

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2002 Session

FISCAL NOTE

House Bill 1050 (Delegate Burns)
Commerce and Government Matters

Vehicle Laws - Abandoned Vehicles

This bill changes the definition of an abandoned vehicle so that a vehicle left on private or public property for more than 24 hours without the property owner's consent is considered abandoned. It also requires State and local police departments to take any abandoned vehicle into custody.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The bill could be implemented with existing resources.

Local Effect: Increase in revenues from additional towing fees. Increase in expenditures for additional towing, storage, and administration. The impact would vary by jurisdiction. *This bill may impose a mandate on a unit of local government.*

Small Business Effect: Potential minimal. To the extent that the bill generates additional revenue for towing companies, it will benefit small business.

Analysis

Current Law: A vehicle is defined as abandoned if it has remained on private property for more than 48 hours without the consent of the owner or person in control of the property, is inoperable and left unattended on public property for more than 48 hours, or has remained illegally on public property for more than 48 hours. However, vehicles that have been left unattended on any portion of a controlled access highway for more than 24 hours are considered abandoned. An abandoned vehicle includes any motor vehicle, trailer, or semitrailer. State and local police departments may take abandoned vehicles into custody, but are not required to do so.

Local Fiscal Effect: The bill would result in the need for local jurisdictions to tow more vehicles. The fiscal impact could vary by jurisdiction. It is generally expected, however, that the bill would result in additional expenditures due to the need to tow, store, and process additional vehicles. Towing fee revenues would also increase.

Prince George's County advises that the bill would have little or no impact as it would not increase the number of vehicles taken into custody because the costs of towing (by a private contractor) are reclaimed by the vehicle owner or through vehicle auction sales. Montgomery County, however, advises that it would need to hire three additional abandoned vehicle specialists and buy more vehicles at a cost of approximately \$173,000 in fiscal 2003. The county expects to receive \$67,000 in additional revenues through storage and towing fees, assuming that 200 more vehicles would be towed annually. Kent County estimates that the bill would cost \$5,460 to implement.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: An identical bill was introduced as HB 1279 in the 2001 session and given an unfavorable report by the Commerce and Government Matters Committee.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Montgomery County, Prince George's County, Kent County, Worcester County, Department of General Services, Department of State Police, Department of Transportation, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 1, 2002
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