

Debt Service

Debt Service is required to be reported in the budget certification statement to the Maryland State Department of Education under the Public School Laws of Maryland 1978, Chapter 22 of the Annotated Code of Maryland. Debt Service represents the periodic payments of principal and interest on bonded long and/or short-term indebtedness, and all costs associated with bond sales, issues, and cost to service debt.

Harford County Public Schools does not have the authority to issue such long term debt. The School system does have the authority to enter into alternative financing mechanisms such as leases and lease purchase transactions. The Harford County Government determines the long term debt financing levels to be used in conjunction with the Board of Education's Capital Improvements Program to be funded through the School Construction Fund. The County Treasurer's Office is responsible for administration of debt service, and the County Budget Office has graciously provided the following debt-related financial data. Before County General Funds are used to pay Board of Education Debt Service, the County utilizes Recordation taxes, Transfer taxes and school development impact fees. Both of these taxes were instituted to assist in debt payments and capital construction for the School's Capital Improvement Program.

The Recordation Tax was established by State law at the rate of \$4.40 per \$1,000 of actual consideration of debt secured as evidenced by documents recorded with the Clerk of the Circuit Court of Harford County. Receipts from this tax are dedicated to the repayment of debt service for school construction financing. In accordance with County Council Bill No. 93-3, the County established a one percent transfer tax. Fifty percent is dedicated to fund school site acquisition or school construction. The School Development Impact Fee was established by the County Government for all residential building permits applied for on or after July 1, 2005. The fees were established to assure that new development contributes its fair share towards the costs of public schools reasonably necessitated by such new development. The revised fees are imposed as of December 2009 and are \$6,000 for a single family detached home, \$4,200 for a townhouse/duplex and \$1,200 for all other residential dwellings including mobile homes.

*County Government Debt Service on behalf of HCPS
Table 1¹*

Debt Service Fund										
	Actual FY 2008		Actual FY 2009		Actual FY 2010		Actual FY 2011		Projected FY 2012	
	Amount	Percent	Amount	Percent	Amount	Percent	Amount	Percent	Amount	Percent
PRINCIPAL PAYMENTS										
School Bonds	\$5,408,231	82.2%	\$6,692,991	84.6%	\$7,575,299	85.7%	\$9,875,706	88.3%	\$15,020,096	91.7%
Short Term Notes	\$0	0.0%	\$0	0.0%	\$0	0.0%	\$0	0.0%	\$0	0.0%
Lease Purchase	\$1,172,109	17.8%	\$1,216,654	15.4%	\$1,262,892	14.3%	\$1,310,888	11.7%	\$1,360,707	8.3%
TOTAL EXPENDITURE BY OBJECT	\$6,580,340	100.0%	\$7,909,645	100.0%	\$8,838,191	100.0%	\$11,186,594	100.0%	\$16,380,803	100.0%
INTEREST PAYMENTS										
School Bonds	\$4,388,664	95.1%	\$5,264,982	96.6%	\$6,886,493	98.1%	\$11,301,566	99.2%	\$13,736,296	99.7%
Short Term Notes	\$0	0.0%	\$0	0.0%	\$0	0.0%	\$0	0.0%	\$0	0.0%
Lease Purchase	\$227,141	4.9%	\$182,595	3.4%	\$136,357	1.9%	\$88,362	0.8%	\$38,543	0.3%
TOTAL EXPENDITURE BY OBJECT	\$4,615,805	100.0%	\$5,447,577	100.0%	\$7,022,850	100.0%	\$11,389,928	100.0%	\$13,774,839	100.0%
SUMMARY										
Principal	\$6,580,340	58.8%	\$7,909,645	59.2%	\$8,838,191	55.7%	\$11,186,594	49.5%	\$16,380,803	54.3%
Interest	\$4,615,805	41.2%	\$5,447,577	40.8%	\$7,022,850	44.3%	\$11,389,928	50.5%	\$13,774,839	45.7%
TOTAL	\$11,196,145	100.0%	\$13,357,223	100.0%	\$15,861,041	100.0%	\$22,576,522	100.0%	\$30,155,642	100.0%

¹ Data is from the Harford County Department of the Treasury.

