
February 10, 2021

The Honorable Delores Kelley
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis MD 21401

***Re: Letter of Information – Senate Bill 26 – State Highways and Interstate Highways –
Litter Collection and Mowing***

Dear Chair Kelley and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) takes no position on Senate Bill 26 but offers the following information for the Committee’s consideration.

Currently, MDOT State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA) spends approximately 16 percent of its \$120 million annual Routine Maintenance Operating Budget on litter removal and mowing, \$7.7 million and \$11.7 million, respectively. This allows for an average of four to six cycles of litter removal and mowing on approximately 13,000 MDOT SHA-owned roadside miles.

MDOT SHA recognizes that litter is both an environmental and aesthetic issue and continues to perform daily litter removal throughout the year. During the growing season, litter removal is scheduled immediately prior to mowing operations. Litter removal is traditionally performed by inmates, contract litter-removal crews, Sponsor-A-Highway and Adopt-A-Highway participants, as well as State crews. Due to the pandemic, inmate litter-removal crews have not been available.

MDOT SHA is actively engaged in a mowing-reduction program that returns selected areas of grassed roadsides to meadows and forests. Through this process, MDOT SHA has steadily decreased the number of acres being mowed and the number of mowing cycles in a season. In addition to saving millions of dollars, our revised mowing program has created areas that benefit wildlife and improve water quality by capturing and containing runoff after storms.

Senate Bill 26 will require additional litter pick-up and mowing cycles which cannot be accomplished with existing resources. To meet the requirements of Senate Bill 26, the additional cost to MDOT SHA will be approximately \$10 million.

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Additionally, we have requirements for Small Business Reserves (SBR) and Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) goals on litter pick-up and mowing contracts, and the preferential vendors contained in Senate Bill 26 may not meet that criteria. In fact, the vast majority of MDOT SHA mowing and litter contracts are advertised as SBR contracts and the preferences spelled out in this bill may conflict with those. The procurement preferences in the bill are not ordered or prioritized, which may make compliance difficult, or impossible in some cases. Finally, while mowing and litter pick-up activities may seem relatively easy to perform, often these contracts require ownership of specialized equipment and skills that the vendors targeted in the bill may not have.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee consider this information when deliberating Senate Bill 26.

Respectfully Submitted,

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