

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2005 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
 Revised

Senate Bill 747

(Senator Haines, *et al.*)

Judicial Proceedings

Environmental Matters

Transportation - Vehicle Laws - Maximum Vehicle Width and Length

This bill increases the maximum width of a vehicle permitted to operate on State highways to 102 inches. The State Highway Administration (SHA) and local jurisdictions may ban a vehicle exceeding a designated width from using a highway or part of a highway but must post signage of this restriction before a vehicle enters the restricted roadway. The bill also alters the maximum length for specified vehicles permitted to operate on certain State roads and highways and how the width of a motor home is calculated.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Transportation Trust Fund (TTF) revenues would decrease by \$56,700 in FY 2006 and by \$75,600 annually thereafter due to decreased permit revenues for oversize permits. Expenditures would not be affected. Enforcement of width and length restrictions could be handled with existing resources.

(in dollars)	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010
SF Revenue	(\$56,700)	(\$75,600)	(\$75,600)	(\$75,600)	(\$75,600)
SF Expenditure	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Net Effect	(\$56,700)	(\$75,600)	(\$75,600)	(\$75,600)	(\$75,600)

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

Local Effect: Local expenditures would increase to post signs on highways or roads that jurisdictions choose to designate as inaccessible to vehicles that exceed a certain width; however, this impact would be minimal. Enforcement could be handled with existing resources.

Small Business Effect: Potential minimal decrease in expenditures for small businesses that own a vehicle between 96 and 102 inches wide as they would no longer be required to obtain a \$30 special hauling permit or a longer-term and more expensive but more economical blanket permit to travel off the specific route assigned to oversize vehicles.

Analysis

Bill Summary: A vehicle may not be driven on the highway if the width of the vehicle exceeds 102 inches. However, SHA or a local authority may prohibit the use of a highway or a part of a highway to vehicles exceeding a designated width if such vehicles would: (1) endanger road users; (2) cause excessive deterioration to the highway; or (3) harm property adjacent to the highway. If SHA or a local authority does prohibit a vehicle exceeding a designated width on a road, it must post and maintain signage of the restriction before the affected location.

The width of a motor home or travel trailer does not include retractable awnings installed by the manufacturer, as long as such awnings do not extend more than six inches from each side of the vehicle.

The length of a bus or a Class M motor home may exceed 40 feet but not 45 feet if it is being operated on:

- an interstate highway or any part of the State highway system designated by the Secretary of Transportation in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Transportation; or
- the shortest practical route between a highway specified above and to or from specified locations.

This exception does not apply to publicly owned rigid buses.

The length of a combination of noncommercial vehicles consisting of a power unit and a travel trailer may not exceed 65 feet.

Current Law: Except under specified conditions, the following vehicles have a maximum width of 102 inches when driven on a State highway:

- a bus, motor home, or travel trailer;
- a publicly owned transit bus;

- a truck or combination of vehicles operated either on the interstate or other State highway system or on a highway that is either the shortest or safest practical route under specified conditions; and
- a motor vehicle loaded with tobacco hogsheads or sod.

All other vehicles have a maximum width of 96 inches.

The length of a combination of noncommercial vehicles consisting of a power unit and a travel trailer may not exceed 60 feet. The length of a bus may exceed 40 feet but not 45 feet if it is being operated on any part of the interstate highway system or State primary system. A publicly owned rigid bus may not exceed 41 feet in length. A Class M motor home cannot exceed 40 feet.

SHA may issue permits for oversized vehicles to travel on State highways. The permit fee cannot be less than \$30 for the first 90,000 pounds and \$5 for each additional ton.

Background: SHA advises that vehicles over 96 inches wide (over width) are restricted to a specific routing system that includes the interstate system, U.S. routes, and State highways. The SHA Motor Carrier Division issues permits to allow oversize vehicles to travel off the specific route. A special hauling permit is \$30 plus an additional fee of \$5 for each additional ton of weight above 90,000 pounds. The permit applies to over width, over length, over height (collectively, oversize vehicles), and overweight vehicles. The permit is valid for one trip and expires after five days.

A blanket permit allows a vehicle, whose weight does not exceed 80,000 pounds, length does not exceed 75 feet, height does not exceed 14 feet, and width does not exceed 12 feet, to move on State highways. A blanket permit is in effect for a period of either one month (\$50 fee) or one year (\$500 fee). If an oversize or overweight vehicle is going to be making numerous trips, such as hauling a piece of equipment from site to site, a blanket permit is more economical.

State Revenues: SHA advises that in fiscal 2004 it issued 1,216 blanket permits for revenues totaling \$408,400. SHA also issued 10,936 special hauling permits for vehicles between 96 and 102 inches. Of these 10,936 vehicles, 9,530 would still be required to obtain a permit under the proposed bill due to other oversize issues. SHA advises that it issued eight special hauling permits to trailers over 60 feet long but not exceeding 65 feet, and three permits for motor homes between 40 and 45 feet of length, for a combined \$335 in fees.

TTF revenues would decrease by \$56,697 in fiscal 2006 and by \$75,595 annually thereafter. This estimate takes into account the October 1, 2005 effective date and is based on the following assumptions:

- the proportion of blanket permits that applies to vehicles between 96 and 102 inches wide that are not otherwise oversize or overweight is identical to the proportion of special hauling permits for such vehicles (8.1% of 1,216 or 98);
- the number of vehicles that would otherwise be subject to obtaining a special hauling permit (1,406) or blanket permit (98) remains constant; and
- fees charged for special hauling permits and blanket permits stay constant.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: HB 419 (Delegates Arnick and Malone) – Environmental Matters.

Information Source(s): Montgomery County, Prince George’s County, Harford County, Queen Anne’s County, St. Mary’s County, Carroll County, Maryland Department of Transportation, Department of Legislative Services

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