

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2023 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 682
Finance

(Senator Beidle)

Maryland Transportation Authority - Chesapeake Bay Bridge - Safety Barriers

This bill requires the Maryland Transportation Authority (MDTA) to install and maintain safety barriers on the William Preston Lane, Jr. Memorial Chesapeake Bay Bridge and the parallel Chesapeake Bay Bridge.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Nonbudgeted expenditures for MDTA increase *significantly*, likely by hundreds of millions of dollars over multiple years, to install and maintain safety barriers on the Chesapeake Bay Bridge, as discussed below. Nonbudgeted revenues for MDTA increase to the extent that MDTA must increase its toll rates to offset the additional costs incurred under the bill, as discussed below.

Local Effect: None. The bill does not directly affect local government finances or operations.

Small Business Effect: None. The bill does not directly affect small businesses.

Analysis

Current Law: Since 1971, MDTA has been responsible for constructing, managing, operating, and improving the State's toll facilities (for example, the Chesapeake Bay Bridge, the Francis Scott Key Bridge, and the Intercounty Connector) and for financing new revenue-producing transportation projects. MDTA is governed by nine individuals appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. Generally, MDTA may issue revenue bonds without obtaining the consent of any instrumentality, agency, or unit of the State and without any proceedings or the happening of any condition or things other than those specifically required by State law. MDTA is a nonbudgeted State agency,

meaning that its budget is not subject to the General Assembly's appropriation process.

MDTA has the authority to set tolls on transportation facilities projects under its supervision. Tolls must provide funds that, when combined with bond proceeds and other available revenues, are sufficient to pay maintenance, repair, and operating costs for transportation facilities projects that are not otherwise paid for; pay the interest and principal of any outstanding bond issues; create reasonable reserves for these purposes; and provide funds for the cost of replacements, renewals, and improvements. Toll revenues are deposited into the Transportation Authority Fund, which is wholly separate from the Transportation Trust Fund.

State Expenditures: Nonbudgeted expenditures increase *significantly* for MDTA to install and maintain safety barriers on the Chesapeake Bay Bridge; however, a reliable estimate of the increase in costs cannot be made at this time. MDTA advises that the age and structure of the two Chesapeake Bay Bridge spans make retrofitting the existing bridges with safety barriers a complex and costly endeavor. The Department of Legislative Services advises that a comprehensive study may be necessary to determine the structural feasibility of retrofitting the bridges and the associated costs. Nevertheless, based on a similar [safety barrier retrofit on the Golden Gate Bridge](#), the cost of the project is anticipated to total hundreds of millions of dollars over multiple years.

According to the Golden Gate Bridge Highway and Transportation District, the cost of the project, which included the installation of 369 net supports and 4,100 linear feet of enhanced sidewalk railings, was estimated in 2019 to total \$211.0 million, with a construction timeline from 2018 through 2023. However, according to the [Engineering News Record](#), the estimated total cost of the project has since increased to \$398.0 million. Costs for MDTA under the bill are likely to be significantly higher than those incurred for the Golden Gate Bridge project since the two spans of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge total 8.4 miles (4.2 miles each), while the Golden Gate Bridge is only a single span with a length of 1.7 miles.

State Revenues: The significant increase in nonbudgeted expenditures for MDTA may require MDTA to raise toll rates to generate nonbudgeted revenue to offset the costs it incurs under the bill. However, any impact on MDTA's nonbudgeted revenues depends on the ultimate disposition of the safety barrier project and associated costs and cannot be reliably estimated at this time.

Additional Comments: This analysis does not reflect any reduction in costs for the State and local governments for emergency response activities that might otherwise be incurred in the absence of the bill.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of Transportation; Golden Gate Bridge Highway and Transportation District; Engineering News Record; Department of Legislative Services

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km/lgc

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