

March 26, 2024

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr
Chair, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis MD 21401

RE: Letter of Information – House Bill 364 – Prince George’s County – Stop Sign Monitoring Systems – Authorization PG 301-24

Dear Chair Smith and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) offers the following information on House Bill 364 for the Committee’s consideration.

House Bill 364 authorizes, for Prince George’s County, the use of stop sign monitoring systems in school zones to capture violations¹ of § 21-707 of the Transportation Article on (1) highways maintained by a local jurisdiction, if authorized by the governing body of the local jurisdiction, and (2) State highways, if authorized by the State Highway Administration (SHA). The bill provides for the operation of the stop sign monitoring systems and enforcement of violations through these systems. As amended, the bill provides that not more than 10 stop sign monitoring systems may be placed in the county, and it requires Prince George’s County to prioritize placement of these systems within municipalities that have the highest rates of violations.

The State Highway Administration (SHA) notes for the Committee that the proposed operation and enforcement structure of House Bill 364 resembles other forms of automated enforcement currently authorized for use in the State. However, unlike those other forms of automated enforcement, which are limited to enforcement of very specific elements of the Maryland Vehicle Law (such as speeding in a work zone or through a school district), obedience to a stop sign, like other traffic control devices, includes several defenses – the device may be illegible, or a law enforcement officer may direct the driver to disobey the device. As such, there is the potential for a high rate of errors with this type of enforcement. Alternatively, significant review of captured images may be required prior to issuing a citation.

Another unique factor in the structure of House Bill 364 compared to other forms of automated enforcement codified in State law is that House Bill 364 establishes a general authorization for Prince George’s County to use stop sign monitoring systems on State highways located in school zones throughout the County, if authorized by SHA. SHA would need to review plans and technical documents from the County for these requests, issue permits, and place signs notifying drivers that traffic control device monitoring systems are in use on State highways.

¹ For the purpose of House Bill 364, the violation would be a failure to come to a complete stop a stop sign.

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.

Page Two

Because of the investment of State resources necessary to manage these requests and the subsequent signing for approved projects, SHA must take steps to recover costs from the County or agency for any systems it approves, permits it issues, and signs it is required to place. Additionally, the bill as drafted directs any amount remaining from the fines collected, after cost recovery, to the local jurisdiction for public safety purposes, including pedestrian safety programs. While SHA supports the goal of directing the fines to public safety enhancements, money from fines collected on State highways would be distributed to local jurisdictions and is not guaranteed to be used to address public safety needs on the roads where the violations occurred. Practically, funds collected on State roads should be retained by or directed to the State to improve safety on State roads. This will ensure a unified response, where both State and local roads are improved to ensure the safety of Marylanders within the county, whatever the mode their transportation takes.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee consider this information when deliberating House Bill 364.

Sincerely,

Matt 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