

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2012 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 924

(Delegate Beitzel)

Environmental Matters

Judicial Proceedings

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Vehicle Laws - Local Authority - Use of Highways by Snowmobiles

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This bill repeals a reference to the designation of snowmobile trails by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), thereby allowing snowmobiles to travel on portions of highways to gain access to *any* snowmobile trails that have been obstructed and divided by highways, if authorized by local authorities.

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** The bill is not anticipated to materially affect State operations or finances.

**Local Effect:** Local government expenditures increase minimally for any jurisdiction that opts to designate additional portions of highways for snowmobile use.

**Small Business Effect:** Minimal.

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Analysis

**Current Law:** The Maryland Vehicle Law does not prevent a local authority, in the reasonable exercise of its police power, from using specified powers as to highways within its jurisdiction. For example, generally, a local authority may designate a portion of a highway for snowmobiles to travel on to gain access to trails designated by DNR; only highways that divide DNR snowmobile trails and obstruct direct access between the trails may be designated for such use. In Garrett County, a local authority may also permit a person to cross a highway on a snowmobile at a right angle on designated portions of highways to gain access to snowmobile trails designated by DNR.

**Background:** According to the DNR website, there are currently 12 designated trails for snowmobiles for use by those with snowmobiles registered with the State Forest Service. Recently, DNR closed three trails due to the results of environmental assessments and a forest certification audit. The decision to close the trails was done in part to protect the western Maryland forest products industry. It is unknown how many other snowmobile trails exist in the State.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Baltimore, Cecil, Carroll, Harford, Montgomery, and St. Mary's counties; Department of Natural Resources; Department of State Police; Maryland Department of Transportation; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - March 1, 2012  
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