

Economic Impact Statement

Montgomery County, Maryland

Bill 14-24 Vehicle Noise Abatement Monitoring – Pilot Program

SUMMARY

The Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) anticipates that Bill 14-24 would have an insignificant impact on economic conditions in the County in terms of the Council’s priority indicators.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF BILL 14-24

Noise abatement monitoring systems, or “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.¹

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.² 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).³

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.⁴ 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.⁵

¹ Johnson, “What To Know About Noise Cameras.”

² HB0212, Maryland General Assembly.

³ Introduction Staff Report for Bill 14-24.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ “Council Vice President Stewart and Councilmember Fani-González Introduce Bill to Reduce Excessive Vehicular Noise with Automated Noise Cameras.”

Before activating a noise camera, MCPD would be required to:⁶

- 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.⁷

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

INFORMATION SOURCES, METHODOLOGIES, AND ASSUMPTIONS

Per Section 2-81B of the Montgomery County Code, the purpose of this Economic Impact Statement is to assess the impacts of Bill 14-24 on County-based private organizations and residents in terms of the Council’s priority economic indicators and whether the Bill would likely result in a net positive or negative impact on overall economic conditions in the County.⁸

Empirical studies suggest that establishing a vehicle noise abatement policy may have economic impacts. On the one hand, studies have shown that fines for traffic violations cause adverse financial impacts for recipients, such as lower earnings, reduced consumption and borrowing, default on bills, and lower credit scores. These impacts are especially harmful for lower income households.⁹ On the other hand, studies have shown that vehicular noise pollution can lower property values for third party homeowners.¹⁰ These findings suggest that reducing vehicular noise pollution could prevent this form of negative externality for certain homeowners.¹¹

⁶ Introduction Staff Report for Bill 14-24.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Montgomery County Code, Sec. 2-81B.

⁹ Mello, “Fines and Financial Wellbeing”; Mello, “Speed Trap or Poverty Trap? Fines, Fees, and Financial Wellbeing”; LaScala-Gruenewald and Paik, “Legal Financial Obligations in the United States”; Dorsey and White, “No Exit: How Maryland’s Debt Collection Practices Deepen Poverty and Widen the Racial Wealth Gap.”

¹⁰ Nelson, “Hedonic Property Value Studies of Transportation Noise”; Rich and Nielsen, “Assessment of Traffic Noise Impacts”; Wilhelmsson, “The Impact of Traffic Noise on the Values of Single-Family Houses.”

¹¹ A negative externality is the indirect imposition of a cost on another party who does not bear the cost. In this case, vehicle owners may reduce the property values of certain homeowners, while not incurring the cost of doing so through, for instance, a “noise pollution tax.”

Despite these potential economic impacts of the Bill, a small number of residents likely would experience them, given the scale of the program. For this reason, OLO anticipates the Bill would have an overall insignificant impact on private organizations, residents, and economic conditions in the County in terms of the indicators prioritized by the Council.

VARIABLES

Not applicable

IMPACTS

WORKFORCE ■ TAXATION POLICY ■ PROPERTY VALUES ■ INCOMES ■ OPERATING COSTS ■ PRIVATE SECTOR CAPITAL INVESTMENT ■ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■ COMPETITIVENESS

Not applicable

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Not applicable

WORKS CITED

- Arianna Johnson, “[What To Know About Noise Cameras — As NYC Lawmakers Consider Cracking Down On Illegal Mufflers And Exhaust Systems](#),” Forbes, December 4, 2023.
- “[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.
- Dorsey, Robyn, and Marceline White. “[No Exit: How Maryland’s Debt Collection Practices Deepen Poverty and Widen the Racial Wealth Gap](#).” Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition, June 2018.
- [HB0212](#), Maryland General Assembly, Effective July 1, 2024.
- [Introduction Staff Report for Bill 14-24](#), Montgomery County Council, July 30, 2024.
- LaScala-Gruenewald, Angela, and Leslie Paik. “[Legal Financial Obligations in the United States: A Review of Recent Research](#).” *Sociology Compass* 17, no. 5 (2023): e13070.
- Mello, Steven. “[Fines and Financial Wellbeing](#).” *Working Paper*, October 12, 2012.
- . “[Speed Trap or Poverty Trap? Fines, Fees, and Financial Wellbeing](#).” *Working Paper*, November 14, 2018.
- Nelson, Jon P. “[Hedonic Property Value Studies of Transportation Noise: Aircraft and Road Traffic](#).” In *Hedonic Methods in Housing Markets: Pricing Environmental Amenities and Segregation*, edited by Andrea Baranzini, José Ramirez, Caroline Schaerer, and Philippe Thalmann, 57–82. New York, NY: Springer, 2008.

Rich, Jeppe Husted, and Otto Anker Nielsen. "[Assessment of Traffic Noise Impacts.](#)" *International Journal of Environmental Studies* 61, no. 1 (February 1, 2004): 19–29.

Wilhelmsson, Mats. "[The Impact of Traffic Noise on the Values of Single-Family Houses.](#)" *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management* 43, no. 6 (November 1, 2000): 799–815.

CAVEATS

Two caveats to the economic analysis performed here should be noted. First, predicting the economic impacts of legislation is a challenging analytical endeavor due to data limitations, the multitude of causes of economic outcomes, economic shocks, uncertainty, and other factors. 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.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Stephen Roblin (OLO) prepared this report.