

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2015 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

House Bill 818 (Delegate Fraser-Hidalgo, *et al.*)
Environment and Transportation

Judicial Proceedings

Vehicle Laws - Rules of the Road - Lane Changes

This bill generally applies the requirements for signaling while turning to lane change maneuvers. It authorizes a driver to move from a lane or from a shoulder or bikeway into a lane only when the driver has reasonably determined that such a maneuver is safe and activated the appropriate turn signal. The bill expands the circumstances where signals are required by prohibiting a driver from moving a vehicle to the right or left to change lanes unless the driver gives an appropriate signal as required by the Maryland Vehicle Law. When a signal to change lanes is required, the signal must be given continuously before changing lanes, except that a bicyclist may interrupt a turning signal to maintain control of the bicycle.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund revenues increase – potentially significantly – to the extent additional people receive citations under the bill’s provisions as discussed below. Enforcement can be handled with existing resources.

Local Effect: Enforcement can be handled with existing resources. Revenues are not affected.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law/Background: A vehicle must be driven as nearly as practicable entirely within a single lane. The Maryland Vehicle Law prohibits a driver from moving from a lane or moving from a shoulder or bikeway into a lane until the driver has determined that it is safe to do so. A violation of this provision is a misdemeanor, subject to a maximum

fine of \$500. The prepayment penalty established by the District Court is \$90 and one point assessed against the driver’s license. However, if the violation contributes to an accident, the prepayment penalty increases to \$130 and three points must be assessed against the license by the Motor Vehicle Administration.

If any other vehicle might be affected by the movement, a driver may not turn a vehicle unless the driver gives an appropriate signal as required. A signal of an intention to turn right or left must be given continuously during at least the last 100 feet traveled by the vehicle before turning. A bicyclist, however, may interrupt the turning signal to maintain control of the bicycle.

The signals required for vehicles by the Maryland Vehicle Law are authorized to be used to indicate an intention to turn; change lanes; or start from a stopped, standing, or parked position. The signal lamps may not be flashed, however, as a courtesy or “do pass” signal to the driver of any other vehicle approaching from the rear. Each required stop or turn signal must be given by hand or arm, as specified, or by signal lamps, except as otherwise specified. Each motor vehicle in use on a highway in the State must be equipped with, and give a required signal with, signal lamps if the distance from the center of the top of the steering post to the left outside limit of the body, cab, or vehicle load exceeds 24 inches. Each motor vehicle in use on a highway must be equipped with, and give required signals with signal lamps if, for any vehicle or combination of vehicles, the distance from the center of the top of the steering post to the rear limit of the body or load exceeds 14 feet.

A violation of any of the above provisions is a misdemeanor, subject to a maximum fine of \$500. The prepayment penalty established by the District Court for all of these violations is \$90 and, upon conviction, one point assessed against the driver’s license. If the violation contributes to an accident, the prepayment penalty is \$130 and three points assessed against the license.

Exhibit 1 shows citations issued by the District Court in fiscal 2014 for unsafe lane changes and failure to signal when turning:

Exhibit 1
Unsafe Lane Change and Failure to Signal Citations
Fiscal 2014

<u>Violation</u>	<u>Prepaid</u>	<u>Open</u>	<u>Trial</u>	<u>Total</u>
Unsafe Lane Change	2,779	2,977	4,224	9,980
Turn without Required Signal	233	331	506	1,070
Turn without Required Continuous Signal	160	183	329	672

Source: District Court

State Revenues: Expansion of the requirement to signal when changing lanes could increase general fund revenues, perhaps significantly, to the extent that additional citations are issued for violations under the bill. As shown in Exhibit 1, 2,779 citations were prepaid by drivers in fiscal 2014 for unsafe lane changes. *By way of illustration only*, if the number of citations that were prepaid doubled due to the expanded application of the signaling requirement to the requirement to make a safe lane change, then general fund revenues would increase by \$187,560 in fiscal 2016 and \$250,110 on an annual basis thereafter. By the same token, in fiscal 2014, 233 citations were prepaid for turning without the required signal and 160 citations were prepaid for failing to signal continuously while turning. If expansion of these turn signal requirements to lane changes doubled the number of prepaid citations, then general fund revenues would increase by an additional \$26,550 in fiscal 2016 and \$35,370 on an annual basis thereafter.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of Transportation, Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts), Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 3, 2015
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