

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2005 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 963

(Senators Giannetti and Garagiola)

Judicial Proceedings

Vehicle Laws - Failure to Yield the Right-of-Way - Penalties

This bill establishes additional penalties against a person convicted of failing to yield the right of way if the violation contributed to bodily injury or death. If the violation contributes to an accident that results in bodily injury to another person, the violator is subject to a \$500 fine and a 90-day license suspension. If the violation contributes to an accident that results in the death of another, the person is subject to a fine of \$1,000 and a 180-day license suspension.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Potential significant increase in general fund revenues as a result of the bill's penalty provisions. General fund revenues increase by \$103,900 in FY 2006 due to filing fees for additional administrative hearings. Transportation Trust Fund (TTF) revenues increase by \$36,100 in FY 2006 due to additional license fees. TTF expenditures could increase by \$117,500 in FY 2006 for personnel and resources to handle the additional license suspension and hearing caseload generated by the bill. Out-years include annualization and inflation.

(in dollars)	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010
GF Revenue	\$103,900	\$138,400	\$138,400	\$138,400	\$138,400
SF Revenue	36,100	48,100	48,100	48,100	48,100
SF Expenditure	117,500	146,200	150,000	154,100	158,400
Net Effect	\$22,500	\$40,300	\$36,500	\$32,400	\$28,100

Note:() = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate effect

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

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: A vehicle at an intersection generally has the right of way over any other vehicle approaching from the left and must yield the right of way to any other vehicle approaching from the right. At a “T” intersection with no traffic control device, any person driving on a highway that intersects, but does not cross the highway, must yield to any other vehicle traveling on the other highway.

If a driver approaches a through highway, the driver must stop at the entrance and yield the right of way to any other vehicle approaching on the highway. A driver about to enter or cross a highway from a private road or driveway must yield the right of way to any approaching vehicles. A driver who is about to enter or cross a paved highway from an unpaved highway must yield the right of way to any other approaching vehicle on the paved highway.

A violation of any of these laws is a misdemeanor. A violator is subject to a maximum fine of \$500 and the imposition of one point if the violation does not contribute to an accident, and three points if the violation contributes to an accident. There are no penalties associated specifically with accidents involving failure to yield right of way that result in bodily injury or death.

State Revenues: General fund revenues could increase by \$103,872 in fiscal 2006 from the filing fees for additional administrative hearings that could occur under the bill. Annualized revenue would be \$138,375, assuming no changes in caseload or fees.

The Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) advises that in fiscal 2003, there were 19,129 failure-to-yield accidents, including 89 fatalities and 8,823 injuries. According to the MVA, there were about 5,202 failure-to-yield convictions, for a conviction rate of 27%. It should be noted that convictions involving injuries or fatalities may also result from other related charges, such as reckless or aggressive driving; however, this estimate assumes the conviction rate is 27%.

The MVA experience indicates that about 46% of those who have licenses suspended request a hearing. The estimate assumes that 27%, or 2,406, of those who are involved in failure-to-yield accidents with injury or death are convicted, have their licenses suspended, and that 46%, or 1,107, of that group request an administrative hearing and pay the filing fee of \$125.

General fund revenues could increase significantly due to the bill's penalty provisions for those cases heard in the District Court.

TTF revenues could increase by \$36,090 in fiscal 2006, accounting for the October 1 effective date of the bill as those convicted for the offenses described above will have their licenses suspended for three or six months and must pay \$20 to obtain a new license. Annualized revenue would be \$48,120, assuming no changes in caseload or fees. This assumes that 2,406 additional drivers could be convicted of the proposed crime and have their licenses suspended as a result of the bill.

State Expenditures: TTF expenditures could increase by an estimated \$117,506 in fiscal 2006, which accounts for the bill's October 1, 2005 effective date. This estimate reflects the cost of hiring one customer service agent to prepare suspension and administrative hearing notices associated with new cases. It includes a salary, fringe benefits, one-time start-up costs, expenditures for additional administrative hearings, and ongoing operating expenses.

Salary and Fringe Benefits	\$31,179
Administrative Hearing Fees	76,383
Other Operating Expenses	<u>9,944</u>
Total FY 2006 State Expenditures	\$117,506

Future year expenditures reflect: (1) a full salary with 4.6% annual increases and 3% employee turnover; and (2) 1% annual increases in ongoing operating expenses.

The MVA advises that computer programming modifications to the driver licensing system that could be required by the bill could result in a one-time expenditure of \$60,000 in fiscal 2006 only. However, the Department of Legislative Services (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. It is also assumed that the mailing and printing costs from additional notices would be absorbed within existing resources.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: This bill is a reintroduction of SB 782 of 2004, which received an unfavorable report from the Judicial Proceedings Committee. Similar bills were

introduced in 2003 as SB 719 and HB 1114, which would have allocated the additional penalty revenue to a fund for motorcycle safety programs. SB 719 was heard by the Judicial Proceedings Committee, which took no action. HB 1114 received an unfavorable report from the Judiciary Committee.

Cross File: None.

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

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mp/jr

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