

SENATE BILL 1001

M1

6lr3602

By: **Senator Mautz**

Introduced and read first time: February 24, 2026

Assigned to: Rules

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Natural Resources – Development of Abandoned Railroad Corridors – Proof of**
3 **Title**

4 FOR the purpose of requiring the Department of Natural Resources, prior to undertaking
5 the development of a railroad corridor property for recreational use, to establish
6 through a title search that the State owns the property in fee simple; and generally
7 relating to the development of railroad corridor properties for recreational use.

8 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
9 Article – Natural Resources
10 Section 5–1010
11 Annotated Code of Maryland
12 (2023 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

13 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
14 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

15 **Article – Natural Resources**

16 5–1010.

17 (a) The General Assembly finds that:

18 (1) In order to provide the public with access to the use, enjoyment, and
19 appreciation of the outdoor areas of Maryland, it is declared to be the public policy of this
20 State to provide the means and procedures for establishing and expanding a network of
21 recreational and scenic trails;

22 (2) Abandoned railroad corridor property is a unique source of land
23 corridors that are, in many cases, suitable for recreational trails;

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 (3) Railroad corridor property is being abandoned at a high rate and is
2 often sold in segments, thereby fragmenting the original corridors and leaving unconnected
3 segments which may be suitable for acquisition for recreational trail use;

4 (4) The preservation of abandoned rail corridor property for use as
5 recreational trails is in the public interest; and

6 (5) A systematic and continuing statewide program of acquiring abandoned
7 railroad corridor property is needed to preserve this unique and irreplaceable source of
8 recreational trails.

9 (b) (1) The Department shall maintain liaison with, provide factual data to,
10 and work with the Department of Transportation, the State Railroad Administration, the
11 Department of Planning, other agencies, and local governments to determine the suitability
12 for trail purposes of railroad corridor property proposed for abandonment.

13 (2) The Department may conduct feasibility studies and appraisals of
14 railroad corridor property proposed for abandonment.

15 (3) The Department may acquire railroad corridors pursuant to the
16 National Trails Systems Act, 16 U.S.C. § 1241 et seq., as amended.

17 (c) (1) If, under the provisions of § 7-901 of the Transportation Article, the
18 Department of Transportation acquires railroad corridor property considered suitable for
19 use as recreational trails, the Department may request interim use of the property for
20 public recreational use.

21 (2) The Department may lease a corridor from the Department of
22 Transportation and sublease it to a local government subject to all the terms and conditions
23 of the original lease.

24 (3) Any lease of railroad corridor property by the Department for interim
25 use for public recreation shall be subject to restoration or reconstruction for railroad
26 purposes, and the interim use may not be considered as an abandonment of the use of the
27 railroad corridor for railroad purposes.

28 (4) (I) Prior to undertaking the development of a railroad corridor
29 property for recreational use the Department shall conduct a public hearing in the affected
30 county.

31 (II) The hearing shall be advertised in a newspaper of general
32 circulation in the affected county for 3 consecutive weeks.

33 (D) **PRIOR TO UNDERTAKING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A RAILROAD**
34 **CORRIDOR PROPERTY FOR RECREATIONAL USE, THE DEPARTMENT SHALL**

1 ESTABLISH THROUGH A TITLE SEARCH THAT THE STATE OWNS THE PROPERTY IN
2 FEE SIMPLE.

3 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect
4 October 1, 2026.