
January 28, 2021

The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass
Chair, House Health and Government Operations Committee
241 House Office Building
Annapolis MD 21401

Re: Letter of Information – House Bill 92 – Procurement – Invasive and Nonnative Plant Species – Prohibition on Use of State Funds

Dear Chair Pendergrass and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) takes no position on House Bill 92 but offers the following information for the Committee's consideration.

MDOT promotes the installation and establishment of native tree, shrub, and perennial plant species on all MDOT projects; however, there are certain instances where non-native, non-invasive plantings may be warranted. Survivability of vegetation is critical to the specific function the plantings were designed to perform. Examples of these functions include slope stabilization, erosion and sediment control, safety, pollinator habitat creation, and community enhancement. Safety aspects may include providing specific shrubs that can be planted within median areas of our highways to prevent headlight glare for drivers or selecting specific trees and vegetation that would not attract flocking birds near our airports. Among the considerations for survivability is not just the plant material and soil structure, MDOT also needs to factor in the micro-climate conditions for each project. MDOT takes an integrated approach to vegetation management which includes invasive species control and removal, developing preferred plant lists that are publicly available, and an asset management approach to identify opportunities to improve functionality and optimize survivability.

MDOT has been working closely with the sponsor on House Bill 92 and remains confident that ongoing collaboration and communication will result in a compromise that satisfies all interested stakeholders. MDOT's primary concern includes retaining the flexibility with the plantings currently included in projects so as to ensure that the delivery and impact of those projects are both safe and timely.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee consider this information when deliberating House Bill 92.

Respectfully Submitted,

Pilar Helm
Director of Government Affairs
Maryland Department of Transportation
410-865-1090