

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2001 Session

FISCAL NOTE
Revised

Senate Bill 580 (Senator Hafer, *et al.*)

Judicial Proceedings

Commerce and Government Matters

Vehicle Laws - Forest Products - Axle Load Limit Tolerance

This bill allows trucks that haul forest products and have been loaded in an off-highway location to have higher axle load limit tolerances, except on interstate highways, from June 1 to September 30 of each year.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Because heavier vehicles cause more wear to bridges and road surfaces, there may be some increase in State expenditures for road repairs. Any such increase is assumed to be minimal.

Local Effect: To the extent that some roads under local authority may require more repairs, there may be some increase in local expenditures. Any such increase is assumed to be minimal.

Small Business Effect: Meaningful.

Analysis

Bill Summary: A single unit vehicle with at least three axles or a combination of vehicles with a trailer length of less than 32 feet long, or a combination of vehicles with a semi-trailer length of 45 feet or less, may have an axle load limit tolerance of 15% from June 1 to September 30 when carrying forest products.

Current Law: Trucks that have been loaded in field locations and are hauling agricultural products are allowed a 15% axle load tolerance during harvest time.

However, for vehicles carrying forestry products, the axle load limit tolerance for a single unit vehicle with at least three axles or a combination of vehicles with a trailer length of less than 32 feet is 10% the entire year. The axle load limit tolerance for a combination of vehicles with a semi-trailer length of 45 feet or less is 5%.

Background: An axle load tolerance is “gross weight imposed on the ground surface by the wheels of an axle.” The Transportation Article defines the maximum weight a vehicle may carry given its axle configuration, but tolerates a vehicle to be a small percentage, usually no more than 5%, heavier than the law mandates. During agricultural harvest time many trucks are loaded in fields and in other non-industrial, non-highway locations where measuring axle load is difficult or impossible. The law makes certain allowances for agricultural trucks but does not make the same allowances for forestry products. This bill attempts to address this inconsistency.

Small Business Effect: Trucking companies that are small businesses or owner-operated could have an increase in business. They will be able to haul more weight per load and thus transport the same amount of product in less time and at a lower cost over the course of a harvest season.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: HB 371 (Delegate Edwards) – Commerce and Government Matters.

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

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