
February 23, 2024

The Honorable Marc Korman
Chair, House Environment and Transportation Committee
251 House Office Building
Annapolis MD 21401

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

Dear Chair Korman and Committee Members:

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

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 winter season 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 applied per lane mile under its jurisdiction. In determining the amounts of salt applied, a State agency, county, or municipality shall include salt applied at schools, including institutions of higher education, and public parks, as well as salt applied by private contractors.

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 MDOT 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 build on and 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. Additionally, SHA reports much of the information requested in this bill in the 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 Honorable Marc Korman
Page Two

SHA maintenance trucks track the salt usage per lane mile by each operator across State roadways. House Bill 1055 requests an additional breakdown by schools, public parks, and the activities of private contractors. The only way to accurately track this more detailed level of salt application is with advanced automatic vehicle locator (AVL) on every truck, including contractor vehicles, which is capable of tracking both location *and* application data. SHA estimates that it will cost approximately \$10 million to implement the necessary AVL on contractor vehicles to match the current application information provided in existing reporting. The costs will increase further if additional reporting is required. While the State vehicles are adequately equipped, it would not be operationally sound to use SHA trucks in the schools, parks, and other places listed.

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

Sincerely,

Matthew Mickler
Deputy Director (Acting)
Office of Policy and Research
Maryland State Highway Administration
410-545-5629

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