

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2005 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 628

(Senator Pipkin, *et al.*)

Judicial Proceedings

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Vehicle Laws - Tractor-Trailer Combinations on the Chesapeake Bay Bridge -  
Restriction

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This bill prohibits a vehicle combination of a Class F (tractor) vehicle and a Class G (trailer) vehicle from being driven on a span of the William Preston Lane, Jr. Memorial Bridge (Chesapeake Bay Bridge) if any lane on that bridge span contains a highway work zone.

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** Nonbudgeted revenues would decrease due to the loss of toll revenue from tractor-trailer combinations passing over the Chesapeake Bay Bridge. Expenditures would not be affected.

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** Meaningful. Businesses that ship goods by tractor-trailer could face an increase in shipping expenses of up to \$225 per trip, which could be significant depending on how many trips must be made a year.

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Analysis

**Current Law:** The Maryland Transportation Authority (MdTA) has general supervision over all transportation facilities projects (including the Chesapeake Bay Bridge) and may do anything necessary or convenient to carry out its powers.

A highway work zone means a construction or maintenance area on or alongside a highway that is marked by appropriate warning signs or other traffic control devices indicating work is in progress.

A Class F (tractor) vehicle is a truck tractor or similar motor vehicle used for propelling, supporting, or drawing a trailer or semitrailer.

A Class G (trailer) vehicle is classified as “freight” or “nonfreight.” A nonfreight trailer or semitrailer is a vehicle designed for towing by a Class A (passenger) vehicle, a Class M (multipurpose) vehicle, or a Class E (truck) vehicle, which must meet specified weight requirements, depending on the class of the towing vehicle, and be a boat, camping trailer, or travel, horse, or utility trailer. A freight trailer or semitrailer must be designed for towing by a Class E (truck) or Class F (tractor) vehicle and meet specified weight requirements, depending on the class of the towing vehicle.

**Background:** The Chesapeake Bay Bridge, built in 1952, connects Maryland’s Eastern Shore recreational regions with the metropolitan areas of Baltimore, Annapolis, and the District of Columbia. Traffic congestion on the bridge can be particularly severe. The toll for two-axle vehicles is \$2.50; each additional axle is \$2.50. The toll is only collected on the eastbound span of the bridge, which is not currently under construction.

A six-year, \$87 million project to rehabilitate the bridge deck of the westbound span is underway. The construction has been plagued with problems over the past few years, and the resurfacing on the bridge has been badly damaged. The construction, which requires lane closures, has created traffic congestion during nonpeak times for the past few years – one backup in October 2001 stretched 14 miles westbound and 9 miles eastbound.

**State Revenues:** MdTA advises that approximately 6.36% of traffic volume in fiscal 2004 was from five-axle trucks (the most likely to be tractor-trailers). However, at \$10 a truck, five-axle vehicles generated toll revenues of \$8,212,880 in fiscal 2004, or 24.62% of all revenues.

MdTA indicates that it would be hard to determine when exactly a highway work zone would be established on the bridge. Therefore, it is extremely likely that many trucking companies that travel over the bridge would be unwilling to risk the bridge being closed to a tractor-trailer and would permanently alter routes to avoid the bridge, especially vehicles that have to travel over the westbound span of the bridge. The number of trucking companies and motor carriers that would choose to do this is unknown; however, MdTA could create a hotline to check for work zone closures on the bridge.

**Small Business Effect:** The Maryland Motor Truck Association advises that the cost to run a five-axle vehicle ranges from \$1.15 to \$1.50 per mile. If a tractor-trailer were unable to cross the Chesapeake Bay Bridge, this bill could add as much as 150 miles to a trip, depending on point of origin for the tractor-trailer. Therefore, expenses could increase as much as \$225 for each trip made by tractor-trailer. Given the construction on the westbound span of the bridge, this is likely to have a significant impact on small businesses.

Further, this estimate only accounts for the operator of a tractor-trailer knowing that the bridge is closed due to the presence of a work zone. Backtracking could add more miles to the trip and therefore result in a greater cost.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland Department of Transportation, Maryland Motor Truck Association, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - March 7, 2005  
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