

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2004 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**

House Bill 171 (Delegate Arnick)  
Environmental Matters

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**Vehicle Laws - Widths and Lengths of Vehicles and Loads**

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This bill expands the maximum authorized width for a Class M motor home or travel trailer by extending the maximum width of safety devices and awnings on the vehicle from three inches on each side of the vehicle to six inches on each side of the vehicle. The bill also expands the operating authority of these vehicles beyond the interstate highway or State primary highway systems to also include the shortest practical route between an interstate highway or State primary highway system and a point or origin or destination on a particular day, or for a maximum distance of one mile from those highways to food, fuel, repairs, or rest. The bill expands the maximum authorized length of a Class M motor home to 45 feet and also expands the operating authority of buses and motor homes beyond the interstate highway or State primary highway systems to also include the shortest practical route between an interstate highway or State primary highway and a point of origin or destination on a particular day, or for a maximum distance of one mile from those highways, to food, fuel, repairs, or rest. The bill also extends the maximum authorized length of a combination of noncommercial vehicles consisting of a power unit and travel trailer from 60 feet to 65 feet.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** The bill's requirements could be enforced with existing resources.

**Local Effect:** The bill's requirements could be enforced with existing resources.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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## Analysis

**Current Law:** The width of a vehicle includes any load that it carries, exclusive of safety, and energy conservation devices as specified in statute, provided that the equipment or device, other than mirrors, does not extend more than three inches on each side of the vehicle beyond the statutory width limitation. A vehicle means a semi-trailer or trailer. A truck tractor may not be operated on a highway in the State with more than two vehicles.

A vehicle may not be driven on any highway if its width exceeds statutory limits unless the State Highway Administration (SHA) has issued a permit, or for a highway under local jurisdiction, the local authority has issued special permission. A motor vehicle loaded with tobacco hogsheads or sod may not exceed a width of 102 inches. For a bus, motor home, or travel trailer on any highway that is part of the interstate system or State primary system or for a publicly-owned transit bus, the maximum authorized width is 102 inches. For a truck or combination of vehicles, the maximum authorized width is 102 inches provided that it is being operated: (1) on any part of the interstate system or other State system highways as designated by the Secretary of Transportation in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT); (2) on a highway that is the shortest practical route between a designated highway and a truck terminal, a point of origin or destination for cargo, or, for a maximum distance of one mile, to facilities for food, fuel, repairs, or rest; or (3) on a highway that is the safest practical route and is a State highway with four or more lanes. For any other vehicle the maximum authorized width is 96 inches. However, by ordinance, a municipal corporation or Baltimore City may permit the operation of any bus up to 102 inches wide within its jurisdiction.

The length of a vehicle includes its front and rear bumpers and any part of its load that extends beyond the vehicle, exclusive of nonload bearing safety and energy conservation devices. The measurement of combination vehicles that transport automobiles or boats may not include the overhang of the transported autos or boats or any retractable device on the rear of the combination when in use to support a transported vehicle. However, a combination of vehicles that carries an indivisible load may be up to 70 feet long.

Except as otherwise provided, a bus, single unit truck, or Class M motor home may not be over 40 feet long. A publicly-owned rigid bus may not exceed 41 feet in length. The length of a bus on any highway that is part of the interstate system or State primary system may not exceed 45 feet. A publicly-owned articulated three-axle bus may not exceed 60 feet in length. Any other vehicle may not exceed 35 feet in length. However, when a semi-trailer and trailer (double) are operated in combination with a truck tractor, the combination of vehicles may not be subject to an overall length limitation. This type of combination may only be operated: (1) on any part of the interstate or other State highway system designated by the Secretary of Transportation, in conjunction with

USDOT; or (2) on a highway that is the shortest practical route between a designated highway and a truck terminal, point of origin or destination for cargo, or, for a maximum distance of one mile, to facilities for food, fuel, repairs, or rest. A semi-trailer or trailer operated in this type of combination may not exceed a length of 28 feet for each unit. When a semi-trailer (single) is being operated in combination with a truck tractor, the combination may not be subject to an overall length limit. However, the semi-trailer may not exceed 48 feet in length.

In a combination of vehicles with a power unit that is a cargo-carrying vehicle, the overall length of the combination may not exceed 62 feet. Any other combination of vehicles may not exceed a length of 55 feet and a truck or truck tractor and semi-trailer combination designed for and engaged exclusively for automobile or boat transport may not exceed 65 feet in length, except as otherwise provided by statute. The combinations engaged in automobile or boat transport may only be operated: (1) on any part of the interstate system or other State system highways designated by the Secretary of Transportation in conjunction with USDOT; or (2) on a highway that is the shortest practical route between a designated highway and a truck terminal, a point of origin or destination for cargo, or, for a maximum distance of one mile, to facilities for food, fuel, repairs, or rest. Exemptions from length limitations are provided for specified combinations of vehicles involved in the transport of explosives or munitions and combinations lawfully operated before December 1, 1982.

A combination of noncommercial vehicles consisting of a power unit and travel trailer may not exceed 60 feet in length. Authorized vehicle combinations that exceed 55 feet may only be operated on: (1) any part of the interstate system or other State system highways designated by the Secretary of Transportation, in conjunction with USDOT; or (2) a highway that is the shortest practical route between a designated highway and a point of origin or destination on a particular day, or, for a maximum distance of one mile, to facilities for food, fuel, repairs, or rest.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** SB 220 (Senator Haines) – Judicial Proceedings.

**Information Source(s):** Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 3, 2004  
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