

Department of Legislative Services  
 Maryland General Assembly  
 2020 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
 First Reader

House Bill 1432 (Delegate Lisanti)  
 Environment and Transportation

Chesapeake Bay Water Transportation Network

This bill requires the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) and the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) to study and examine the feasibility and practicality of using the Chesapeake Bay and its navigable waters as a water transportation network to link waterfront communities along the bay by using high-speed water taxis and other vessels to transport residents and visitors to employment centers, recreational facilities, and activities along the bay. MDOT and MTA must prepare an inventory of facilities that might be used for such a network and estimate the cost of implementing the network. MDOT and MTA must report their findings to the Governor and the General Assembly by June 30, 2022. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2020, and terminates June 30, 2022.**

Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** Transportation Trust Fund (TTF) expenditures increase by approximately \$500,000 in FY 2021 only for MDOT to enlist the services of a consultant to perform the required study. Revenues are not affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
SF Expenditure	500,000	0	0	0	0
Net Effect	(\$500,000)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

*Note:() = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate increase; (-) = indeterminate decrease*

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

## Analysis

### Current Law/Background:

#### *Chesapeake Bay Bridge*

The Chesapeake Bay is a 200-mile-long estuary (a body of water where fresh and salt water mix); it is the largest estuary in the United States. The Chesapeake Bay Program estimates that there are 150 streams, creeks, and rivers that drain into the bay watershed and that there are more than 700 public access points along the bay and its tributaries.

The Chesapeake Bay Bridge is the only toll bridge in Maryland that currently crosses the Chesapeake Bay. The bridge connects Maryland's Eastern Shore recreational regions with the metropolitan areas of Annapolis, Baltimore, and the District of Columbia. The original two-lane bridge was constructed in 1952, and the second three-lane bridge was constructed in 1973. The Maryland Transportation Authority (MDTA) estimates that about 25.6 million vehicles crossed the bridge in fiscal 2014. Traffic congestion on the bridge can be severe.

The [2015 Bay Bridge Life Cycle Cost Analysis](#) estimates that, by 2040, average traffic on the bridge will increase by at least 31.3% (to 92,800 vehicles per day). Furthermore, on summer Fridays (one of the heaviest traffic days for the bridge), traffic volume is estimated to increase by at least 36.6% by 2040 (to 94,300 vehicles).

The analysis also researched and developed alternatives designed to improve the Bay Bridge and its approaching roadways. The analysis includes a cost estimate of \$3.25 billion to simply repair and maintain the bridge in its existing form through 2065, as well as a range of alternatives that involve building a third bridge across the bay, demolishing one or both existing bridges to rebuild with additional travel lanes, and widening the U.S. 50/301 main line by one lane. Costs for the alternatives are estimated through 2060 and range from \$7.80 billion (which simply widens and rehabilitates the existing eastbound bridge to three lanes) to \$25.34 billion (which demolishes both existing structures to rebuild a new, single, eight-lane bridge).

#### *Third Crossing of the Chesapeake Bay – National Environmental Policy Act Process*

MDTA is currently undertaking a Tier 1 National Environmental Policy Act study for a third crossing of the Chesapeake Bay. One of the issues being explored is the best location for such a bridge. A draft of the study is scheduled to be complete during fall 2020, while the full study is scheduled to be complete during summer 2021. Updates on the progress and findings of the study can be found on MDTA's website.

**State Expenditures:** MDOT does not have the expertise needed to perform the study required by the bill and requires the assistance of one of its consultants. Therefore, TTF expenditures increase by an estimated \$500,000 in fiscal 2021 only to perform the required study. Prior year estimates for similar bills were based off of MDOT's cost to conduct a similar study in 2007 (approximately \$200,000). This estimate is based in part on the cost to conduct the 2007 study; however, it also takes into consideration (1) inflation and (2) an expanded scope for the study under the bill to ensure, among other things, that the network works in conjunction with any third crossing.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** HB 907 of 2017 received a hearing in the House Environment and Transportation Committee, but no further action was taken. Its cross file, SB 850, received a hearing in the Senate Finance Committee, but no further action was taken. HB 1439 of 2016 received a hearing in the House Environment and Transportation Committee, but no further action was taken.

**Designated Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland Department of Transportation; Department of Natural Resources; Department of Legislative Services

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