

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2001 Session

FISCAL NOTE

House Bill 880 (Delegate Clagett)
Commerce and Government Matters

Vehicle Laws - Trailers and Semitrailers - Surge Brakes

This bill authorizes a trailer or semitrailer that has a gross combination weight rating of less than 10,001 pounds and operates solely intrastate to be equipped with surge brakes. The bill defines surge brakes as a braking system designed to activate the brakes of a vehicle being towed as a result of the forward pressure against the towing vehicle during deceleration.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The bill would not directly affect State activities or State finances.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Current Law: Trailers and semitrailers of a registered gross weight over 3,000 pounds must be equipped with brakes acting on all wheels. Trailers and semitrailers under 3,000 pounds do not have to be so equipped if they meet certain performance requirements and if the total weight on and including the wheels of the trailer does not exceed 40% of the gross weight of the towing vehicle when connected to the trailer. No distinction is made for trailers and semitrailers that only operate on an intrastate basis.

Maryland must currently comply with federal motor carrier safety regulations as they apply to surge brakes. Under Section 393.48 of the Code of Maryland Regulations, surge

brakes do not comply with federal regulations, which require that brakes on trailers be operable at all times. Surge brakes operate only when the vehicle is moving forward.

Background: The State Highway Administration (SHA) advises that surge brakes, which function without requiring additional controls for the driver to operate, can provide additional safety for vehicles such as rental trailers. The SHA further advises that it would continue to use the existing standard on its trailers, rather than retrofit them with the lower standard called for under the bill.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Transportation (State Highway Administration),
Department of Legislative Services

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ef/jr

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