

March 26, 2024

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman
Chair, Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis MD 21401

RE: Letter of Information – House Bill 1055 – Environment – Highways - Salt Application

Dear Chair Feldman and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) offers the following information for the Committee's consideration of House Bill 1055.

As amended, House Bill 1055 requires each State agency, county, and municipality to maintain records of each highway salt application made for the winter weather season and submit a report on the annual highway salt application for the previous fiscal year to the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) by July 1 of each year. The report must include the total amount of salt applied by the State agency, county, or municipality, as well as the amount of salt the jurisdiction had at the beginning of the fiscal year.

As the party responsible for winter operations on State highways, it is the State Highway Administration's (SHA) duty to provide safe and well-maintained roads during winter storms in a cost-effective and environmentally sensitive manner. In recent years, SHA has focused efforts on reducing road salt usage and promoting environmentally friendly practices during winter operations. SHA's practices have been reviewed by a nationally recognized team of winter operations experts and, as a result of their findings, SHA has implemented best practices such as: 1) proactive anti-icing activities, 2) close monitoring of salt application rates used by SHA and its contractors, and 3) increased personnel training in salting operations. Further testing and deployment of new materials, equipment, and strategies will help SHA implement best practices that balance safety, environmental stewardship, and cost containment.

Many of the best practices currently in place form the basis for the Statewide Salt Management Plan created by SHA, in conjunction with MDE. As amended, SHA believes it can meet the requirements of this bill. Currently, SHA already reports on road salt usage in its Annual MS-4 Permit Overview Report. When reporting year-to-year comparisons of road salt usage, SHA uses a standard of pounds of road salt per total lane miles per inch of snow (lbs/lm/inch), which accounts for variability in winter weather activity between years. In Fiscal Year 2023, SHA applied 643 lbs/lm/in, of salt, a reduction of 24 lbs/lm/in relative to the fiscal 2022 reporting period.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee consider this information during its deliberations of House Bill 1055.

Sincerely,

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