

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2024 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

House Bill 43

(Delegate Stewart, *et al.*)

Environment and Transportation

Judicial Proceedings

Motor Vehicle Registration - Exceptions for Golf Carts - Authorization

This bill authorizes counties and municipalities to designate county or municipal highways under their respective jurisdictions on which a person may operate a golf cart. The bill's statewide authorization replaces similar authorizations that only apply in certain jurisdictions (Smith Island, the community of Golden Beach Patuxent Knolls in St. Mary's County, the Town of Vienna in Dorchester County, Hoopers Island or Taylors Island, and the City of Crisfield in Somerset County).

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill does not materially affect State finances or operations.

Local Effect: The bill does not materially affect local finances or operations.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Bill Summary: Under the bill, a person may operate a golf cart only on county or municipal highways on which the maximum posted speed limit does not exceed 30 miles per hour (or 35 miles per hour in the community of Golden Beach Patuxent Knolls, consistent with current statutory provisions). Such golf carts may be operated only (1) between dawn and dusk, if equipped with lighting devices required by the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) or (2) at *all* times of the day, if the golf cart is equipped with headlights, tail lights, and brake lights approved by MVA (in addition to any other lighting devices required by MVA). Additionally, the number of occupants must not exceed the number of seats.

A golf cart operating pursuant to the bill’s authorization must be kept as far to the right of the roadway as feasible, and the driver must have a valid driver’s license. Any such golf cart is also exempt from the general requirement that each motor vehicle driven on a highway in the State be registered.

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, on Smith Island, in the City of Crisfield in Somerset County, in the community of Golden Beach Patuxent Knolls in St. Mary’s County, in the Town of Vienna in Dorchester County, and on Hoopers Island and Taylors Island.

A “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.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: SB 316 (Senator Bailey) - Judicial Proceedings.

Information Source(s): Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, Queen Anne’s, and St. Mary’s counties; cities of College Park, Frostburg, and Rockville; Town of Bladensburg; Department of State Police; Maryland Department of Transportation; Department of Legislative Services

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