

HB 925

Battery Backup for Traffic Signals

FEBRUARY 24, 2022

ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

SPONSORED BY DELEGATE PARROTT



Background:

- In 2006, 2 teenagers, Scott Caplan and Teresa “Tara” Howard were killed in a crash at the intersection of MD 175 and I-195 SB Ramp in Howard County. The traffic signal had been dark for at least 45 minutes.
- This fatal crash could have been prevented.
- As a result of the crash, Howard County mandated that all traffic signals in the county be equipped with batteries to operate the signal in the case the electricity goes off.

What this bill does:

- Upgrade all traffic control signal heads in Maryland with:
 - Light-emitting diode (LED) technology, which uses significantly less electricity
 - A battery that would power the signal in case of electrical disruptions
- Establish the Traffic Control Signal Modernization Fund from 10% of red-light-running tickets to pay for the upgrading of these traffic control signals



Benefits of LED Lights and Battery Backups:

- LED lights are a greener, and energy efficient choice
- Signals with battery backup systems are significantly safer
- In cases of major power outages, the signals will still operate. This will allow police officers to focus on other pressing needs
 - Example: In a hurricane, people need to be rescued. The police cannot afford to be focusing on traffic disruptions



Quick Facts:

- LED lights have been implemented at 95% of Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) Controlled intersections
 - County, the city of Baltimore, and municipal intersections are significantly less
- Current battery backup implementation by the SHA is very limited and is based on risk-based assessment
- Currently, around 30% of Maryland intersections have a battery backup
- Anne Arundel and Howard Counties both have a consistent battery backup program. This should be extended to the rest of the state.

Places that currently use battery backup systems at all of their signalized intersections:

- Parts of California
- Anne Arundel and Howard Counties, Maryland
- Scottsdale, Arizona
- Suffolk, Virginia
- Overland Park, Kansas
- British Columbia, Canada

Benefits of the bill

- There will be significantly lower electricity costs over time
- There are lower maintenance costs for LED signal heads
- Police will not need to man the signals during power outages
- This proposal increases safety and reduces fatalities
 - It is well worth the investment

Conclusion

- We could be the first state with this program
- It will bring our traffic signals into the 21st century
- There is no excuse for creating hazardous conditions by allowing signals to continue to go dark

Please vote favorably for HB 925.

Questions?