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COUNTY PRACTICE

It is Harford County's practice to conduct a bi-annual bond sale contingent on capital project needs and the economic conditions of the bond market. Prior to selling bonds, the County will issue Bond Anticipation Notes (short term financing) or use existing cash flows to start the construction of capital projects based on cash flow needs.

On June 1, 2010, the County sold general obligation bonds of \$219,345,000 at a true interest cost of 2.9786206 percent. Including in this bond sale were Taxable Build America Bonds and Refunding Bonds. Bond Ratings were increased by Fitch & Moody's:

- Fitch Ratings AAA
- Moody's Investors Aaa
- Standard & Poor's. AA+

Revenues from the county sources of pay go funds, recordation taxes, transfer taxes, impact fees, and County general funds support the FY 2012 County debt service payments as outlined in the following chart:

*County Government Debt Service for HCPS
Table 2²*

FY 2012 BUDGET BOOK

Harford County, Maryland				
Budgeted FY 2012 County General Fund Principal and Interest Payments for Harford County Public Schools				
			PRINCIPAL	INTEREST
SCHOOL BONDS:	2002	Bonds	\$270,000	\$25,218
	2003	Refunding Bonds	\$902,911	\$66,396
	2004	Bonds	\$459,681	\$243,902
	2005	Bonds	\$1,293,324	\$950,439
	2007	Bonds	\$2,995,869	\$2,398,194
	2009	Bonds	\$2,012,000	\$3,479,922
	2009	Refunding Bonds	\$1,467,740	\$236,892
	2010 Series A	Bonds	\$4,843,200	\$2,572,950
	2010 Series B	Bonds		\$3,203,777
	2010	Refunding Bonds	\$775,370	\$558,608
TOTAL SCHOOL BONDS			\$15,020,095	\$13,736,298
SHORT TERM FINANCING				
		Lease Finance Agreement	\$1,360,707	\$38,542
TOTAL GENERAL FUND PRINCIPAL & INTEREST			\$16,380,802	\$13,774,840

While Debt Service Table 2 indicates the specific amounts of bonded indebtedness undertaken by Harford County Government for the Board of Education in FY 2002 through FY 2010, the following information is provided to clarify the fiscal policies of Harford County, which is responsible, for issuing, managing, and retiring debt obligations associated with Harford County Public Schools. The Board of Education has no authority to issue long term debt such as General Obligation Bonds.

Debt management is an important component of a county's financial management practices. Governments use the option of debt financing to pay for large projects, such as schools, when paying for governmental activities with roads, schools, libraries, and public buildings being the more common uses of bond proceeds.

² Data is from the Harford County Department of the Treasury.

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Debt management is important to ensure that:

- The amount of debt issued by the County is affordable given the County's anticipated revenue levels and operating needs;
- The County issues the kinds of debt appropriate to given projects at the lowest possible interest cost; and,
- The County issues debt in compliance with all relevant laws and regulations.

Section 524 of the Harford County Charter states that the County may incur debt. Furthermore, no indebtedness for a term of one year or greater shall be incurred by the County to meet current operating expenses. All County indebtedness for a term in excess of one year shall become due no later than 30 years after the date of issuance, except debt incurred to finance water, sewer and wastewater facilities, which shall become due no later than 40 years after the date of issuance.

LONG-TERM FINANCING TECHNIQUES

General Obligation Bonds – General Obligations Bonds are known as full faith and credit bonds since their payment is based on the general credit and taxing power of the County. The quality of the general obligation bonds is derived from the fiscal and economic strengths of the County and its ability to assure repayment of monies borrowed. General Obligation Bonds, being tax-supported, are typically used to finance the capital portion of tax supported general public purpose capital projects.

Lease Purchase/Certificates of Participation – Obligations of a public entity secured by an installment sale or leaseback arrangement with a public entity lease. The lessee generally pledges general operating revenues to pay the lease payments, which may or may not be reimbursed by revenues from the project. These obligations do not constitute indebtedness under state constitutional debt limitation. Payment to be made under valid leases are payable only in the year in which use and occupancy of the leased property is available, and lease payments may not be accelerated.

