

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader

Senate Bill 121

(Senator A. Washington)

Judicial Proceedings

Environment and Transportation

Vehicle Laws - Noise Abatement Monitoring Systems Pilot Program - Inspection and Extension

This bill extends by two years the termination date and reporting requirements of Chapters 624 and 625 of 2024, which established authorization for Montgomery and Prince George's counties to use noise abatement monitoring systems on State and local highways to record violations of State law governing maximum sound limits of motor vehicles. The bill also applies existing requirements related to the inspection of images captured by automated enforcement systems to images from noise abatement monitoring systems. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2025, and terminates June 30, 2028.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund revenues increase, likely minimally, in FY 2027 and 2028 to the extent that the counties extend their pilot programs and noise abatement monitoring systems citations are contested and heard in District Court. The District Court can handle any additional caseload using existing budgeted resources.

Local Effect: Expenditures and revenues for Montgomery and Prince George's counties increase in FY 2027 and 2028 to the extent the counties continue their pilot programs, as discussed below.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Bill Summary/Current Law:

Noise Abatement Monitoring Systems

Chapters 624 and 625 authorized the use of up to three noise abatement monitoring systems in both Montgomery and Prince George's counties. Under the Acts, any such system may only be implemented if its use is authorized by the governing body of the county by local law enacted after reasonable notice and a public hearing; however, Chapters 624 and 625 terminate June 30, 2026. The Acts included additional requirements and specifications for the use of the systems, including:

- requiring fine revenues to be paid directly to the appropriate political subdivision, unless a case is contested in the District Court (in which case the fine revenues are paid to the District Court);
- authorizing the counties to recover the costs of implementing and administering the systems from the fines collected and requiring any balance to be used solely for public safety purposes, as specified;
- requiring the counties to provide specified notice to the general public before activating a system;
- requiring the counties to designate an official or employee to respond to questions and concerns about the systems;
- requiring system operators to receive training and be certified by the system manufacturer, as specified;
- requiring operators to complete daily logs, as specified;
- requiring the systems to undergo annual calibration checks, as specified;
- establishing penalty amounts and requiring the District Court to prescribe a uniform citation form;
- establishing other requirements related to violations, administration of the penalties, the processing of citations, the admissibility of the recordings as evidence, and information the District Court may consider in defense of a violation; and
- requiring, by December 1, 2025, a county that authorizes a program of noise abatement monitoring systems to report to the Governor and General Assembly on specified information about the program.

The bill extends the authorization for Montgomery and Prince George's counties to use the noise abatement monitoring systems through June 30, 2028. The bill also requires the aforementioned report to be completed by December 1, 2027, instead of December 1, 2025. The bill also specifies, similar to the disclosure rules for information collected by other authorized automated enforcement systems, that a custodian must deny inspection of

recorded images produced by a noise abatement monitoring system except under specified circumstances.

Sound Limits

Under current law, a person is prohibited from driving (or permitting to be driven) a motor vehicle on a highway in violation of maximum sound limits established under State law. A violation is a misdemeanor with a maximum \$500 fine. The prepayment penalty is \$60.

State Revenues: To the extent the District Court collects fines for citations issued under the pilot program, general fund revenues increase for an additional two-year period (encompassing the entirety of fiscal 2027 and 2028). Any such impact depends on the extent to which the counties continue their pilot programs under the extended authorization granted by the bill and citations are contested. While both counties have enacted legislation to implement a pilot program under Chapters 624 and 625, the Montgomery County program has only been in effect since October 15, 2024, and the Prince George's County program takes effect February 3, 2025.

Local Fiscal Effect: As noted above, both counties have enacted legislation to establish noise abatement monitoring systems under the authority granted by Chapters 624 and 625. Montgomery County has yet to place its systems; Prince George's County advises that it has procured a vendor to place three units in the county in March or April 2025.

Accordingly, county expenditures to maintain the systems and penalty revenues from citations issued and collected increase in fiscal 2027 and 2028 to the extent that the counties choose to extend their pilot programs as authorized by the bill. According to the [Fiscal Impact Statement](#) for the local legislation enacted by Montgomery County, expenditures for the program are anticipated to be \$99,400 annually, and revenues cannot be reliably estimated without actual experience under the pilot program. The Department of Legislative Services advises that revenues for the counties are anticipated to be minimal; for both counties, the civil penalty for a violation may not exceed \$75.

Additional Information

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

Designated Cross File: HB 18 (Delegate Palakovich Carr) - Environment and Transportation.

Information Source(s): Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts); Maryland Department of the Environment; Department of State Police; Maryland Department of Transportation; Montgomery and Prince George's counties; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - January 21, 2025
km/jkb Third Reader - February 7, 2025

Analysis by: Richard L. Duncan

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