
April 2, 2024

The Honorable Marc Korman
Chair, House Environment and Transportation Committee
251 House Office Building
Annapolis MD 21401

RE: Letter of Information – Senate Bill 891 – Transportation – MobilityLink Paratransit Service Improvements – Study

Dear Chair Korman and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) offers the following information on Senate Bill 891 for the Committee’s consideration.

Senate Bill 891 would require the Maryland Transportation Institute at the University of Maryland to conduct a study on the Maryland Transit Administration’s (MTA) Mobility paratransit service, with a report due by July 1, 2025, and authorizes the Governor to include at least \$150,000 in Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 for the Study.

The MTA operates Mobility paratransit, which is a specialized transit service available to those who, because of a functional or cognitive disability, are unable to get to a bus stop, wait unassisted at a stop or station or board or ride a bus or train by themselves. Mobility is a shared ride door-to-door service, which is federally required to operate within three-quarters of a mile radius of MTA’s fixed route service.

As amended, Senate Bill 891 requires the study include recommendations for service improvements for individuals outside of a three-quarters mile radius of a fixed transportation route and recommendations to address interjurisdictional restrictions to paratransit services. The Mobility service area is bound to serve origins and destinations within three-quarters of a mile radius of MTA’s fixed route service, due to federal requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Additionally, Mobility service is not impacted by interjurisdictional restrictions; the service area is bound by the ADA to be within three-quarters of a mile of fixed route service, to complement that fixed route service. Any recommendations of the study to expand the service area outside of what is federally required service area would have a significant and negative impact on the Transportation Trust Fund.

The MTA recognizes the critical service that Mobility provides to riders. To understand existing and future needs, the MTA will be undertaking an internal study of Mobility, including but not limited to six key tasks: the collection and review of existing information, interviews with Mobility riders and MTA staff, defining existing conditions, updating service strategies, ridership and fleet forecasting, and developing a fleet and operations management plan.

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As a result, MTA will be producing a 10-year projection on ridership and staffing levels needed to operate Mobility services, as well as determining information on system improvements and any necessary vehicle replacements. It is estimated that MTA's existing study will cost \$175,000 and MTA would like to note that those funds have already been identified; no additional dollars from the Transportation Trust Fund or the General Fund are needed to complete the existing study. MTA would be happy to add the requirements of this bill to the existing study. MTA is currently expecting work to begin Spring 2024, with work completed in Fall 2024.

Additionally, MTA is currently engaged in discussions with the United States Department of Justice (DoJ) to resolve a service complaint and DoJ letter finding noncompliance. As a result of these discussions, the MTA would request being the responsible party for conducting a study on Mobility improvements. The agency is committed to continuous improvements for our paratransit riders and believes that MTA is the best party to complete the study.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests that the Committee consider this information when deliberating Senate Bill 891.

Respectfully submitted,

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