

Department of Legislative Services
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2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 936

(Senator West, *et al.*)

Judicial Proceedings

Vehicle Laws - Bus Obstruction Monitoring Systems and Bus Stop Zones

This bill prohibits a person from stopping, standing, or parking a vehicle in a “bus stop zone” if a transit vehicle is present in the zone except under specified circumstances. The bill also makes a series of technical changes to allow automated enforcement systems that may be used to record violations related to dedicated bus lanes (renamed from “bus lane monitoring systems” to “bus obstruction monitoring systems”) to record and issue citations for violations of the new prohibition; existing requirements related to the automated enforcement systems continue to apply.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Transportation Trust Fund (TTF) expenditures may increase significantly for the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) to establish “bus stop zones,” as discussed below. General fund revenues increase minimally from the penalty provision applicable to the new offense and from additional contested bus obstruction monitoring system cases in District Court beginning in FY 2027. General fund expenditures are not anticipated to be materially affected, as discussed below. Enforcement of the new offense can be handled using existing budgeted resources.

Local Effect: Local government revenues increase from additional citations from bus obstruction monitoring systems that are prepaid. Expenditures for local jurisdictions may increase to establish “bus stop zones,” as discussed below. Potential additional local effects are discussed below; enforcement of the new offense can be handled using existing budgeted resources.

Small Business Effect: Potential minimal.

Analysis

Bill Summary: A person may not stop, stand, or park a vehicle in a bus stop zone if a transit vehicle is present in the bus stop zone unless the person (1) is authorized by the local jurisdiction in which the bus stop zone is located or (2) is actively engaged in the loading or unloading of passengers and has activated the vehicle's hazard warning lights.

Current Law:

Dedicated Bus Lanes – Generally

A “dedicated bus lane” is a lane designated for use by mass transit vehicles owned, operated, or contracted by MTA, the Washinton Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), or a local department of transportation. It includes transit bus stops located proximate to lanes designated for use by mass transit vehicles.

Chapter 751 of 2024 made numerous changes to the permissions and prohibitions associated with dedicated bus lanes. Under the Act, a person may not drive, stand, or park a vehicle in a dedicated bus lane unless authorized by the local jurisdiction in which the dedicated bus lane is located. However, the following vehicles may be driven, allowed to stand, or, as appropriate, parked in a dedicated bus lane.

- a transit vehicle owned, operated, or contracted by MTA, WMATA, or a local department of transportation;
- a school bus;
- a bicycle;
- an emergency vehicle; and
- a vehicle making a right turn at the next immediate intersection.

Bus Lane Monitoring Systems

Chapter 751 also established a statewide authorization (previously only applicable in Baltimore City) for local jurisdictions to use bus lane monitoring systems to enforce the prohibitions related to dedicated bus lanes. Under the Act, a bus lane monitoring system may be used to record images of motor vehicles during the commission of a violation. Generally, an agency may issue warnings or citations to vehicle owners or drivers committing a violation; however, during the first 45 days of operation of the monitoring system, a warning notice must be mailed in place of a citation.

The maximum fine for a violation recorded by a bus lane monitoring system is \$75. Otherwise, a violation is a misdemeanor, subject to a maximum fine of \$500. Unless a driver of a motor vehicle received a citation from a police officer at the time of the violation, a person who receives a citation by mail may:

- pay the specified civil penalty directly to the local jurisdiction; or
- elect to stand trial in District Court, which is granted exclusive jurisdiction in proceedings for civil infractions; in a contested case, the penalty must be paid to the District Court.

A citation issued by a bus lane monitoring system is not a moving violation for which points may be assessed and may not be placed on the driving record of the owner or driver of the vehicle. However, it may be treated as a parking violation for purposes of enforcement. In addition, the citation may not be considered in the provision of vehicle insurance. If the civil penalty is not paid and the violation is not contested, the Motor Vehicle Administration may refuse to register or reregister the motor vehicle. From the fines it collects, a political subdivision may recover the costs of implementing and administering the bus lane monitoring system; any remaining revenue balances must be spent for public safety purposes, including pedestrian safety programs.

There are additional requirements in State law for bus lane monitoring systems related to training, record keeping, and retention of recorded images.