BOND RATINGS

The County's General Obligation Bond rating, Aa1/AA+/AA+, reflects the County's strong credit rating. Moody's Investors Service, Standard and Poor's, and Fitch Ratings awarded these ratings to the County, respectively, in June 2009. Credit ratings are designations by the investor's services to give a relative indication of credit quality, with Aaa/AAA/AAA being the highest achievable rating. Factors contributing to the County's relative high ratings include historically strong financial performance, along with tax raising flexibility, a low debt profile, and ongoing growth and diversification in the economic base.

DEBT MANAGEMENT

Traditionally, Harford County sold bonds only for construction of capital projects within the Capital Improvement Program during the period of 1948 through 1982. Projects must have legislative approval before engineering or construction contracts can be awarded. A pay-as-you-go (PAYGO) policy was implemented in July 1984 for funding capital projects for the general county, education, fire, library, college, highways, and certain water and sewer projects.

In order to provide an adequate physical infrastructure, improved services, and channel growth while maintaining the County's quality of life, a more balanced approach to capital funding has been adopted. Projects within the General Capital Program will be financed with PAYGO funding when feasible rather than long term debt. The County has established a policy where they will keep bonded debt and its resulting debt service to as small a portion of the General Fund Budget as is realistically possible, while not tied to a set ratio. The County will hold conservative, yet fluid and responsive, debt management to be fiscally prudent.

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*County Government Legal Debt Margin
Table 3³*

Statement of Legal Debt Margin as of June 30, 2010

Debt Margin Calculation	Bonded Debt	Debt Limit
Legal Debt Limit		\$1,794,971,828
Amount of Debt applicable to Debt Limit	\$635,102,567	
Less:		
Self-sustaining Debt:	(185,512,510)	
Total Amount of Debt Applicable to Debt Limit		449,590,057
Legal Debt Margin		\$1,345,381,771

DEBT LIMITATIONS

According to state law⁴, the County, as a charter county, is limited in the amount of general obligation supported debt that it can issue to an amount equal to a total of 6 percent of the assessable value of real property of the County and 15 percent of the assessed value of the personal property and operating real property in the County. As of June 30, 2010, the estimated debt limit of the County is \$1,794,971,828.

The County's estimated outstanding general obligation supported debt as of June 30, 2010, exclusive of self-supporting/self-liquidating debt not applicable to the debt limit, is \$449,590,057. This allows for an excess of allowable debt over outstanding non-self-liquidating debt of \$1,345,381,171 as calculated in Debt Service Table 3.

Debt Service Table 4⁵

Harford County Government Statement of Direct and Overlapping Debt as of June 30, 2010

General Obligation Debt	\$635,102,567	
Self-Liquidating Debt Outstanding		
Water and Sewer Bonds	(\$57,100,122)	
Special Revenue Fund Bonds	(\$128,412,388)	
Total Direct Debt		\$449,590,057
Overlapping Debt:		
City of Aberdeen	\$5,874,556	
Town of Bel Air	\$2,504,874	
City of Havre de Grace	\$30,230,344	
Total Overlapping Debt		\$38,609,774
Total Direct and Overlapping Debt		\$488,199,831

³ Debt Service data is from Harford County Government Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for the year ended June 30, 2010.

⁴ Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 25A, §5(P)

⁵ Debt Service data is from Harford County Government Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for the year ended June 30, 2010.

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DEBT BURDEN

Debt burden is a measurement of the relationship between the debt of the County supported as a percentage of personal income and population. The broadest and most generally available measure of wealth in the community is debt as a percentage of personal income. In addition, debt can be compared to population to determine a per capita burden level.

The County makes these comparisons each time it offers bonds for sale. They are included in the official statements that are distributed to prospective investors. Additional ratio comparisons are provided to help understand the debt load in Debt Service Tables 4 and 5.

County Government Debt Service Table 5⁶

Debt Ratios as of June 30, 2010	
Ratio of Debt to Personal Income	5.17%
Ratio of Debt per capita	\$2,555
Personal income and population were estimated by the County Government because data was unavailable.	

BUSINESS PLAN

In order to help understand the framework used by the County government in establishing funding for Harford County Public Schools, it is useful to become familiar with the Harford County Government's Business Plan. Under the Plan, the annual budget is to be adjusted as a result of economic conditions in the County, state, and nation. Capital projects may progress more rapidly or more slowly depending on population growth, economic, and funding sources.

