

Department of Legislative Services
2025 Session
Agency Explanation of Impact

Bill number: HB0731

Cross file: SB0635

Bill title: Wildlife - Protections and Highway Crossings

Agency: Maryland Department of Transportation - (tra / 373)

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To assist our department in preparing a fiscal and policy note for this proposed legislation, please provide detailed responses to the questions below.

If you have additional information that cannot be included in either this Word document or the provided Excel file, please send that information **in a separate email** to fnotes@mlis.state.md.us **with the bill number included in the document and the email subject line.**

1. Will this legislation have a fiscal and/or operational impact on your agency?

YES x_____ NO _____

If yes, please proceed to question #2 on page 2.

If no, please briefly indicate **why** below and then proceed to question #6 on page 4.

2. General Operational/Fiscal Impact on Your Agency – Please describe the operational and/or fiscal impact of the proposed legislation on your agency.

This proposal makes numerous changes to policies and procedures surrounding wildlife safety on Maryland roadways, including, among other things, establishing the Maryland Connectivity Coalition. The proposal specifies numerous coalition participants, including the State Highway Administration (SHA). While the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) is not specified as a required participant, it is possible that the MVA may be selected to participate by the SHA Administrator. The MVA could participate in this effort, if requested, using existing resources.

The proposal also establishes a Wildlife Connectivity Fund (WCF) as a special, non-lapsing fund, administered by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), in consultation with SHA, for the purpose of protecting species whose habitat or movement intersect with a state highway. This fund consists of money appropriated in the State budget, interest earnings, and any other money from any source accepted for the benefit of the fund.

SHA

HB0731/SB0635 will result in increased coordination and reporting by SHA but should not be too significant. The estimated fiscal impact *could* be \$50,000 to \$100,000 for staff time devoted to the additional leadership role in the ‘Coalition’, coordination with DNR, and annual reporting requirements.

According to the bill language, these costs would be covered by the Wildlife Connectivity Fund. Among other things, the fund may be used to “cover the costs of relevant administration and personnel expenses, including 1) cost recovery, 2) GIS Data, and 3) any other related administrative costs. The fund may also “cover the costs of asset management for wildlife crossing infrastructure, including planning, inventory, condition information and life cycle analysis.”

MVA

The proposal does not specify the source of funds; however, it requires the DNR to “work with the MVA to provide the option, appearing on the vehicle registration portal, to donate to the fund,” if feasible. To the extent that the DNR may pursue this option, the MVA would adjust current systems to allow customers to donate to the WCF when completing a registration transaction. This would require the MVA to (1) change internal and external systems to allow customers to donate to WCF; and (2) collect donations and disperse the funds to the DNR. The setup would mirror existing processes, which allow customers to donate to several optional programs including *Tree-Mendous* through the DNR, and the Traumatic Brain Injury Fund (**See #6 below*) when renewing a registration. Required changes could be accomplished with existing resources.

Other changes in the proposal, including alternations to roadway procedures for wildlife protection, have no impact on MVA revenues or expenditures.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2025

3. Impact on Revenues – Please estimate any increase or decrease in revenues (general, special, federal, or other funds) in each of the next five fiscal years. Enter the estimated amounts in the *Revenues* worksheet in the provided Excel file and describe in the space below.

- Please be aware of delayed effective dates or other factors that may cause revenue increases/decreases to begin in later years.
- Please explain the cause(s) of the revenue increase(s)/decrease(s), any assumptions and/or calculations used, and any variations if the revenue impact(s) are not constant.
- If federal funds are affected, please describe how (*e.g.*, loss of funds for noncompliance, availability of new funds, etc.)

No foreseeable impact on revenues.

4. Impact on Expenditures – Please estimate the increase or decrease in expenditures in each of the next five fiscal years using the *Expenditures* worksheet in the provided Excel file and describe in the space below.

- Please be aware of delayed effective dates or other factors that may cause expenditure increases/decreases to begin in later years.
- Please explain the need for the number and type of personnel (both permanent and contractual), including (1) what specific provision(s) of the bill necessitate additional staff; (2) what the duties of each type of employee will be; and (3) why existing personnel cannot absorb the additional work.
- Please describe the items included under “Other Operating Expenses” and explain any assumptions or calculations used in your estimates.
- Please specify the fund type (general, federal, special, or other) or combination of fund types of the expenditure increases and/or decreases.

See # 2 above.

5. Anticipated in Proposed Operating/Capital Budget? – Have funds been included in your agency’s proposed operating or capital budget in anticipation of this legislation? Or has your agency submitted a request for funding in a supplemental budget? If so, please indicate specific amount(s) budgeted and budget code(s).

No

6. Other Information – Please provide any other information that may be helpful in determining the fiscal effect of this legislation, even if the bill does not directly affect your agency.

The following is provided to give a sense of donations generated for similar funds through MVA’s vehicle registration portal

*Revenue for the *Tree-Mendous* Maryland Program and the Traumatic Brain Injury Fund in Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 were as follows:

	Number of Transactions with Donations	Total Revenue Generated FY24
Tree-Mendous Maryland	9,757	\$137,331.92
Traumatic Brain Injury Fund	4,235	\$63,844.59

7. Effect on Local Governments – Will local government operations or finances (revenues or expenditures) be affected by this legislation? If yes, please describe how.

There is an effect on local jurisdictions. The fiscal impacts are indeterminate.

The legislation provides matching grants from the WCF to counties and municipalities for projects related to the purpose of the fund.

The Department of Planning is charged with coordinating with DNR and SHA “to provide each charter county with updated information on habitat connectivity concerns and current and planned wildlife crossings.”

Local jurisdictions “shall consider wildlife movement and habitat connectivity when enacting, adopting, amending, or executing a plan in according with 3-101 (Maryland Land Use Code). “

8. Effect on Small Businesses – Will existing small businesses be affected (either positively or negatively) by this legislation and/or will the legislation encourage or discourage new small business opportunities? If so, please describe.

State law defines a small business as a corporation, partnership, sole proprietorship, or other business entity, including affiliates that: (1) is independently owned and operated; (2) is not dominant in its field; and (3) employs 50 or fewer full-time employees.

Indeterminate.