

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2024 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader

House Bill 653 (St. Mary's County Delegation)
Environment and Transportation

Judicial Proceedings

St. Mary's County - Motor Vehicle Registration - Exception for Golf Carts

This bill authorizes the St. Mary's County Board of Commissioners to designate certain county highways on which a person may operate a golf cart. The maximum posted speed limit of any designated highway must not exceed 30 miles per hour. A person who operates a golf cart on a designated highway may do so only (1) between dawn and dusk and (2) if the golf cart is equipped with approved lighting devices. The golf cart must be kept as far to the right of the roadway as feasible, and the driver must have a valid driver's license. A golf cart operating pursuant to the bill's authorization is exempt from the general requirement that each motor vehicle driven on a highway in the State be registered.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill does not materially affect State finances or operations.

Local Effect: The bill does not materially affect local finances or operations.

Small Business Effect: Potential minimal.

Analysis

Current Law: Each motor vehicle, trailer, semitrailer, and pole trailer driven on a highway must be registered. Certain motor vehicles are exempt from this requirement, including:

- certain snowmobiles in Allegany and Garrett counties; and
- certain golf carts in Allegany County, on Smith Island, in the City of Crisfield in Somerset County, in the community of Golden Beach Patuxent Knolls in

St. Mary's County, in the Town of Vienna in Dorchester County, and on Hoopers Island and Taylors Island.

Chapter 609 of 2023 required the St. Mary's County Board of County Commissioners to produce a report recommending and describing the areas of St. Mary's County that the board considers appropriate for the operation of unregistered golf carts on public highways, subject to specified standards. The report was due, by December 1, 2023, to the House Environment and Transportation Committee, the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee, and the St. Mary's County Delegation to the General Assembly.

A "motor vehicle" is defined as a vehicle that, unless otherwise specifically exempted, is self-propelled or propelled by electric power obtained from overhead electrical wires and not operated on rails. Certain vehicles, such as low-speed vehicles, bicycles, and motor scooters, are restricted to certain highways based on the maximum posted speed limit; they may be subject to different rules of the road than passenger cars and trucks.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has been introduced within the last three years. For example, see HB 219 of 2023 (as introduced), HB 475 of 2022, and HB 863 of 2021.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): St. Mary's County; Maryland Department of Transportation; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 14, 2024
km/ljm Third Reader - March 18, 2024

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