

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2004 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

Senate Bill 35

(Chairman, Judicial Proceedings Committee)
(By Request – Departmental – Transportation)

Judicial Proceedings

Environmental Matters

**Motor Vehicle Administration - Driver's License Renewals - Vision Test
Requirements**

This departmental bill provides that an individual who is at least 21 years old, but less than 40, may apply for renewal of a driver's license by mail, electronically, or by other authorized means without taking a vision test, if the individual passed a vision test authorized by the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) within the previous six years.

The bill is effective July 1, 2004.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Potential operating efficiencies from streamlining MVA customer services. Potential minimal increase in computer reprogramming costs in FY 2005 only.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: The Maryland Department of Transportation has determined that this bill will have minimal or no impact on small business (attached). The Department of Legislative Services (DLS) concurs with this assessment. (The attached assessment does not reflect amendments to the bill.)

Analysis

Current Law: A driver's license issued to a driver at least 21 years old must expire on the birth date of the licensee in the fifth year following issuance of the license. A driver's

license is renewable with the presentation of an application, payment of a renewal fee, and satisfactory completion of a vision test or certification of acceptable visual acuity presented within six months of license expiration or when the driver qualifies for a corrected license. Except as provided, the MVA may not renew an individual's license for more than one consecutive term without requiring the individual to appear in person at an MVA office.

Every individual applying for renewal of a driver's license must pass a vision test prescribed by the MVA, or the MVA must accept certification of acceptable visual acuity from a licensed physician or optometrist. A certificate of acceptable visual acuity must be based on an examination that took place within 12 months of the date of the license renewal application.

If the MVA has reason to believe that an individual is a safety hazard due to a vision deficiency, the MVA may require the vision test at a time other than renewal of a driver's license. Before expiration of a driver's license, if the MVA has reason to believe that an individual is not a safety hazard, but the individual is unable to pass a required knowledge or vision test, the MVA may extend the individual's driving privilege for a maximum of 90 days.

Background: Chapter 14 of 2000 repealed a requirement that a driver's license renewal applicant appear in person for every renewal of a driver's license, among other things. However, an individual must still visit an MVA office every 10 years to secure an updated photograph. By eliminating the requirement for a vision screening once in that 10-year period, drivers in the 21 to 40 age group would be able to renew their licenses by other means. The MVA undertook comprehensive modernization of the driver licensing process from 1999 to 2001, which made mail-in renewal of driver's licenses possible. For driver's licenses renewed by mail or through electronic means, the MVA would use the previous photograph for the license. The MVA reports that in fiscal 2002, 14.2 million transactions were processed, including 505,000 driver license renewals. About 1.3 million drivers age 21 to 40 are currently licensed.

State Expenditures: This bill could result in operating efficiencies for the MVA. It is estimated that each year about half of the eligible drivers in the 21 to 40 age group, or about 130,000 drivers, who need to renew their licenses would use alternative means other than an in-person visit under this bill. This could reduce customer visit time by four minutes in each branch office. The average visit time per customer at an MVA branch office was 47 minutes in fiscal 2003.

The MVA advises that computer programming modifications to six programs would be needed to meet the bill's requirements. The changes could result in a one-time

expenditure of \$24,600 in special funds. However, DLS advises that if other legislation is passed requiring computer programming changes, economies of scale could be realized. This would reduce computer programming costs associated with this bill and other legislation affecting the MVA system. Further, DLS advises that the increased computer expenditure is an estimate and that the MVA may be able to handle the changes within existing resources.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

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

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