

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2024 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

House Bill 737

(Delegate J. Long, *et al.*)

Environment and Transportation

Judicial Proceedings

Vehicle Laws - Slow Moving Vehicles - Right-Hand Lane

This bill requires a driver traveling slower than the general speed of traffic on *any roadway* (rather than just an *interstate highway located in a rural area* under existing statute) to drive in the right-hand lane or lanes, if the driver determines it is practicable to do so.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Transportation Trust Fund (TTF) expenditures increase by *at least* \$250,000 (*up to a maximum of* \$750,000) in FY 2025 only, as discussed below. Revenues are not affected.

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

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: On every roadway, any vehicle going at least 10 miles per hour below the applicable maximum speed limit or at less than the normal speed of traffic under existing conditions (if any existing conditions reasonably require a speed below that of the applicable maximum) generally must be driven in the right-hand lane then available for traffic or as close as practicable to the right-hand curb or edge of the roadway.

A driver traveling slower than the general speed of traffic on an interstate highway located in a rural area must drive in the right-hand lane or lanes, if the driver determines it is practicable to do so. An “interstate highway” means a State highway that is part of the national interstate system; a “rural area” means an area outside the fixed boundaries of an

urban area (a bounded area that includes and is adjacent to a municipality or other urban place with a population of at least 5,000).

The Motor Vehicle Administration must include this requirement in the State's driver education curriculum. The State Highway Administration (SHA) must inform drivers of the requirement (1) by placing and maintaining signs at regular intervals on appropriate State highways (at the request of a local jurisdiction or on its own initiative and in SHA's sole discretion) and (2) through the State's dynamic message sign system, to the extent authorized by federal law and regulations. Drivers may not be issued citations for violating the requirement.

State Expenditures: SHA has the discretion to determine the placement and scope of signage installed in accordance with the bill. Thus, the precise impact on TTF expenditures depends on the scale at which SHA chooses to install signage informing drivers of the bill's requirements.

Based on a preliminary analysis, SHA estimates that it would install a minimum of 500 signs, and likely no more than 1,500 signs, on highways statewide. SHA advises that it cannot provide a more precise estimate until it completes a comprehensive review of the State's road network.

SHA estimates that sign installation costs will be \$500 per sign. Accordingly, TTF expenditures increase by *at least* \$250,000, but likely *not more than* \$750,000, in fiscal 2025 only. For purposes of this analysis, the Department of Legislative Services assumes that SHA completes the installation of all signage in fiscal 2025.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years; however, legislation with similar provisions has been proposed. For example, see HB 957 of 2023.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts); Department of State Police; Maryland Department of Transportation; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 22, 2024
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