

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2020 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 1483 (Delegate Fraser-Hidalgo)
Environment and Transportation

Vehicle Laws - Personal Delivery Devices - Standards and Requirements

This bill authorizes a “personal delivery device” to operate without registration on any highway, sidewalk, or crosswalk in the State. The bill excludes such devices from the definition of “motor vehicle” and “vehicle” and establishes various other standards and requirements that must be adhered to by devices operating pursuant to the bill’s authorization.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill is not anticipated to materially affect State finances or operations.

Local Effect: The bill is not anticipated to materially affect local government finances or operations.

Small Business Effect: Potential meaningful.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The bill defines a “personal delivery device” as a powered device that:

- is operated primarily on sidewalks and crosswalks;
- is intended primarily for the transport of property on public rights-of-way;
- weighs at most 200 pounds (excluding cargo); and
- is capable of navigating with or without the active control or monitoring of an individual.

The bill prohibits a personal delivery device from:

- unreasonably interfering with traffic;
- blocking public rights-of-way;
- transporting hazardous materials in a quantity that may pose an unreasonable risk to health, safety, or property; or
- operating on a sidewalk or crosswalk at a speed exceeding 3.5 miles per hour.

A personal delivery device operated on any highway, sidewalk, or crosswalk in the State must:

- be visibly marked with a unique identifying number;
- be visibly marked with a means of identifying the device operator;
- if the device operator is acting on behalf of a corporate entity, be visibly marked with contact information for that entity;
- be equipped with a system that enables the device to come to a controlled stop;
- be covered by an insurance policy that provides general liability coverage of at least \$100,000 for damages; and
- be equipped with lighting devices as required by the Motor Vehicle Administration.

Any information required by the bill to be visibly marked on a personal delivery device must also be marked in braille lettering.

Current Law: Each motor vehicle, trailer, semitrailer, and pole trailer driven on a highway must be registered. Certain motor vehicles are exempt from this requirement, including certain snowmobiles in Allegany and Garrett counties and certain golf carts in Allegany County, Smith Island, the City of Crisfield in Somerset County, the community of Golden Beach Patuxent Knolls in St. Mary’s County, and the Town of Vienna in Dorchester County.

“Motor vehicle” is defined as a vehicle that, unless otherwise specifically exempted, is self-propelled or propelled by electric power obtained from overhead electrical wires and not operated on rails. Certain vehicles, such as low-speed vehicles, bicycles, and motor scooters, are restricted to certain highways based on the maximum posted speed limit; they may be subject to different rules of the road than passenger cars and trucks.

“Vehicle” is defined as any device in, on, or by which any individual or property is (or might be) transported or towed on a highway. “Vehicle” includes a low-speed vehicle and an off-highway recreational vehicle, but it does not include an electric personal assistive mobility device.

Background: As of early 2020, at least seven states (Arizona, Florida, Idaho, Ohio, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin) and the District of Columbia have enacted laws related to personal delivery devices. In addition, legislation has been introduced in several more states between 2019 and 2020.

Small Business Effect: Any small businesses in the State that choose to operate personal delivery devices pursuant to the bill's authorization may benefit, as the bill provides a new means of delivering goods to consumers. The extent to which small businesses in the State may utilize the bill's authorization cannot be determined at this time, however.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Designated Cross File: SB 874 (Senator Feldman) - Judicial Proceedings.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of Disabilities; Department of State Police; Maryland Department of Transportation; Department of Legislative Services

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Analysis by: Eric F. Pierce

Direct Inquiries to:
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510