

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 780 (Delegate Kerr)
Environment and Transportation

Urban State Highways - Speed Limits - Exemptions

This bill authorizes the State Highway Administration (SHA) to decrease the maximum speed limit on certain urban highways that are under its jurisdiction without an engineering and traffic investigation if SHA is only decreasing the maximum speed limit by five miles per hour (MPH). Specifically, SHA may reduce the speed limit in this manner for highways in a business district and undivided and divided highways in a residential district.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: To the extent that SHA uses the authority granted by the bill, Transportation Trust Fund (TTF) expenditures decrease minimally as speed limits are lowered without first conducting a traffic engineering study, and general fund revenues may increase minimally, as discussed below.

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

Small Business Effect: Potential minimal.

Analysis

Current Law: “Urban highway” means a highway, other than an expressway, that is part of the State highway system and (1) constructed with a curb and gutter and an enclosed type storm drainage system; (2) located in an urban area and on which is located a public facility that creates appreciable pedestrian traffic along the highway from adjacent areas; (3) located within urban boundaries as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau; or (4) located within the boundaries of a municipal corporation.

Unless there is a special danger that requires a lower speed, the maximum lawful speeds on a State highway are (1) 15 MPH in alleys in Baltimore County; (2) 30 MPH on all highways in a business district and on undivided highways in a residential district; (3) 35 MPH on divided highways in a residential district; (4) 50 MPH on undivided highways in other locations; and (5) 55 MPH on divided highways in other locations. A maximum speed limit of more than 55 MPH may not be established on any highway in the State that is not an interstate highway or an expressway, and a maximum speed limit of more than 70 MPH may not be established on any highway in the State.

If, on the basis of an engineering and traffic investigation, SHA determines that a maximum speed is greater or less than is reasonable or safe under existing conditions on any part of a highway in its jurisdiction, SHA may establish a reasonable and safe maximum speed limit for that part of the highway. However, an engineering and traffic investigation is not required to conform a speed limit in effect on December 31, 1974, to one of the specified speed limits established by statute.

State Fiscal Effect: To the extent that SHA uses the authority by the bill to lower certain speed limits on State highways without first completing a traffic engineering study:

- general fund revenues may increase minimally due to more citations for speeding; however, the District Court can handle any additional caseload with existing resources; and
- TTF expenditures decrease minimally from fewer traffic engineering studies being conducted.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has been introduced within the last three years. See SB 464 and HB 278 of 2024.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of Transportation; Department of Legislative Services

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