

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2020 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 908
Finance

(Senator Salling)

Transportation - Railroad Grade Crossing Over Private Road - Stop Sign

This bill requires the State Highway Administration (SHA) to install a stop sign at each railroad grade crossing over a private road.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill's requirements can be handled using existing budgeted resources.

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

Small Business Effect: Minimal or none.

Analysis

Current Law: At each grade crossing of a highway and a railroad, the railroad must (1) keep its roadbed and the highway in proper repair to provide an absolutely safe and easy approach to and while crossing the tracks and (2) subject to SHA's approval, construct a railroad grade separation. SHA may abandon, relocate, construct, or reconstruct any railroad grade crossing or railroad grade separation that is dangerous or inconvenient for public travel. SHA may require the railroad to do any work needed to meet these requirements. If the railroad fails to do any required work, SHA may also do the work itself and collect the railroad's share of the cost from the railroad.

SHA and any local authority, with the approval of SHA, may place a stop sign at any railroad grade crossing of a highway that is a particularly dangerous crossing. When approaching such a stop sign, a driver must stop within 50 feet, but not less than 15 feet, from the nearest rail in the crossing and may proceed only on exercising due care.

Background: A highway-rail grade crossing is an intersection where a roadway crosses railroad tracks at the same level or grade. Such crossings may be encountered on both public and private roads. The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) estimates that there are more than 250,000 such crossings in the nation. Moreover, DOT advises that there are about 500 highway-rail grade crossing traffic incidents each year, most of which involve trucks or tractor-trailers.

The bill is in response to a high volume of railroad crossing incidents located in Rosedale, Maryland. Specifically, there are five railroad crossings within 1.8 miles of each other, four of which cross privately owned roads. From 1975 through 2013, there were 31 incidents at these crossings. Most recently, in 2013, a train collided with a dump truck and caused an explosion, and in 2019, a train collided with a car that ignored a stop sign and drove into the train's path.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of Transportation; U.S. Department of Transportation; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 9, 2020
af/lgc

Analysis by: Richard L. Duncan

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