

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2007 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 914

(Delegate Smigiel, *et al.*)

Environmental Matters

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Transportation Study - Monorail System from Annapolis to Kent Island and  
Points South on the Eastern Shore

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This bill requires the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) to examine and make recommendations on the feasibility of preserving or acquiring the rights-of-way for a future monorail transit system from Annapolis to Kent Island and other points on the Eastern Shore. MDOT must report its findings to the General Assembly by January 1, 2008. The bill expresses legislative intent that MDOT use existing resources to conduct the study.

The bill takes effect June 1, 2007 and terminates June 30, 2008.

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** Transportation Trust Fund (TTF) expenditures would increase in FY 2008 by approximately \$250,000 to \$750,000 to perform a preliminary feasibility study; however, the study may not be complete by January 1, 2008. If legislative intent is followed, the study would be performed with existing resources and other projects would be delayed.

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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Analysis

**Bill Summary:** The study must examine and make recommendations about:

- the technical feasibility of a monorail system;
- identifying the property needed for the system and determining ownership of the property;
- estimating the cost to the State and affected local governments to purchase the rights-of-way; and
- determining if it is feasible to use any portion of an existing right-of-way.

MDOT must consult with affected local governing bodies, utility companies that own or use potentially suitable rights-of-way, citizens that have been granted property access across any potentially suitable right-of-way, and the public.

**Current Law:** The Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) may provide transit service by operating the transit facilities it controls itself or contracting or leasing operation of the transit facilities.

MTA has authority to plan, develop, construct, acquire, finance, and operate transit facilities. In addition, MTA has jurisdiction over services performed by transit facilities owned or controlled by MTA, including bus service.

**Background:** According to the Monorail Society, monorail is defined as a single-rail train system where the single rail serves as a track for passenger or freight vehicles. In most cases rail is elevated, but monorails can also run at grade, below grade, or in subway tunnels. Vehicles are either suspended from or straddle a narrow guideway. Monorail vehicles are wider than the guideway that supports them. There are mass transit monorails in Japan, Australia, and many other countries.

In the U.S., mass transit monorails are limited. According to the Monorail Society there are three: one in Las Vegas, Nevada; one in Seattle, Washington; and one in Jacksonville, Florida. Other U.S. monorails include ones at malls, airports, and amusement parks.

**State Expenditures:** MDOT advises that a detailed feasibility study would total \$2.0 to \$4.0 million. However, such a study could not be completed in the seven-month time frame granted. Seven months would not allow MDOT sufficient time to study the technical issues in depth. For example, existing monorails in the U.S. do not go over large bodies of water such as the Chesapeake Bay, which is several miles wide, and more detailed studies could be required to determine what the effect of this would be.

Given the seven-month time frame, any report MDOT produced would have to be preliminary. MDOT expenditures for a seven-month preliminary study could total

\$250,000 to \$750,000. MDOT would have to consult with land use planners on the Eastern Shore and in Annapolis, commuters who would use monorail to find out what would be the most efficient place to put stations and terminals, and property owners in Annapolis and on the Eastern Shore. In addition, Legislative Services advises that it is unlikely that MDOT has the technical expertise in-house to perform a technical analysis of the feasibility of monorail. As such, MDOT would have to hire an outside consultant, which could take several months. This could delay the preliminary report beyond the January 1, 2008 due date.

For MDOT to perform this study with existing resources as intended in the bill, projects currently in the *Consolidated Transportation Plan* would have to be delayed to accommodate the manpower and costs associated with the study.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Monorail Society, National Study Commission on Surface Transportation Policy and Finance, Maryland Department of Transportation, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - March 2, 2007  
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