Stopping, Standing, or Parking Prohibited in Specified Places

The Maryland Vehicle Law expressly prohibits stopping, standing, or parking in specified places except as necessary to avoid conflict with other traffic or in compliance with law or the directions of a police officer or traffic control device. For example, a person is prohibited from stopping, standing, or parking a vehicle in front of a public driveway, on a sidewalk, in an intersection, on a crosswalk, and on any bridge or other elevated structure on a highway.

Maryland Transit Administration

MTA is a modal unit within the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT), and it operates a comprehensive transit system throughout the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan area, including more than 50 local bus lines in Baltimore and other services, such as the light rail, Baltimore Metro subway, commuter buses, MARC trains, and mobility/paratransit vehicles. Aside from the District of Columbia transit system, MDOT and MTA are generally the agencies responsible for the construction and operation of transit lines in the State.

State Fiscal Effect:

New Offense Enforceability – Bus Stop Zones

The bill establishes a new prohibition under the Maryland Vehicle Law for stopping, standing, or parking a vehicle in a “bus stop zone” if a transit vehicle is present in the zone and authorizes the dedicated bus lane automated enforcement systems to be used to record

violations of the new prohibition. However, because the bill does not define what constitutes a “bus stop zone,” the enforceability of the new prohibition is unclear. The Department of Legislative advises that, to ensure the new offense established by the bill is enforceable, MTA may be required to use signs to clearly delineate which areas count as a “bus stop zone.” To the extent this delineation is required, TTF expenditures may increase significantly to install the signs.

Nevertheless, because the prohibition applies only when a transit vehicle is present in a “bus stop zone,” for purposes of this analysis it is assumed that the prohibition applies when a person is blocking a transit vehicle from stopping at, or moving away from, the appropriate location at a bus stop. Therefore, general fund revenues increase minimally from the penalty provision applicable to the new offense under the Maryland Vehicle Law (maximum \$500 fine). Any such impact, however, cannot be reliably estimated without actual experience under the bill.

Judiciary

Due to the bill’s expansion of the type of violations enforceable using any new and existing bus obstruction monitoring systems, the total number of citations issued may increase beginning as early as fiscal 2027. As a result of this potential increase in citations, the number of individuals opting for a trial in District Court may increase. Accordingly, general fund revenues may increase minimally as fine revenues paid by individuals convicted in District Court are paid into the general fund.

It is anticipated that any additional workload resulting from the bill’s requirements does not materially affect general fund expenditures for the District Court.

The Judiciary advises that the significant expansion of automated enforcement systems in the State in recent years necessitates an upgrade to its case management system to improve citation intake and payment processing. For locally operated automated enforcement systems, the District Court administers citations and the payment of fines from contested citations only. For automated enforcement systems operated by a State agency, the District Court administers citations and the payment of fines for both contested and uncontested citations. The court currently processes these citations through a manual workflow that has struggled to keep pace with the expansion of automated enforcement systems. The Judiciary estimates the cost of an information technology upgrade to automate the process at approximately \$1.4 million; additional staffing costs may also be incurred.

However, because the Judiciary’s need is not exclusively attributable to the bill, but rather due to the general expansion of automated enforcement systems, these costs are not reflected in this analysis.

Local Fiscal Effect: Similar to the effect discussed above for MTA, local governments may incur signage costs to delineate bus stop zones along local roads. Additionally, local government revenues and expenditures may increase for local governments that have implemented bus lane monitoring systems as citations are issued for violations of the new prohibition, and the funds are used for authorized purposes. However, neither impact can be reliably estimated without actual experience under the bill.

Additionally, as noted above, local jurisdictions are already authorized to implement bus lane monitoring systems. It is unclear if the bill's expanded authority related to *bus stop zones* will directly result in additional jurisdictions electing to implement (or expand) automated monitoring systems. Should this be the case:

- expenditures increase to install the systems and for other administrative expenses that may be incurred for the operation of the program (*e.g.*, mailing or contractual costs);
- revenues increase as citations are issued and penalty revenues are paid to the appropriate local jurisdiction; and
- expenditures further increase as the penalty revenues are used for authorized purposes.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has been introduced within the last three years. See HB 206 of 2025.

Designated Cross File: HB 1113 (Delegate Lewis) - Environment and Transportation.

Information Source(s): Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts); Maryland Department of Transportation; Montgomery County; Department of Legislative Services

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