

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 1 (Delegate Ebersole, *et al.*)
 Environment and Transportation

Department of Transportation - Human Trafficking Awareness, Training, and Response (See Someone, Save Someone Act)

This bill requires the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT), in consultation with stakeholders, to develop or identify and implement a training program that includes a curriculum on the identification and reporting of suspected human trafficking. MDOT must administer the training program to specified MDOT employees (including employees under contract). Each employer of an affected employee must (1) certify to MDOT that its employees have completed the training program by January 1 annually beginning in 2026; (2) provide the training to a new employee within 90 days after the date of hire; (3) establish a human trafficking reporting procedure, as specified; and (4) implement a human trafficking prevention policy, as specified. Finally, to the extent practicable, MDOT must require frequent public service announcements with safety information for human trafficking victims, as specified.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Transportation Trust Fund (TTF) expenditures increase by \$455,100 in FY 2026 only. Revenues are not affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
SF Expenditure	455,100	0	0	0	0
Net Effect	(\$455,100)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

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

Local Effect: The bill is not anticipated to materially affect local government operations or finances.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Bill Summary:

Applicability and Program Requirements

The bill applies to an employee who is (1) a State employee who works at a transit station, airport, port facility, or highway rest stop; (2) a State employee who provides transit service; or (3) employed under a contract with the State to provide transit service. It also applies to the employer of one of those employees.

The training program developed or identified by MDOT must (1) include a definition of human trafficking and (2) offer guidance to employees and contract employees on the identification of potential victims of human trafficking and protocols for reporting suspected human trafficking.

Requirements for Employers

Generally, by January 1, 2026, and each January 1 thereafter, each employer must certify to MDOT that its employees have completed the training program. An employer must provide a new employee with the required training within 90 days after the date of hire.

Each employer, in consultation with MDOT, must (1) establish a procedure for employees and contract employees to report suspected incidents of human trafficking to the appropriate local agencies, including the designated regional navigator, and (2) implement a human trafficking prevention policy for employees and contract employees by providing information on how to recognize potential victims, respond to an individual who may be or is a victim, and connect an individual who may be or is a victim with available resources.

Limitations on Liability

An employer, employee, or contract employee may not be held civilly or criminally liable for reporting or responding in good faith to a suspected incident of human trafficking.

Public Service Announcements

To the extent practicable, MDOT must require frequent public service announcements with safety information for human trafficking victims to be made, in both English and Spanish, at transit stations, airports, port facilities, and highway rest stops.

Current Law:

Maryland Department of Transportation

MDOT's responsibilities to operate and maintain the State's transportation systems are carried out through modal units that are organized by mode of transportation. For example, the State Highway Administration (SHA) is in charge of maintaining the State's highways and roadways, the Maryland Aviation Administration is responsible for maintaining the State's airports, and the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) is generally responsible for the construction and operation of transit lines in the State.

Human Trafficking Awareness Training

Numerous government entities and licensed businesses in the State are required to provide, approve, and/or receive training on the identification and reporting of human trafficking. For example:

- the Maryland State Department of Education is required to collaborate with the Maryland Department of Health to provide awareness and training for Directors of Student Services in local education agencies on human trafficking, including strategies for the prevention of trafficking of children;
- a commercial driver's license training school is required to include, as part of its curriculum, education and training on the recognition, prevention, and effective reporting of human trafficking; and
- each innkeeper must provide a new employee with an annual training for the accurate and prompt identification and reporting of suspected human trafficking (any such training program must be approved by the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy (GOCPP) and the Maryland Department of Labor).

Chapter 559 of 2019 established the Safe Harbor Regional Navigator Grant Program to support services for youth victims of sex trafficking. GOCPP must provide grant funding for services provided by the program; the Governor may annually appropriate up to \$3.0 million for grant funding. Services coordinated and provided by a grantee must include safety planning, emergency response, basic living needs, trauma counseling and mental health services, drug and alcohol abuse treatment, legal services, victim advocacy, case management, and designation of regional navigators. A "regional navigator" is a provider of services designated by a grantee of the program.

State Expenditures: TTF expenditures increase by an estimated \$455,060 in fiscal 2026 to develop the required human trafficking awareness training required by the bill and to administer the training for affected MDOT employees. This estimate assumes that:

- MTA develops the training at an estimated one-time cost of \$125,000 (because the training requirement primarily affects MTA employees) and the training is developed as an online course;
- the training developed by MTA can be provided to other affected MDOT employees (for example SHA employees that may work at a highway rest stop or provide shuttle service to and from an airport);
- 3,000 existing MDOT employees must receive the training; and
- each affected employee earns two hours of overtime pay to receive the training at an average hourly rate of \$55.01 (totaling \$330,060 in overtime costs), in part because the bill takes effect October 1, 2025, and each affected employee must receive the training by January 1, 2026.

To the extent that fewer employees are affected or less overtime is required, costs decrease accordingly. For new employees, the training can be added to existing trainings and orientations at no additional cost.

It is anticipated that MDOT can likely develop and implement the reporting procedure, the prevention policy, and public service announcements using existing resources. To the extent existing resources prove insufficient for these efforts (for example, if MDOT must develop a significant amount of signage to meet the bill's requirements), costs increase accordingly.

Additional Comments: The bill requires MDOT to administer the training program to its employees and contract employees. However, the bill also requires an employer of such a contract employee to provide the training to a new employee within 90 days after the date of hire. Accordingly, it is unclear if MDOT or an employer is required to provide the training to a new contract employee of the department.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has been introduced within the last three years. See HB 148 of 2024 and SB 203 and HB 1053 of 2023.

Designated Cross File: SB 7 (Senator Jackson) - Judicial Proceedings.

Information Source(s): Department of Human Services; Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy; Maryland Department of Health; Maryland Department of Transportation; Maryland State Department of Education; Morgan State University; St. Mary's College of Maryland; University System of Maryland; Department of Legislative Services

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