

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2024 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
First Reader

Senate Bill 870

(Senator Kelly)

Judicial Proceedings

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Vehicle Laws - Electric Vehicles - Weight Limits

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This bill authorizes *any* plug-in electric vehicle or other vehicle propelled to a significant extent by an electric motor that draws electricity from a battery to be allowed up to an additional 2,000 pounds total in gross, axle, tandem, and bridge formula weight limits when determining whether the vehicle is adhering to the maximum gross weight limits for vehicles operating in the State.

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** Transportation Trust Fund (TTF) expenditures increase, potentially significantly, for additional highway system and bridge preservation and maintenance. Such costs may be able to be deferred in the near term. Revenues are not materially affected.

**Local Effect:** Local government expenditures increase, potentially significantly, for highway and bridge maintenance; however, such costs may be able to be deferred in the near term. Revenues are not materially affected.

**Small Business Effect:** Minimal.

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Analysis

**Current Law:**

*Vehicle Weight Limits – Generally*

The Transportation Article establishes maximum gross weight limits for various types of vehicles operating in the State calculated based on the number of axles on the vehicle and

distance between the axles, as specified. For example, for a two-axle vehicle, the allowed maximum gross weight limit ranges from 34,000 pounds to 40,000 pounds, and for a seven-axle vehicle, the allowed maximum gross weight limit ranges from 74,000 to 80,000 pounds.

The gross weight of any vehicle or combination of vehicles may not exceed 80,000 pounds, including any enforcement or statutory tolerances. This limit applies to a vehicle or combination of vehicles with five or more axles; lower limits apply to vehicles or combinations of vehicles with fewer axles.

### *Vehicle Weight Limits – Exceptions*

The Transportation Article also establishes various exceptions to the weight limits discussed above. Notably, any vehicle that uses an auxiliary power unit or an idle-reduction technology unit in order to promote reduction of fuel use and emissions from engine idling, is allowed up to an additional 550 pounds total in gross, axle, tandem or bridge formula weight limits, under specified circumstances. The additional weight limit may not exceed the certified weight of the auxiliary power unit or idle-reduction technology.

Additionally, vehicles used to transport agricultural products, such as wheat and corn, are allowed additional weight during specified times of the year, and certain vehicles weighing up to 100,000 pounds are allowed exclusively on a designated heavy weight port corridor.

**State/Local Expenditures:** According to the [Federal Highway Administration](#), the amount of infrastructure damage to a highway or bridge caused by an overweight vehicle is geometrically larger than the weight increase; for example, an increase of 2,000 pounds from 18,000 pounds to 20,000 pounds causes 50% more damage to the pavement.

As additional electric vehicles begin using the State's highways, bridges, and transportation infrastructure under the bill's increased weight limits, more maintenance will be necessary to ensure the State's transportation infrastructure remains safe and usable. Notably, the State Highway Administration (SHA) advises that the bill may require the reinforcement of some or all of the State's 5,000 bridges at an average estimated cost of \$250,000 per bridge.

Therefore, TTF and local government expenditures increase, potentially significantly, for this transportation infrastructure maintenance. Such improvements and, thus, their costs may be able to be deferred in the near term as electric plug-in vehicles are not yet routinely used for hauling. (Further, electric passenger vehicles, which weigh more than their gas-powered counterparts, do not yet constitute a significant portion of all vehicles in Maryland.) SHA advises that the approximately 2,500 bridges owned and maintained by local governments tend to be older and more susceptible to potential damage from

overweight vehicles. Thus, the bill's impact may be more pronounced on local governments compared to the State.

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### **Additional Information**

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

**Designated Cross File:** HB 652 (Delegate Fraser-Hidalgo) - Environment and Transportation.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland Department of Transportation; Department of State Police; Federal Highway Administration; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 15, 2024  
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