

Department of Legislative Services  
 Maryland General Assembly  
 2019 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
 First Reader

House Bill 1286 (Delegates Love and Fraser-Hidalgo)  
 Environment and Transportation

School Vehicles - Three-Point Seat Belts - Pilot Program

This bill establishes a pilot program to provide competitive grants to county school boards for equipping school vehicles with three-point seat belts. The goal of the pilot program is to determine the feasibility and desirability of equipping school vehicles with three-point seat belts. The pilot program must be implemented and administered by the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT). Funds for the pilot program must be as provided by the Governor in the State budget. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2019, and terminates June 30, 2024.**

Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** Transportation Trust Fund expenditures increase by \$950,000 in FY 2020 and by \$600,000 in FY 2021 through 2024. Revenues are not affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
SF Expenditure	950,000	600,000	600,000	600,000	600,000
Net Effect	(\$950,000)	(\$600,000)	(\$600,000)	(\$600,000)	(\$600,000)

*Note: ( ) = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate increase; (-) = indeterminate decrease*

**Local Effect:** Local school system expenditures increase by \$50,000 annually in FY 2020 through 2024. Revenues are not affected.

**Small Business Effect:** Minimal.

## Analysis

**Bill Summary:** MDOT must (1) develop application procedures and solicit applications from county school boards for grants to defray the costs of equipping some (or all) of a participating county's school vehicles with three-point seat belts and (2) provide competitive grants to assist in equipping some (or all) of a participating county's school vehicles with three-point seat belts.

A county school board may apply to MDOT for a grant to cover 90% of the costs of purchasing and installing three-point seat belts in school vehicles. However, a county school board that receives a grant must pay a 10% match of the total costs of purchasing and installing the seat belts.

County school boards may seek private funding to implement the pilot program. Any private funding received may be used only to (1) cover all (or part) of the required match or (2) supplement the State and county funds allocated to purchase and install seat belts in school vehicles.

MDOT must establish standards for evaluating grant applications and adopt procedures necessary to implement the pilot program.

### *Required Reporting*

By September 1 each year, a county school board that receives funding under the pilot program must submit a report to MDOT on (1) the amount of funding received under the program; (2) an accounting of how the funds were spent; and (3) a detailed evaluation of the effectiveness of the program in equipping school vehicles and any problems encountered.

By December 1 in any calendar year that funds are disbursed under the program, MDOT must aggregate the information reported to it by county school boards and report to the Governor and General Assembly on (1) the aggregated information and (2) the individual reports received from county school boards.

**Current Law:** Every motor vehicle registered in Maryland and assembled after June 1, 1964, must be equipped with two sets of seat belts in the front seat of the vehicle and, if assembled after June 1, 1969, must have two sets of seat belts on the rear seat of the vehicle. However, this requirement excludes school buses.

Every motor vehicle used by nursery schools, camps, day nurseries, or day care centers for children with intellectual disabilities that transports children must be equipped with seat

belts for each seat. Such vehicles are also subject to regulations prescribed by the Motor Vehicle Administration, unless the vehicle is a specified type of school vehicle.

**Background:** Local school systems spent \$620.6 million on student transportation services in fiscal 2017 as shown in **Appendix 1**. Over 640,000 public school students receive transportation services. Local school systems in six counties (Baltimore, Frederick, Montgomery, Prince George's, Talbot, and Washington) primarily use government owned school vehicles to transport students; whereas, two local school systems (Caroline and Kent) use a combination of government owned and private contractors. Local school systems in the other jurisdictions primarily use private contractors to transport students. In total, local school systems use over 7,200 school vehicles for student transportation services.

**State/Local Expenditures:** The Maryland State Department of Education advises that the cost to add lap and shoulder seatbelts (*i.e.*, three-point seat belts) to a new school bus totals about \$7,500 per bus. However, the cost to retrofit an existing school bus with lap and shoulder seat belts is about \$21,000 per bus.

While the exact amount of funding that may be provided under the bill is not known, *for illustrative purposes only*, assuming the State provides about \$450,000 in funding annually for the program (and that local school systems provide an additional \$50,000 match), the program could equip about 67 new school buses in the State annually with lap and shoulder seatbelts. However, to the extent that local jurisdictions choose to retrofit existing school buses, fewer buses are likely to be equipped. For instance, if *only* existing school buses were retrofitted, about 24 school buses annually would be equipped with lap and shoulder seatbelts.

