



BILL NO.: House Bill 903
TITLE: Environment – Road Salt Management Program
POSITION: **OPPOSE**
DATE: March 10, 2010
COMMITTEE: Environmental Matters
CONTACT: Andrea Mansfield

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** House Bill 903. This bill would require the State Highway Administration (SHA) and every local jurisdiction responsible for highway maintenance to establish and implement a road salt management program by October 31, 2011. SHA and local jurisdictions would be required to submit preliminary plans to the Maryland Department of Environment and update the program annually. The bill would also establish standards and requirements for the management programs and authorize SHA to develop and impose such a management program on a local jurisdiction if they do not already have one or fail to update it.

MACo recognizes the adverse environmental and health effects of road salt run off. However, it is concerned about the administrative and fiscal impacts of developing such a plan would have on local jurisdictions. Currently, some jurisdictions have formal road salt management plans in place. Those that do not are still cognizant of the effects of road salt on surrounding areas. To control these adverse effects, jurisdictions use calibrated salt spreading equipment to reduce salt usage. Other jurisdictions use salt on major roadways, but use a combination of sand, salt brine, and cinders on smaller roads.

Regardless of the effectiveness of current local practices, under HB 903 every jurisdiction would be required to either redo or create a conforming plan. Plan criteria would require a jurisdiction to identify best practices, establish standards and procedures for identifying vulnerable areas, and establish goals for reducing the environmental impact. MACo believes this approach would be costly, and in many cases duplicative.

In addition, many local transportation departments do not have this type of staff expertise. Meeting these criteria would require staff, consultants, and resources at a time when jurisdictions are reeling from significant reductions in funding. Highway User Revenues, typically used for road maintenance and snow removal, have been reduced by 95% in nearly every jurisdiction, with these reductions extended two more years in the proposed budget plan. Jurisdictions have made reductions in many areas and dipped into reserves and rainy day funds. HB 903 would necessitate hiring staff and consultants, increasing resource costs, and possibly adding capital expenditures for upgrading salt storage, salt containment areas, and equipment.

Whereas, MACo understands the desire to temper the effects of road salt runoff in surrounding areas, the approach outlined in HB 903 is onerous and would have a negative fiscal impact on local jurisdictions. For these reasons, MACo **OPPOSES** HB 903 and urges the Committee to give the bill an **UNFAVORABLE REPORT**.