



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

BILL: HB 252 - State Highway Administration - Highway Cleanup - Records and Reporting

SPONSOR: Del. Charles, *et al.*

HEARING DATE: February 9, 2023

COMMITTEE: Environment and Transportation

CONTACT: Intergovernmental Affairs Office, 301-780-8411

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS HB 252 - State Highway Administration - Highway Cleanup - Records and Reporting**, which requires the State Highway Administration (SHA) to keep and maintain records that show in detail all processes, procedures, and expenditures made to maintain clean highways in the State in accordance with any agreements with a county or multiple counties. Additionally, by December 31, 2023, and each December 31 thereafter, SHA must publish on its website by county (1) a full list of existing and scheduled highway cleanup projects and (2) all highway cleanup schedules and notices.

Roadside litter is a growing problem in many places around the State and country. More people, more vehicles, and more products are factors that have aggravated the problem over the years. Additionally, the global pandemic due to COVID-19 drastically increased the amount of litter, particularly for certain types including Personal Protective Equipment and single-use packaging items. But the detriment of roadside litter is not limited to aesthetic problems. Litter is associated with social, economic, and environmental issues. From a transportation standpoint, litter, untamed vegetation, and illegally dumped items can interrupt the flow of traffic, cause delays, or even pose safety hazards.

Over the past several months, we have heard from many businesses, residents, state, and county legislators who have expressed extreme concern, and some down-right anger over the increased trash along roadsides in Prince George's County. Even the most pristine roads have become dumping grounds and no longer resemble the Prince George's County many of us have known.

The Prince George's County Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPW&T) has quadrupled their efforts to remove litter and mow County primary

collector and residential roadways. However, we are very concerned about the persistent presence of litter and inconsistent mowing on roadways maintained by the SHA, especially on major thoroughfares like Pennsylvania Avenue (MD-4), Route 301, 214, and other community integrated state highways. To be blunt, it's embarrassing because SHA roadways are gateways to our County and the conditions of our State Roads send a message to residents, those passing through, and visitors that littered roadways are acceptable and normal. It's concerning that you can almost immediately see the difference when you cross the border from Prince George's County into Howard, Charles, Anne Arundel, or Montgomery counties. Clearly, there is an equitable difference in the maintenance and upkeep between Prince George's County and the other jurisdictions.

As you may know, Prince George's County recently hosted the Washington International Horse Show (WIHS), one of the most prestigious, competitive, and exciting equestrian sporting events in North America. Held annually in October, WIHS brings together the finest and most talented horses and riders from across the country and around the world. For its 64th year, WIHS returned to its roots in the metro Washington, DC, region, and was held at the Show Place Arena in Upper Marlboro, MD, off Pennsylvania Avenue. Last fall, in response to the upcoming show, the condition of Pennsylvania Avenue, and the outcry from the community, we deployed our own DPW&T to undertake the cleanup and mowing of Pennsylvania Avenue (State Route 4).

We spent approximately \$200,000 cleaning up Pennsylvania Avenue (MD-4 from DC Line to MD-725 Marlboro Pike) and Silver Hill Road (MD 458) from Branch Avenue to Walker Mill Road. Removing litter on Pennsylvania Avenue and Silver Hill Road totals about 17.2 linear miles of roadway and mowing Pennsylvania Avenue and Silver Hill Road is approximately 130 acres (including sweeping abrasives and other debris). We therefore sent a letter to the SHA requesting reimbursement from SHA and or MDOT in the amount of \$200,000 ± for unappropriated work performed to clean up this area. Additionally, we sought a plan and strategy to ensure these major state throughfares do not return to the undesirable condition.

This bill will provide badly needed transparency for the County on what the State is doing to maintain their roads in our jurisdiction, as the currently process is sorely lacking.

For the reasons stated above, the Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS House Bill 252** and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report.