MDOT advises that it anticipates additional administrative costs in order to implement the new grant program. In fiscal 2020, MDOT advises that it expects to incur as much as \$500,000 in additional costs in order to develop a grant application and web portal. In addition, MDOT must develop criteria for evaluating applications and procedures for administering the grants (*e.g.*, invoicing, payment tracking, agreements with local jurisdictions, etc.). MDOT anticipates ongoing annual costs totaling about \$150,000 in subsequent years.

However, the Department of Legislative Services advises that the full amount of these administrative costs may not be required depending on the level of grant funding available.

## **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland State Department of Education; Department of Budget and Management; Maryland Department of Transportation; Baltimore City Public Schools; Baltimore County Public Schools; Anne Arundel County Public Schools; Public Schools; Department of Legislative Services

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## Appendix 1 – Student Transportation Statistics – Maryland Public Schools

School System	Number of Vehicles			Total Miles Traveled			Pupils Eligible for Transportation			Transportation Costs
	Public	Contracted	Total	Non-disabled	Disabled	Total	Non-disabled	Disabled	Total	Total Amount
Allegany	22	88	110	1,269,594	345,312	1,614,906	5,398	267	5,665	\$5,850,495
Anne Arundel	54	550	604	9,067,159	1,647,977	10,715,136	59,347	1,741	61,088	55,903,491
Baltimore City	33	407	440	1,810,839	447,869	2,258,708	32,142	2,784	34,926	53,097,524
Baltimore	670	138	808	10,043,580	4,943,914	14,987,494	77,594	3,712	81,306	65,595,607
Calvert	0	139	139	2,548,645	783,880	3,332,525	15,156	327	15,483	13,853,914
Caroline	23	35	58	798,011	176,488	974,499	4,595	94	4,689	3,915,557
Carroll	0	262	262	3,496,507	1,791,115	5,287,622	24,110	496	24,606	21,057,977
Cecil	9	145	154	2,058,398	485,261	2,543,659	14,137	238	14,375	10,057,070
Charles	4	284	288	4,678,095	2,246,111	6,924,206	23,034	948	23,982	26,359,748
Dorchester	8	49	57	785,899	205,674	991,573	4,103	91	4,194	3,695,074
Frederick	351	0	351	4,594,266	2,907,679	7,501,945	28,931	1,026	29,957	20,428,809
Garrett	0	62	62	753,120	266,130	1,019,250	3,772	40	3,812	4,063,587
Harford	100	347	447	4,968,012	2,331,077	7,299,089	31,663	895	32,558	30,934,598
Howard	0	453	453	3,160,440	2,365,380	5,525,820	41,359	1,596	42,955	37,876,468
Kent	10	13	23	521,025	135,824	656,849	1,624	32	1,656	1,938,757
Montgomery	1,176	0		10,336,782	9,540,481	19,877,263	96,415	5,652	102,067	107,541,885
Prince George's	1,042	7		11,778,799	7,701,936	19,480,735	82,161	4,628	86,789	103,193,328
Queen Anne's	15	73	88	1,562,126	514,980	2,077,106	7,679	104	7,783	6,820,554
St. Mary's	12	190	202	2,974,423	1,156,140	4,130,563	17,516	472	17,988	15,821,355
Somerset	0	32	32	694,322	120,186	814,508	2,739	88	2,827	3,051,939
Talbot	41	0	41	629,928	206,113	836,041	3,710	80	3,790	2,622,903
Washington	136	56	192	2,356,257	749,961	3,106,218	18,597	516	19,113	11,388,160
Wicomico	18	106	124	1,590,444	333,233	1,923,677	12,295	211	12,506	8,909,383
Worcester	0	69	69	1,516,949	112,362	1,629,311	6,272	95	6,367	6,578,128
<b>Total State</b>	<b>3,724</b>	<b>3,505</b>	<b>7,229</b>	<b>83,993,620</b>	<b>41,515,083</b>	<b>125,508,703</b>	<b>614,349</b>	<b>26,133</b>	<b>640,482</b>	<b>\$620,556,313</b>

Note: Data for number of school vehicles, miles traveled, and students transported is from fiscal 2018. Student transportation costs is from fiscal 2017.

Source: Maryland State Department of Education; Department of Legislative Services