted above, the installation cost per field is estimated to be between \$600,000 and \$750,000. With four or five fields slated for installation each fiscal year, the total cost to the county board is roughly \$2.4 million to \$3.75 million each year through fiscal 2020. As noted above, the county's fiscal 2015 POS allocation is \$3.7 million, and the county is restricted to using only half of development funds annually, not including any funds for municipal corporations. Therefore, assuming comparable POS allocations in future years, the county board likely has to raise approximately one-third to one-half of the funds necessary to carry out the bill's mandate from other sources because it cannot use its general operating funds for this purpose.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: Similar bills were introduced in 2013 (HB 1108) and 2014 (HB 1013). Both bills received hearings in the House Appropriations Committee, but no further action was taken on either bill.

Cross File: Although HB 597 (Prince George's County Delegation – Appropriations) is designated as a cross file, it is not identical.

Information Source(s): Department of Natural Resources, Prince George's County, Public School Construction Program, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, *American Journal of Sports Medicine*, Synthetic Turf Council, Department of Legislative Services

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