

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2023 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

Senate Bill 876

Finance

(Senator M. Washington)

Appropriations and Environment and
Transportation

Baltimore Regional Transit Commission – Establishment

This bill establishes the Baltimore Regional Transit Commission. The commission must be staffed by the Baltimore Metropolitan Council (BMC), and the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) must allocate funds for the operational expenses incurred by the commission, including funding for one senior planner and two junior planner staffing positions. By December 1 each year, the commission must report its findings and recommendations on the Baltimore region transit systems to MTA, the Governor, and the General Assembly.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Transportation Trust Fund (TTF) expenditures increase by \$431,300 in FY 2024 and by \$575,000 annually thereafter to cover staffing costs incurred by BMC. Revenues are not affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
SF Expenditure	431,300	575,000	575,000	575,000	575,000
Net Effect	(\$431,300)	(\$575,000)	(\$575,000)	(\$575,000)	(\$575,000)

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

Local Effect: It is assumed that local governments can participate in commission activities as necessary and appropriate using existing resources. Revenues are not affected.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The bill specifies various administrative responsibilities for the commission, including that it establish operating policies and procedures, meet at least quarterly, accept public comments, include specified topics in the quarterly agenda at least once each year, and keep minutes of its meetings. The commission must also:

- provide input and engage in advocacy for the Baltimore region public transit systems maintained by MTA;
- request and review information from the Annual Attainment Report and MTA concerning the attainment of its goals, as specified, evaluate other performance measures, and issue related recommendations;
- review and comment on service change reports and major service change proposals on a quarterly basis;
- review and comment on MTA's annual operating and capital budget request for the Baltimore region, including bus, light rail, metro, commuter bus, MARC service, and paratransit as part of the development of the draft and final Consolidated Transportation Program;
- review and approve any update to the Central Maryland Regional Transit Plan;
- review and comment on the Capital Needs Inventory Report; and
- review local transit plans and services in the Baltimore region to ensure coordination between the local transit services and MTA.

In carrying out its duties, the commission must endeavor to ensure that MTA's plans, budgets, decisions, policies, goals, priorities, operations, and services address the public transit needs of residents and businesses in the Baltimore region.

Commission members may not receive compensation but are entitled to reimbursement for expenses, as specified.

Current Law:

Maryland Transit Administration

MTA is a modal unit within the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT), and it operates a comprehensive transit system throughout the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan area, including more than 50 local bus lines in Baltimore and other services, such as the light rail, Baltimore Metro subway, commuter buses, MARC trains, and mobility/paratransit vehicles. Except for the Washington Metropolitan Area transit system, MDOT and MTA are generally the agencies responsible for the construction and operation of transit lines in the State.

To the extent practicable, MTA's transit plans must (1) implement the general development plan of BMC and (2) in order to provide for a balanced transportation system and for the coordination of transit planning and general planning, be prepared in consultation with BMC.

Baltimore Metropolitan Council

BMC is a private nonprofit regional council of governments that includes all of Baltimore City and Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, Howard, and Queen Anne's counties. Broadly, the purposes of BMC are to:

- serve as a forum for local officials and their representatives to identify and address problems in the region;
- provide a central source of information and coordination for fashioning responses to needs in the region;
- assist local jurisdictions in developing regional policies, prioritizing regional infrastructure needs, and developing regional strategies; and
- facilitate coordination and collaboration among local jurisdictions and organizations in the Baltimore region to foster economic growth and development in the region in areas that include transportation, housing, workforce development, and renewable energy projects and usage.

State Expenditures: BMC is a private nonprofit organization and does not receive a direct appropriation from the State and, as such, BMC does not have resources to support the work of the commission without additional funding. Because the bill requires MTA to allocate funds for the operating expenses of the commission, including funding for one senior planner and two junior planner staffing positions, TTF expenditures increase by \$431,250 in fiscal 2024 (which accounts for the bill's October 1, 2023 effective date) and by \$575,000 annually thereafter for additional BMC staff (specifically, one senior planner and two junior planners) to manage and support the activities of the commission.

Expense reimbursements for commission members are assumed to be minimal and absorbable with existing budgeted resources.

Additional Information

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

Designated Cross File: HB 794 (Delegate Bridges) - Appropriations and Environment and Transportation..

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of Transportation; Baltimore Metropolitan Council; Baltimore and Howard counties; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 16, 2023

js/lgc Third Reader - March 20, 2023

Revised - Amendment(s) - March 20, 2023

Analysis by: Richard L. Duncan

Direct Inquiries to:

(410) 946-5510

(301) 970-5510