

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2024 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

House Bill 1199

(Delegate Edelson, *et al.*)

Environment and Transportation

Finance

Transportation - MobilityLink Paratransit Service Improvements - Study

This bill requires the Maryland Transportation Institute (MTI) at the University of Maryland (UMD) to conduct a study to identify methods to improve the Maryland Transit Administration’s (MTA) Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) MobilityLink paratransit service. The Governor may include in the fiscal 2026 budget bill an appropriation of at least \$150,000 for the purpose of carrying out the study. By July 1, 2025, MTI must submit a report of its findings and recommendations to the Governor, the General Assembly, specified members of the General Assembly, the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT), and specified local government entities. MDOT must incorporate the findings and recommendations of the study into the 2050 Maryland Transportation Plan (MTP). **The bill takes effect July 1, 2024, and terminates June 30, 2026.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Higher education expenditures for UMD increase by \$449,000 in FY 2025 to complete the required study. General fund expenditures and higher education revenues for UMD are assumed to increase by \$449,000 in FY 2026 as UMD is reimbursed for its study costs. Other affected State entities can provide data and information and consult with UMD using existing budgeted resources. Transportation Trust Fund (TTF) finances may be affected as early as FY 2026, as discussed below (not reflected in the table below).

(in dollars)	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
Higher Ed Rev.	\$0	\$449,000	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	\$0	\$449,000	\$0	\$0	\$0
Higher Ed Exp.	\$449,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Net Effect	(\$449,000)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

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

Local Effect: The bill does not directly affect local government operations and finances.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The study conducted by MTI must:

- summarize and compare MTA’s MobilityLink service to similar entities nationwide that provide ADA paratransit services;
- identify the service structure of ADA paratransit services in other service areas nationwide and whether a public entity, private contractor, or hybrid model is used to provide the service, including consideration of how specified services are provided;
- analyze both the short- and long-term fiscal costs and savings associated with each type of ADA paratransit service model, including a comparison of the quality of service and reliability of each service model;
- analyze the performance metrics associated with the ADA paratransit services in various service areas nationwide based on the Federal Transit Administration’s ADA Guidance for metrics, including specified metrics;
- analyze the workforce metrics among the ADA paratransit services in various service areas nationwide, including specified metrics;
- in consultation with the Maryland Commission on Disabilities (MCOB) and the State Coordinating Committee for Human Services Transportation, solicit input and comments from the public and riders of MTA’s MobilityLink paratransit service;
- develop recommendations for service improvements to MTA’s MobilityLink paratransit service, considering long-term costs and benefits alongside a qualitative analysis to enhance the delivery of high-quality service to MobilityLink riders;
- develop recommendations for service improvements to individuals in areas outside of three-quarters of a mile of a fixed transportation route; and
- develop recommendations to address interjurisdictional restrictions to paratransit services, including restrictions relating to medical appointments that cross jurisdictional lines.

Current Law: MTA is a modal unit within 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 Authority, MDOT and MTA are generally the agencies responsible for the construction and operation of transit lines in the State.

[MobilityLink](#) is MTA’s paratransit service. The service is offered to people, who because of a disability, are functionally unable to get to a bus stop, wait unassisted at a stop, or board or ride a bus or train by themselves. MobilityLink provides door-to-door service by

picking up participating riders at the first exterior door of the rider's home or pick-up location and dropping the rider off at the first exterior door of their destination.

The MTP is a 20-year forecast of State transportation needs based on MDOT's anticipated financial resources during that 20-year period. It must be revised every 5 years through an inclusive public participation process. Furthermore, it must be expressed in terms of goals and objectives and include a summary of the types of projects and programs that are proposed to accomplish the goals and objectives, using a multimodal approach when feasible. The [2050 MTP](#) was published in January 2024.

[MCOB](#) serves as the advisory board for the Maryland Department of Disabilities, which is charged with unifying and improving the delivery of services to people with disabilities. MCOB also assists in the development of the State Disabilities Plan, which is a comprehensive multi-year strategic plan that sets performance goals for all agencies in Maryland that serve people with disabilities.

The [State Coordinating Committee for Human Services Transportation](#), which was established and reconstituted by executive order, examines and plans for the transportation needs of the elderly, the disabled, and those who need affordable, accessible transportation to get to work, job training, and education programs. Among other things, the committee prepares a five-year plan for human services transportation; coordinates the efforts of federal, State, and local agencies; and serves as a clearinghouse for transportation issues.

State Fiscal Effect:

Study on MobilityLink Paratransit Service Improvements

Higher education expenditures for UMD increase by \$448,986 in fiscal 2025 to complete the required study. This estimate includes direct costs of \$302,078 for professors and graduate students to complete the necessary research and prepare the required report and indirect facilities and administration costs of \$146,907, as authorized and negotiated by the university with the U.S. Health and Human Services Audit Agency to be included in UMD's service contracts.

Because the bill authorizes the Governor to include in the fiscal 2026 budget bill *at least* \$150,000 to carry out the study, this analysis assumes that UMD is fully reimbursed for the costs it incurs to complete the required study. Therefore, general fund expenditures increase by \$448,986 in fiscal 2026 and higher education revenues for UMD increase correspondingly.

The study is likely to require MTA to provide a substantial amount of data and information to UMD about the operations of MobilityLink. This information can be provided using existing budgeted resources.

MCOD and the State Coordinating Committee for Human Services Transportation can consult with UMD on the study using existing budgeted resources.

Incorporating the Findings and Recommendations of the Study into the 2050 Maryland Transportation Plan

The bill requires MDOT to incorporate the findings and recommendations of the study into the 2050 MTP. To the extent this requires MDOT to *implement* the recommendations, TTF finances may be affected as early as fiscal 2026, depending on the actual findings and recommendations included in the report. Because the bill requires the development of recommendations for *service improvements*, implementing the recommendations is likely to increase TTF expenditures. According to MTA, under the existing program, both MTA employees and contractors provide paratransit services in MTA's service area (which includes Baltimore City and parts of Baltimore and Anne Arundel counties) using MTA-owned transit vehicles. MTA further advises that within the MobilityLink call center, MTA employees serve as customer service/registration agents, while dispatchers are all contracted. Accordingly, if the report includes recommendations to purchase additional paratransit vehicles, hire additional MTA paratransit drivers, or increase staffing at the call center, TTF expenditures increase to implement any such recommendations.

Further, although the bill does not require the recommendations to address MobilityLink fares, to the extent any recommendations are made to alter fares to support service improvements, TTF revenues may also be affected. (The current one-way fare is \$2.10 for eligible riders and their guests.)

Because the recommendations – and the extent to which they are ultimately implemented – is unknown, any impact on TTF finances cannot be predicted in advance.

Additional Information

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

Designated Cross File: SB 891 (Senator McCray) - Finance.

Information Source(s): University System of Maryland; Maryland Department of Transportation; Department of Budget and Management; Maryland Department of Disabilities; Maryland State Archives; Department of Legislative Services

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