
February 15, 2022

The Honorable Paul Pinsky
Chairman, Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Letter of Information – Senate Bill 61 – Maryland Transit Administration - Conversion to Zero-Emission Buses (Zero-Emission Bus Transition Act Revisions)

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) takes no position on Senate Bill 61 but offers the following information for the Committee’s consideration.

Senate Bill 61 amends the Zero Emission Bus Transition Act of 2021 to prohibit the Maryland Department of Transportation Maryland Transit Administration (MDOT MTA) from contracting out certain job functions related to the MDOT MTA’s transition to electric buses. It also requires the MDOT MTA to provide workforce training related to electric buses for its operation and maintenance workers; this training must include registered apprenticeships and other labor management training programs. Finally, the legislation makes additions to the reporting requirement related to the new provisions on apprenticeships and contracting.

The MDOT MTA values workforce retention throughout the transition to zero-emission vehicles. State employees have skills and duties that remain critical to operating safe and reliable bus service, and the MDOT MTA will offer training to build the necessary skills for state employees to deploy zero-emission technology. The MDOT MTA does not intend to transfer any current duties of state employees to a contracting entity. In addition to retaining state employee duties and building skills through training, the MDOT MTA is working toward procuring an electrification partner that will be responsible for providing equipment and new duties associated with electrification. Any electrification partner contracting with the MDOT MTA will be required to provide training to staff related to the operation of the chargers and the charge management system. Many functions of the charging equipment will be automated and the maintenance of the chargers will be handled largely by both the equipment manufacturers and the electrification partner; however, the electrification partner will provide the MDOT MTA with a comprehensive operations and maintenance training program. Thus, MDOT MTA staff will be in position to take over full operations and maintenance responsibilities at the end of the service contract term.

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The MDOT MTA has always anticipated workforce training as an integral element of the conversion to zero-emission vehicles. Senate Bill 61 requires this training to be part of a registered apprenticeship program; the MDOT MTA does not currently have any registered apprenticeship programs. Apprenticeship programs have previously been evaluated and it has been determined that equivalent in-house programs can be established with less administrative requirements. Existing training programs leverage training offered by bus and equipment manufacturers and are tailored to MDOT MTA's specific needs. A challenge in establishing a registered apprenticeship program is managing and offering two different training paths for employees that come in previously certified, and those that come in through the apprenticeship program.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests that the Committee consider this information while deliberating Senate Bill 61.

Respectfully submitted,

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