

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2020 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader

House Bill 1481

(Delegate Fraser-Hidalgo, *et al.*)

Environment and Transportation

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Zero-Emission Electric School Vehicles - Inspections

This bill authorizes a zero-emission electric school vehicle to be operated for 15 years, rather than 12 (unless it fails to meet applicable school bus and motor vehicle safety standards). **The bill takes effect July 1, 2020.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill does not materially affect State finances or operations.

Local Effect: The bill does not materially affect local school system finances or operations.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Current Law: A “zero-emission” vehicle is any vehicle that (1) is determined by the Secretary of Transportation to be of a type that does not produce any tailpipe or evaporative emissions and (2) has not been altered from the manufacturer’s original specifications.

Length of Use of School Buses in the State

Unless it fails to meet applicable school bus and motor vehicle safety standards, a school vehicle may be operated for 12 years. In certain counties, a school vehicle may be operated for 15 years (unless it fails to meet applicable school bus and motor vehicle safety standards). Those counties include Allegany, Calvert, Caroline, Cecil, Charles, Dorchester,

Garrett, Kent, Queen Anne's, St. Mary's, Somerset, Talbot, Wicomico, and Worcester. In those counties, a school vehicle must also meet specified maintenance standards.

A school vehicle may be operated for additional years if (1) the vehicle is maintained under a preventative maintenance plan approved by the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) and the Maryland State Police that includes an inspection at the end of the 12th year and a minimum of two inspections by MVA each year thereafter; (2) any necessary structural repairs are certified by an independent expert approved by MVA to meet or exceed the manufacturer's original manufacturing standards; (3) the school vehicle is equipped with specified features; and (4) the State Superintendent grants approval.

Background: Except for counties allowed under statute to operate a school bus for 15 years, all other counties must annually submit a waiver request to the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) seeking approval to continue operation through year 15. The waiver request must include documentation showing evidence that a bus has met the MVA's preventative maintenance standards.

While the bill may result in administrative efficiencies for MSDE and any local school systems operating electric school buses beyond 12 years, it is not anticipated to significantly affect local school system finances or operations. However, MSDE advises that electric school buses are an emerging technology and almost none of the electric school buses currently in use have been in operation for more than 5 years. Thus, it is difficult to project whether electric school buses would be reliable to keep in operation for more than 12 years.

Student Transportation Services

Local school systems spent \$637.3 million on student transportation services in fiscal 2018 as shown in **Appendix 1**. Approximately 650,000 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.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Department of Education; Maryland Department of Transportation; Anne Arundel County Public Schools; Montgomery County Public Schools; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 5, 2020
an/hlb Third Reader - March 17, 2020

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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	Nondisabled	Disabled	Total	Nondisabled	Disabled	Total	Total Amount
Allegany	19	85	104	1,144,512	379,584	1,524,096	5,374	245	5,619	\$5,921,892
Anne Arundel	54	571	625	8,578,891	3,120,510	11,699,401	61,399	1,952	63,351	56,750,072
Baltimore City	36	398	434	2,136,194	492,962	2,629,156	29,931	2,980	32,911	47,046,560
Baltimore	670	138	808	10,345,431	5,091,900	15,437,331	80,036	3,980	84,016	69,316,982
Calvert	0	140	140	2,294,382	1,039,986	3,334,368	15,132	346	15,478	14,430,714
Caroline	23	35	58	801,289	176,288	977,577	4,745	100	4,845	4,172,816
Carroll	0	259	259	3,437,125	1,857,947	5,295,072	24,036	487	24,523	21,629,306
Cecil	10	143	153	2,130,694	479,062	2,609,756	13,940	263	14,203	10,745,460
Charles	4	285	289	4,681,416	2,541,322	7,222,738	23,789	845	24,634	27,650,247
Dorchester	8	49	57	772,236	217,591	989,827	4,145	113	4,258	3,882,282
Frederick	355	0	355	4,882,992	2,724,858	7,607,850	29,249	1,073	30,322	21,666,212
Garrett	0	62	62	789,480	182,130	971,610	3,782	44	3,826	4,116,990
Harford	97	334	431	5,433,816	2,174,665	7,608,481	31,643	901	32,544	31,633,212
Howard	0	468	468	2,971,080	2,429,100	5,400,180	41,989	1,709	43,698	39,011,564
Kent	18	10	28	415,413	128,257	543,670	1,630	27	1,657	1,954,490
Montgomery	1,191	0	1,191	10,546,110	9,611,959	20,158,069	98,625	5,930	104,555	115,706,066
Prince George's	1,025	8	1,033	11,779,757	7,938,167	19,717,924	82,406	4,733	87,139	103,469,529
Queen Anne's	14	73	87	1,603,667	489,600	2,093,267	7,642	107	7,749	7,115,765
St. Mary's	13	190	203	2,988,225	1,149,403	4,137,628	17,437	467	17,904	16,752,171
Somerset	0	32	32	664,081	115,254	779,335	2,746	85	2,831	3,074,050
Talbot	41	0	41	707,709	174,889	882,598	4,344	74	4,418	2,689,705
Washington	142	51	193	2,360,569	808,199	3,168,768	19,194	545	19,739	12,246,269
Wicomico	22	106	128	1,754,376	319,308	2,073,684	12,679	194	12,873	9,408,765
Worcester	0	69	69	1,512,469	141,389	1,653,858	6,248	107	6,355	6,886,663
Total State	3,742	3,506	7,248	84,731,914	43,784,330	128,516,244	622,141	27,307	649,448	\$637,277,781

Note: Data for number of school vehicles, miles traveled, and students transported is from fiscal 2019. Student transportation costs is from fiscal 2018.

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