

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 206 (Delegate R. Lewis)
Environment and Transportation

Vehicle Laws - Bus Obstruction Monitoring Systems and Bus Stop Zones

This bill prohibits a person from stopping, standing, or parking a vehicle in a “bus stop zone.” The bill also makes a series of technical changes to allow automated enforcement systems that may be used to record violations related to dedicated bus lanes (renamed from “bus lane monitoring systems” to “bus obstruction monitoring systems”) to record and issue citations for violations of the new prohibition; existing requirements related to the automated enforcement systems continue to apply. Finally, the bill makes a clarifying change in the existing prohibition against driving, standing, or parking a vehicle in a dedicated bus lane by expressly prohibiting a person from *stopping* a vehicle in a dedicated bus lane.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Transportation Trust Fund expenditures may increase by as much as \$1.1 million in FY 2026 to establish “bus stop zones,” as discussed below. General fund revenues increase minimally from the penalty provision applicable to the new offense and from additional contested bus obstruction monitoring system cases in District Court beginning in FY 2026. Any increase in caseloads for the Judiciary and enforcement of the new offense can be handled using existing budgeted resources.

Local Effect: Local government revenues increase from additional citations from bus obstruction monitoring systems that are prepaid. Expenditures increase correspondingly as the penalty revenues are used for authorized purposes. Expenditures may increase for local governments to establish “bus stop zones,” as discussed below. Enforcement of the new offense can be handled using existing budgeted resources.

Small Business Effect: Potential minimal.

Analysis

Current Law:

Dedicated Bus Lanes – Generally

A “dedicated bus lane” is a lane designated for use by mass transit vehicles owned, operated, or contracted by the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA), the Washinton Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), or a local department of transportation. It includes transit bus stops located proximate to lanes designated for use by mass transit vehicles.

Chapter 751 of 2024 made numerous changes to the permissions and prohibitions associated with dedicated bus lanes. Under the Act, a person may not drive, stand, or park a vehicle in a dedicated bus lane unless authorized by the local jurisdiction in which the dedicated bus lane is located. However, the following vehicles may be driven, allowed to stand, or, as appropriate, parked in a dedicated bus lane.

- a transit vehicle owned, operated, or contracted by MTA, WMATA, or a local department of transportation;
- a school bus;
- a bicycle;
- an emergency vehicle; and
- a vehicle making a right turn at the next immediate intersection.

Bus Lane Monitoring Systems

Chapter 751 also established a statewide authorization (previously only applicable in Baltimore City) for local jurisdictions to use bus lane monitoring systems to enforce the prohibitions related to dedicated bus lanes. Under the Act, a bus lane monitoring system may be used to record images of motor vehicles during the commission of a violation. Generally, an agency may issue warnings or citations to vehicle owners or drivers committing a violation; however, during the first 45 days of operation of the monitoring system, a warning notice must be mailed in place of a citation.

The maximum fine for a violation recorded by a bus lane monitoring system is \$75. Otherwise, a violation is a misdemeanor, subject to a maximum fine of \$500. Unless a driver of a motor vehicle received a citation from a police officer at the time of the violation, a person who receives a citation by mail may:

- pay the specified civil penalty directly to the local jurisdiction; or
- elect to stand trial in District Court, which is granted exclusive jurisdiction in proceedings for civil infractions; in a contested case, the penalty must be paid to the District Court.

A citation issued by a bus lane monitoring system is not a moving violation for which points may be assessed and may not be placed on the driving record of the owner or driver of the vehicle. However, it may be treated as a parking violation for purposes of enforcement. In addition, the citation may not be considered in the provision of vehicle insurance. If the civil penalty is not paid and the violation is not contested, the Motor Vehicle Administration may refuse to register or reregister the motor vehicle. From the fines it collects, a political subdivision may recover the costs of implementing and administering the bus lane monitoring system; any remaining revenue balances must be spent for public safety purposes, including pedestrian safety programs.

There are additional requirements in State law for bus lane monitoring systems related to training, record keeping, and retention of recorded images.

Stopping, Standing, or Parking Prohibited in Specified Places

The Maryland Vehicle Law expressly prohibits stopping, standing, or parking in specified places except as necessary to avoid conflict with other traffic or in compliance with law or the directions of a police officer or traffic control device. For example, a person is prohibited from stopping, standing, or parking a vehicle in front of a public driveway, on a sidewalk, in an intersection, on a crosswalk, and on any bridge or other elevated structure on a highway.

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. Aside from the District of Columbia transit system, MDOT and MTA are generally the agencies responsible for the construction and operation of transit lines in the State.

State Fiscal Effect:

New Offense – Bus Stop Zones

The bill establishes a new prohibition under the Maryland Vehicle Law for stopping, standing, or parking a vehicle in a “bus stop zone,” and authorizes the dedicated bus lane automated enforcement systems to be used to record violations of the new prohibition. However, the bill does not define what constitutes a “bus stop zone,” and, as a result, the enforceability of the prohibition is unclear.

MTA advises that to establish “bus stop zones” to make the new prohibition enforceable, it may be required to install additional signs at thousands of bus stops around the State. Specifically, MTA advises that 2,863 of its core bus stops only have one sign, whereas two signs would likely be needed to demarcate the beginning and end of a “bus stop zone.” At an estimated cost of \$373.68 per sign (which includes production costs and labor), installation of the signs would total \$1.1 million in fiscal 2026.

Nevertheless, to the extent that the new prohibition is enforceable, general fund revenues increase minimally from the penalty provision applicable to the new offense under the Maryland Vehicle Law (maximum \$500 fine) and from additionally contested bus obstruction monitoring system cases in District Court beginning in fiscal 2026. Any such impact, however, cannot be reliably estimated without actual experience under the bill.

Dedicated Bus Lanes – Clarification

Even though the bill expressly prohibits a person from *stopping* a vehicle in a dedicated bus lane, because vehicles are already prohibited from *driving* or *standing* in a dedicated bus lane, this change is assumed to be clarifying.

Local Fiscal Effect: Similar to the effect discussed above for MTA, local government transit agencies may incur costs to establish bus stop zones. Additionally, local government revenues and expenditures increase for local governments that have implemented bus obstruction monitoring systems as citations are issued for violations of the new prohibition and the funds are used for authorized purposes. However, neither impact can be reliably estimated without actual experience under the bill.

Additional Comments: The bill requires the publisher of the *Annotated Code of Maryland* (in consultation with and subject to the approval of the Department of Legislative Services (DLS)) to correct any cross-references and terminology rendered incorrect by the bill. DLS notes that the bill does not amend references to “bus lane monitoring system” to be “bus obstruction monitoring system” in certain provisions of the Courts and Judicial Proceedings Article – those related to civil penalties, cost recovery, and use of

fine revenues. Nevertheless, this analysis assumes that the cost recovery and related provisions for use of fine revenues (§ 7-302(e)(3) and (4) of the Courts and Judicial Proceedings Article) continue to apply to political subdivisions. Likewise, references in the State Finance and Procurement Article (§ 17-901) that relate only to procurement in Baltimore City are assumed to continue to apply.

Additional Information

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

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of Transportation; Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts); Maryland Association of Counties; Harford County; Maryland Municipal League; Department of Legislative Services

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