The County has developed a business model for capital project funding for the current and the next succeeding five fiscal years. The model sets the following goals:

1. Expenditures will be reviewed and approved based on real versus perceived need;
2. Each function, service, project, and expenditure as to its affordability;
3. New sources of revenue will be identified and advanced;
4. Prepare, integrate through planning, and maintain conservative annual operating budgets and multi-year spending plans;
5. Plan for and preserve a prescribed year-end fund balance to maintain the credit rating and provide for emergency needs; and,
6. Develop and implement a new five year capital program based on affordability and sound debt management practices.

Pay-as-you-go (PAYGO) funding will continue to be used for minor renovation and repair projects which have an asset life of less than ten years. The PAYGO policy has allowed the County to plan more efficiently how annual budgets and capital improvements programs will be undertaken while maintaining the same property tax rate.

The General County Capital Program includes general government, education, police/sheriff/fire, community college, libraries, highway, landfill, and parks and recreation projects. Lease-purchase financing of capital assets will be analyzed and assessed as an alternative to long-term bond financing. Utility capital projects will be financed with long-term debt, only after funding sources have been established to pay the annual debt payments, such as PAYGO funding and/or assessments to property owners who will benefit from the improvements.

⁶ Debt Service data is from Harford County Government Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for the year ended June 30, 2010.

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The County has issued a combination of debt⁷ (general obligation bonds, lease purchase agreements) in financing capital projects for the school system. The July 1, 2009 outstanding balance of debt issued for the school system projects was \$198,629,434: principal and interest payments during FY 2010 were \$15,861,041: new debt issued totaled \$117,199,306 and the outstanding balance of debt at June 30, 2010 was \$306,181,664.

HARFORD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS DEBT SERVICE

Harford County Public Schools does not have the authority to issue long term debt. The School System does have the authority to enter into alternative financing mechanisms such as leases and lease purchase transactions. The School System entered into energy performance construction contracts in 2001 and 2002, which were financed with equipment lease purchase transactions. Both transactions have a fifteen year term. The Schools System entered into a lease purchase for the construction of a new administration building in September 2004 for a 25 year term. These Transactions were approved by the County Executive and County Council. Payments are included in the Unrestricted Funds Budget and are identified in Table 6.

Debt Service Table 6⁸

Harford County Public Schools Debt Service Fund					
PRINCIPAL PAYMENTS	Actual FY 2008	Actual FY 2009	Actual FY 2010	Budget FY 2011	Budget FY 2012
SunTrust Lease dated Dec. 7, 2001	\$187,194	\$204,893	\$223,713	\$243,744	\$265,024
SunTrust Lease dated Dec. 19, 2002	\$226,718	\$244,864	\$263,976	\$284,102	\$305,287
SunTrust Lease dated Sept. 1, 2004	\$268,970	\$282,845	\$296,928	\$311,714	\$327,235
TOTAL EXPENDITURE BY OBJECT	\$682,882	\$732,603	\$784,617	\$839,560	\$897,546
INTEREST PAYMENTS					
SunTrust Lease dated Dec. 7, 2001	\$144,179	\$134,913	\$124,770	\$113,697	\$101,631
SunTrust Lease dated Dec. 19, 2002	\$166,755	\$156,916	\$146,289	\$134,833	\$122,502
SunTrust Lease dated Sept. 1, 2004	\$553,378	\$540,977	\$526,893	\$512,109	\$496,587
TOTAL EXPENDITURE BY OBJECT	\$864,312	\$832,805	\$797,952	\$760,639	\$720,720
SUMMARY					
Principal	\$682,882	\$732,603	\$784,617	\$839,560	\$897,546
Interest	\$864,312	\$832,805	\$797,952	\$760,639	\$720,720
TOTAL	\$1,547,194	\$1,565,408	\$1,582,569	\$1,600,199	\$1,618,266

⁷ Debt data is the most current information from Harford County Government, Treasury Department for the year ended June 30, 2010.

⁸ Data is from Harford County Public Schools Budget Office.