

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2004 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

House Bill 93

(Chairman, Environmental Matters Committee)
(By Request – Departmental – Transportation)

Environmental Matters

Vehicle Laws - School Buses - Repeal of Special Speed Limit

This departmental bill repeals the 50 miles per hour speed limit on school buses that are carrying passengers.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Minimal decrease in general fund fine revenues due to the repeal of the special school bus speed limit. No effect on expenditures.

Local Effect: Any changes in local training programs for school bus drivers could be handled with existing resources.

Small Business Effect: The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) has determined that this bill has minimal or no impact on small business (attached). Legislative Services concurs with this assessment.

Analysis

Current Law: A person may not drive a school bus more than 50 miles per hour while it is carrying passengers, regardless of the posted speed limit.

Background: MDOT has requested this bill to improve highway safety. Currently, a school bus with passengers may not drive at a speed greater than 50 miles per hour, even if the school bus is on a highway with a maximum speed limit of 55, 60, or 65 miles per hour. Studies have indicated that safety improves as speed variation among vehicles decreases. A vehicle traveling at much slower speeds than surrounding traffic can be at

greater risk than if it were traveling at or close to the prevailing speed. On some interstates and highways, especially in the more rural areas of the State, the speed differential between a school bus and other traffic can exceed 20 miles per hour. In this situation, all traffic can be at greater risk for accidents. This bill is intended to narrow the speed differential between school buses and other traffic on highways and enhance the safety of those riding in school buses and other vehicles.

State Revenues: As established by the District Court, the prepay penalty for driving a school bus more than 50 miles per hour while carrying passengers is \$125; the maximum fine under Maryland Vehicle Law is \$500. One point may be assessed against the driver's license upon conviction. With the repeal of the special speed limit for school bus drivers, general fund revenues from the collection of these fines could be reduced minimally.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: An identical bill was introduced in 2003 as HB 585. That bill received an unfavorable report from the Environmental Matters Committee. Another identical bill, introduced in 2001 as HB 976, was passed by the General Assembly; however, the bill was vetoed by the Governor.

Bills that would have allowed school bus drivers to drive at up to five miles per hour below the speed limit on expressways were introduced in 2002 as HB 1297 and in 2001 as HB 886. Both bills received unfavorable reports from the House Commerce and Government Matters Committee.

Cross File: SB 612 (Senators Hafer and Munson) – Judicial Proceedings. In addition, a bill with identical provisions, HB 65, is referred to the Environmental Matters Committee.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Department of Education, Maryland Department of Transportation, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - January 22, 2004
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