

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 967

(Howard County Senators)

Judicial Proceedings

Howard County - Noise Abatement Monitoring Systems - Authorization

This bill expands the regulatory framework established by Chapters 624 and 625 of 2024 for the use of noise abatement monitoring systems in the State to also authorize the systems to be used on State and local highways in Howard County to record violations of State law governing maximum sound limits of motor vehicles. Existing penalties, requirements, and limitations that apply to systems used by Montgomery and Prince George’s counties under Chapters 624 and 625 also apply to the systems used by Howard County under the bill. Howard County must report – by March 1, 2026 – to the Governor and the General Assembly on its implementation of noise abatement monitoring systems, as specified. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2025, and terminates on the termination date of Chapters 624 and 625 (June 30, 2026).**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Because the bill is authorizing in nature, the impact on State finances generally depends on the extent to which the systems are deployed in Howard County. Nevertheless, the District Court must be prepared should any systems be deployed, with programming costs totaling approximately \$7,100 in FY 2026 only. The District Court can likely adopt procedures as required under the bill with existing resources.

Local Effect: The bill is authorizing in nature for Howard County; accordingly, the impact on county finances depends on the extent to which the systems are deployed, as discussed below. Further, any impact ends at the end of FY 2026. Howard County can provide the required report using existing budgeted resources.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: By March 1, 2026, Howard County must report to the Governor and General Assembly on:

- through January 1, 2026, (1) the time period during which noise abatement monitoring systems authorized under the bill were used in the county and (2) the number of warnings and citations issued over the time period, by location and date;
- the costs associated with implementing and operating noise abatement monitoring systems and the revenue collected on a monthly basis as a result of violations recorded by noise abatement monitoring systems;
- appropriate locations for the deployment of noise abatement monitoring systems;
- the performance and reliability of noise abatement monitoring systems used by the county; and
- the effectiveness of noise abatement monitoring systems in reducing noise produced by motor vehicles in the county and in areas where the systems were implemented and used.

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.

Unless the driver of the motor vehicle received a citation from a police officer at the time of the violation, the owner or driver of a motor vehicle is subject to a civil penalty if recorded by a noise abatement monitoring system during the commission of a violation. For a first offense, a person is subject to a warning notice; for a second or subsequent offense, the person is subject to a civil penalty of up to \$75.

A county may not issue a citation applicable to a motor vehicle during the first 30 days after a warning for a first offense applicable to the motor vehicle is mailed. The District Court must prescribe a uniform citation form, as specified, and a civil penalty, which must be indicated on the citation, to be paid by persons who choose to prepay the civil penalty without appearing in District Court. The Acts include 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 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 (under Chapters 624 and 625) to report to the Governor and General Assembly on specified information about the program.

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 bill, general fund revenues increase in fiscal 2026 only. Any such impact depends on the extent to which Howard County elects to deploy noise abatement monitoring systems, the amount of the fine established for a violation, and whether citations are contested.

State Expenditures: General fund expenditures for the District Court increase for programming changes necessary to collect payments for citations that may be issued under the bill. Programming-related costs total as much as \$7,096 in fiscal 2026. This estimate includes about 55 hours of reprogramming.

Local Fiscal Effect: As Howard County did not respond to multiple requests for information on the bill, it is unknown whether the county will implement a program to establish noise abatement monitoring systems under the authority granted by the bill.

Nevertheless, the county may deploy, at most, three noise abatement monitoring systems; to the extent it does so, county expenditures increase in fiscal 2026 only for start-up costs, ongoing implementation costs, and public safety purposes. County revenues also increase to the extent that Howard County collects penalties from citations issued by its noise abatement monitoring systems. Given the bill's termination date, it is unclear whether the county will fully offset its implementation costs.

Additional Information

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

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Comptroller's Office; Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts); Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 4, 2025
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