

**CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL 15-0225R
(Resolution)**

Introduced by: Councilmember Scott, President Young, and All Members

Introduced and read first time: April 27, 2015

Assigned to: Public Safety Committee

Committee Report: Favorable

Adopted: June 8, 2015

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION CONCERNING

Investigative Hearing – Police Wagon Safety

1
2 FOR the purpose of calling on the Police Commissioner and representatives from the Baltimore
3 City Police Department to appear before the City Council to discuss the current state of the
4 Department’s wagon fleet, what steps can be taken to improve the safety of individuals being
5 transported in these wagons, and how the Department plans to address concerns about wagon
6 safety in the immediate future.

Recitals

7
8 The death of Freddie Gray after a more than 30 minute confinement inside a police
9 transportation van, or wagon, has raised many very troubling questions that have yet to answered.
10 One area that stands out as a particular concern is the apparent dearth of information about what
11 happened to Mr. Gray inside the wagon, and how that may have contributed to the injuries that
12 subsequently led to his death.

13 These unanswered questions point to broader concerns about the Baltimore City Police
14 Department’s wagon fleet. Individuals being transported in these wagons are in a particularly
15 vulnerable position. They are typically handcuffed or otherwise restrained and unable to hold
16 themselves up or react to normal traffic movements in the same way an unrestrained person
17 would, greatly increasing the possibility of inadvertent injury. They also are out of public view,
18 but not yet in the more closely monitored formal holding environment present in police stations
19 or jails, leaving them exposed to potential abuse; and leaving transporting officers exposed to
20 allegations of abuse that are difficult to prove or rebut by either party.

21 All of these concerns can be alleviated through the proper deployment of technology.
22 Modern wagons with adequate restraints and safety features can greatly reduce the risk of
23 accidental injury. Cameras in wagons can provide a record of what takes place during prisoner
24 transportation that reduces both passenger vulnerability to abuse and officers’ vulnerability to
25 unsubstantiated allegations.

26 However, it is not clear to what extent the Baltimore City Police Department takes advantage
27 of these potential remedies. The Department had reportedly pledged to replace its existing
28 wagons last year, but that plan has apparently been at least temporarily scrapped and we don’t
29 know if the wagons intended to be put out of service are still safe to operate.

EXPLANATION: Underlining indicates matter added by amendment.
~~Strike out~~ indicates matter stricken by amendment.

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1 In order to prevent future tragedies it is important to get a handle on the current state of the
2 Police Department's wagon fleet as well as where safety improvement could and should be
3 made. All options must be on the table for these discussions, including installing cameras in
4 wagons or contracting with private entities to operate modern and secure transportation vans for
5 the Department.

6 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That the
7 Council calls on the Police Commissioner and representatives from the Baltimore City Police
8 Department to appear before it to discuss the current state of the Department's wagon fleet, what
9 steps can be taken to improve the safety of individuals being transported in these wagons, and
10 how the Department plans to address concerns about wagon safety in the immediate future.

11 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the
12 Police Commissioner, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.