

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2021 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 475 (Delegate Attar)
Environment and Transportation

Speed Monitoring Systems in School Zones – Operation Times – Limitation

This bill establishes that a speed monitoring system (speed cameras) in a school zone may operate only during the regular school year. **The bill takes effect June 1, 2021.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund revenues decrease beginning in FY 2021 primarily due to fewer contested cases in District Court. Expenditures are likely not materially affected.

Local Effect: Local revenues decrease, potentially significantly, beginning in FY 2021 due to the reduced periods of operation for school zone speed cameras. Local expenditures likely decrease correspondingly.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Current Law: Speed monitoring systems must be authorized in a local jurisdiction by the governing body of the jurisdiction but only after reasonable notice and a public hearing. Before activating a speed monitoring system, a local jurisdiction must publish notice of the location of the speed monitoring system on its website and in a newspaper of general circulation in the jurisdiction. In addition, the jurisdiction must also ensure that each sign that designates a school zone is proximate to a sign that (1) indicates that speed monitoring systems are in use in the school zone and (2) conforms with specified traffic control device standards adopted by the State Highway Administration.

A speed monitoring system in a school zone may operate only Monday through Friday between 6:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m.

State Fiscal Effect: Under the bill, the number of citations issued in local jurisdictions is expected to decrease, as some speed cameras must be deactivated for a portion of the school year. As a result, the number of individuals opting for a trial in District Court is likely to decline. Although the potential decrease in cases cannot be reliably estimated, general fund revenues are likely to also decrease, as fine revenues paid by individuals convicted in District Court are paid into the general fund. Further, any revenues at the local level that exceed a specified threshold are remitted to the Comptroller; thus, any decrease in local revenues due to a shorter period for use of speed cameras under the bill also may limit such remittances to the Comptroller. Any such impact is likely negligible.

Although District Court caseloads are also likely to decrease, expenditures are not anticipated to be affected. The decrease in caseloads may have a positive impact on District Court operations, however.

Local Fiscal Effect: The number of speed cameras placed near schools (as compared to nonschool zone speed cameras) is not known, so it is not possible to estimate how these factors affect local revenues. Nevertheless, given that the authorization for school zone speed cameras has been in effect since 2006 in some locations, this analysis assumes that the number of cameras in school zones represents a significant portion of the total number of speed cameras in the State.

The bill limits the times of year when speed cameras may be operated in school zones. However, without additional data (*e.g.*, the number of cameras operating year round in school zones, the level of violations captured by such cameras, *etc.*), a precise estimate of the bill's impact on local governments cannot be made at this time. However, Washington County advises that the reduction in operational times may significantly reduce speed camera revenues and make it much more difficult to control speeds in the affected areas. Based on current revenues received throughout the summer months from speed cameras, the county estimates a revenue reduction of approximately \$250,000 annually.

Local expenditures for public safety purposes are reduced correspondingly. Expenditures associated with operating these speed cameras may also be reduced, to the extent any contracts associated with such operation can be modified.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Kent, Montgomery, Washington; and Worcester counties; Comptroller's Office; Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts); Department of State Police; Maryland Department of Transportation; Department of Legislative Services

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