

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2018 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
First Reader

House Bill 285 (Delegate Luedtke, *et al.*)  
Environment and Transportation

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Department of Transportation – Pedestrian and Bicycle Access to Public Schools  
– Study

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This bill requires the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) to study pedestrian and bicycle access to public schools in the State, as specified. MDOT must report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly by January 1, 2020. **The bill terminates September 30, 2020.**

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** Under one set of assumptions, MDOT can complete the required study with existing budgeted resources, as discussed below.

**Local Effect:** The bill is not anticipated to materially affect local government operations or finances. It is assumed that any assistance or information provided by local agencies to MDOT can be handled with existing local resources.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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Analysis

**Bill Summary:** In conducting the study, MDOT must (1) examine pedestrian and bicycle access to public schools throughout the State; (2) identify safety concerns regarding such access; and (3) make recommendations for addressing the safety concerns identified in the study.

**Current Law/Background:** MDOT maintains a [Statewide Twenty Year Bicycle-Pedestrian Master Plan](#). Related to pedestrian and bicycle safety around schools, the plan

includes and discusses the importance of the Safe Routes to Schools Program. The program is a federally funded reimbursement program administered by the State Highway Administration (SHA). Eligible sponsors can apply for funding to support infrastructure and noninfrastructure activities that enable and encourage children to safely walk, bicycle, or roller skate to school. Federal funds allocated to the program must be used to benefit elementary and middle school children and are required to have a 20% cash match contribution from the State.

School zones and the additional traffic safety rules that accompany them are the primary safety mechanism for students who walk or bike to school. SHA or a local transportation authority is authorized to establish a school zone and maximum speed limits within the school zone, within a half-mile radius of any school. In any established school zone, SHA or the local authority must place signs that designate the school zone and may place other traffic control devices, such as timed flashing warning lights or traffic signals. The signs must show the maximum speed limit of the school zone, and standard fines may be doubled if a speed violation occurs when any timed flashing lights are activated. Many school districts also employ crossing guards and establish speed monitoring systems to ensure the safety of students and others on and around the school grounds.

**State Expenditures:** Assuming that MDOT can meet the bill's intent by conducting a standard study that involves contacting national experts, conducting a limited number of site visits, and hosting public meetings with students and representatives from affected public schools, MDOT can likely complete the required study with existing resources.

However, if the bill is interpreted to require MDOT to physically visit and investigate the pedestrian and bicycle paths around every public school in the State, Transportation Trust Fund (TTF) expenditures increase significantly. As of April 2016, there were 1,447 public schools in the State, including 793 elementary schools, 215 middle schools, 181 high schools, and 258 other types of education facilities. If required to visit, inventory the existing conditions at, and make individual recommendations for each of those public schools, TTF expenditures increase by approximately \$10,000 per site. This estimate is based on similar studies conducted by SHA that required site visits and inventories. Under this possible interpretation of the bill, TTF expenditures increase by an estimated \$14.5 million over the course of the two-year study.

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## **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland State Department of Education; Maryland Department of Transportation; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 7, 2018  
nb/lgc

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Analysis by: Richard L. Duncan

Direct Inquiries to:  
(410) 946-5510  
(301) 970-5510