

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2018 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
Third Reader

House Bill 1714

(Delegate Mosby)(By Request - Baltimore City Police  
Department)

Environment and Transportation

Judicial Proceedings

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Vehicle Laws - Police Vehicles - Use of Cruise or Directional Marker Lights

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This bill authorizes a police department and other city, county, State, or federal law enforcement agencies to display cruise or directional marker lights on their vehicles. A driver of a police vehicle may use the cruise or directional marker lights at *any* time.

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** The bill does not affect State finances; such lights are already part of the lighting package on police vehicles.

**Local Effect:** The bill does not affect local government finances; such lights are already part of the lighting package on police vehicles.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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Analysis

**Current Law:** An emergency vehicle, in addition to any other equipment and distinctive markings required, must be equipped with a siren, exhaust whistle, or bell capable of giving an audible signal. Every emergency vehicle must be equipped with signal lamps mounted as high as practicable, which must be capable of displaying, to the front and to the rear, a flashing red light or lights. These lights must have sufficient intensity to be visible at 500 feet in normal sunlight.

Blue, red, or white lights or signal devices may be flashed or oscillated or otherwise used by law enforcement vehicles only while on route to or at the scene of an emergency. Their

use does not relieve an emergency vehicle from otherwise giving an audible warning as required. Exceptions to this rule include when the driver of an emergency vehicle uses flashing lights within 100 feet of the entrance ramp of a fire or rescue station while parking or backing the emergency vehicle, or when a driver of a fire department or rescue squad emergency vehicle, at the discretion of the officer in charge, flashes or oscillates or otherwise uses red and white lights or signal devices while stopped, standing, or parked on the roadway at the scene of an emergency.

**Background:** According to the Maryland Department of Transportation, “cruise lights” are a steady burn, low voltage light output that are on continuously and identify the emergency vehicle at all times when in operation. Cruise lights are usually located on the outer corners of the normal light bars on the top of a police vehicle.

According to local news reports in Virginia, police in Danville as well as the District of Columbia, Cincinnati, Philadelphia, and Connecticut use or have used cruise lights on police vehicles in nonemergency status on regular patrol. Law enforcement agencies that have adopted their use claim the steady blue lights act as a crime deterrent and help people locate officers more easily. In 2016, however, the Philadelphia police commissioner reversed the previous commissioner’s directive for all police patrol vehicles to display cruise lights *at all times*, citing concerns about officer safety.

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### Additional Information

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Anne Arundel and Garrett counties; Comptroller’s Office; Department of General Services; Department of Natural Resources; Department of State Police; Maryland Department of Transportation; [www.cbslocal.com](http://www.cbslocal.com); [www.wsls.com](http://www.wsls.com); [Virginiafirst.com](http://Virginiafirst.com); Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - March 12, 2018  
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