

# Climate Assessment

Office of Legislative Oversight

## Bill 14-24: Vehicle Noise Abatement Monitoring – Pilot Program

### SUMMARY

The Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) anticipates Bill 14-24 will have no impact on the County's contribution to addressing community resilience as the bill is proposing a small pilot program for noise cameras which is likely to not change noise pollution significantly with the quantity of cameras proposed. OLO notes if more noise cameras are installed after the initial pilot program, noise pollution may decrease significantly which would have a positive impact on overall community resilience.

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### BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF BILL 14-24

Noise abatement monitoring systems, also known as noise cameras, are devices that detect noise levels above an established limit. When noise from a vehicle exceeds the limit, a noise camera captures identifying images of the vehicle for law enforcement. In recent years, several cities in the U.S. and around the globe have installed noise cameras on their roads to help control loud noises from vehicles, including from modified mufflers and exhaust systems.<sup>1</sup>

In 2024, the Maryland General Assembly passed a bill allowing Montgomery and Prince George's Counties to establish pilot programs for installing noise cameras on their roads.<sup>2</sup> The purpose of Bill 14-24 is to establish this pilot program in the County – the Vehicle Noise Abatement Monitoring Pilot Program – under the Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD).<sup>3</sup>

If enacted, Bill 14-24 would allow MCPD to install three noise cameras within the County for the sole purpose of enforcing legal noise requirements for vehicles.<sup>4</sup> As described in the Council's press release for Bill 14-24:

Under Maryland law, vehicles must not exceed a sound limit of 80 decibels. When the volume is detected at least five decibels above the standard set by state law, the camera would capture a video of the vehicle causing the noise for identification.<sup>5</sup>

Before activating a noise camera, MCPD would be required to:<sup>6</sup>

- Publish notice of the location of the noise camera on the County website; and
- Ensure that each noise camera is near a sign that indicates that noise cameras are in use in the area.

The Police Chief would also be required to designate a liaison to investigate and respond to concerns, review citations upon request, and respond to questions from community members.

MCPD would issue a warning for the first offense detected by a noise camera. A fine of no more than \$75 would be issued for the second offense and for any subsequent offenses. The pilot program would end on June 30, 2026 as required by the state’s enabling legislation.<sup>7</sup>

The Council introduced Bill 14-24, Vehicle Noise Abatement Monitoring – Pilot Program, on July 30, 2024.

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## ANTICIPATED IMPACTS

Noise pollution can affect human health, as long, sustained exposure to loud noises can lead to heart problems, hearing loss, high blood pressure, stress, anxiety, and other health issues.<sup>8</sup> Further, the World Health Organization ruled noise as the second largest environmental factor contributing to health problems in Europe (the largest environmental factor being air pollution).<sup>9</sup> Decreasing noise pollution can improve health outcomes, and subsequently increase community resilience.<sup>10</sup>

Bill 14-24 proposes only three cameras to be installed for the pilot program. It is unlikely that there will be a significant reduction of levels of noise pollution across the County. Due to the quantity of cameras proposed, OLO anticipates the bill will have no impact on the County’s contribution to addressing community resilience, including the reduction and/or sequestration of greenhouse gas emissions and adaptative capacity. OLO notes if the pilot program is successful and more noise cameras are installed, it may decrease noise pollution which would have a positive impact on community resilience.

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## RECOMMENDED AMENDMENTS

The Climate Assessment Act requires OLO to offer recommendations, such as amendments or other measures to mitigate any anticipated negative climate impacts.<sup>11</sup> OLO does not offer recommendations or amendments as Bill 14-24 is likely to have no impact on the County’s contribution to addressing climate change, including the reduction and/or sequestration of greenhouse gas emissions, community resilience, and adaptative capacity.

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## CAVEATS

OLO notes two caveats to this climate assessment. First, predicting the impacts of legislation upon climate change is a challenging analytical endeavor due to data limitations, uncertainty, and the broad, global nature of climate change. Second, the analysis performed here is intended to inform the legislative process, not determine whether the Council should enact legislation. Thus, any conclusion made in this statement does not represent OLO’s endorsement of, or objection to, the bill under consideration.

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## PURPOSE OF CLIMATE ASSESSMENTS

The purpose of the Climate Assessments is to evaluate the anticipated impact of legislation on the County's contribution to addressing climate change. These climate assessments will provide the Council with a more thorough understanding of the potential climate impacts and implications of proposed legislation, at the County level. The scope of the Climate Assessments is limited to the County's contribution to addressing climate change, specifically upon the County's contribution to greenhouse gas emissions and how actions suggested by legislation could help improve the County's adaptive capacity to climate change, and therefore, increase community resilience.

While co-benefits such as health and cost savings may be discussed, the focus is on how proposed County bills may impact GHG emissions and community resilience.

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## CONTRIBUTIONS

OLO staffer Kaitlyn Simmons drafted this assessment.

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<sup>1</sup> Arianna Johnson, "[What To Know About Noise Cameras — As NYC Lawmakers Consider Cracking Down On Illegal Mufflers And Exhaust Systems](#)," Forbes, December 4, 2023.

<sup>2</sup> [HBo212](#), Maryland General Assembly, Effective July 1, 2024.

<sup>3</sup> [Introduction Staff Report for Bill 14-24](#), Montgomery County Council, July 30, 2024.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> "[Council Vice President Stewart and Councilmember Fani-González Introduce Bill to Reduce Excessive Vehicular Noise with Automated Noise Cameras](#)," Montgomery County Council, July 30, 2024.

<sup>6</sup> Introduction Staff Report for Bill 14-24.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> "[Too Loud! For Too Long!](#)," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, January 6, 2020.

<sup>9</sup> "[Noise](#)," World Health Organization, April 27, 2010.; "[Could Everyday Noise be Affecting your Health?](#)," UC Davis Environmental Health Sciences Center, March 3, 2023.

<sup>10</sup> Giles-Corti, B., et. al., "[What are the lessons from COVID-19 for creating healthy, sustainable, resilient future cities?](#)," June 2, 2023.; "[Perceptions Of Community Resilience: A Maryland Community Pilot Study](#)," National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association, 2016.; Hammer, M. S., et. al., "[Environmental Noise Pollution in the United States: Developing an Effective Public Health Response](#)," December 5, 2013.

<sup>11</sup> Bill 3-22, Legislative Branch – Climate Assessments – Required, Montgomery County Council, Effective date October 24, 2022