

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

House Bill 422

(Delegate Palakovich Carr, *et al.*)

Environment and Transportation

Rules

Vehicle Laws - Bicycles, Play Vehicles, and Unicycles - Crosswalks

This bill authorizes a person riding a bicycle, play vehicle, or unicycle at an intersection, if facing a red signal, to enter the intersection to cross the highway in the direction of a pedestrian control “walk” signal displayed for the portion of the highway on which the bicycle, play vehicle, or unicycle is traveling, unless otherwise directed by a traffic control device. (Under current law, a person riding a bicycle, play vehicle, or unicycle is subject to all traffic control signals at an intersection.) Before entering an intersection in these circumstances, a person riding a bicycle, play vehicle, or unicycle must yield the right-of-way to any vehicle or pedestrian lawfully using the intersection.

Fiscal Summary

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

Local Effect: Local government expenditures may decrease minimally in certain counties, as discussed below. Revenues are not affected.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law:

Definitions

For purposes of the Maryland Vehicle Law, “bicycle” means a vehicle that (1) is designed to be operated by human power; (2) has two or three wheels, with one being more than

14 inches in diameter; and (3) has a drive mechanism other than pedals directly attached to a drive wheel. In general, the term includes an electric bicycle, a moped, and an electric low-speed scooter.

“Play vehicle” means a vehicle that has two or more wheels, is propelled only by human power, and is not a bicycle or a wheelchair. A “unicycle” is not defined for purposes of the vehicle law.

A “traffic control device” is defined as any sign signal, marking, or device that is not inconsistent with the Maryland vehicle law and is placed by authority of an authorized public body or official to regulate, warn, or guide traffic.

Maryland Vehicle Law – Bicycles, Play Vehicles, and Unicycles

The Maryland Vehicle Law specifies that every person operating a bicycle in a public bicycle area has all the rights granted to and is subject to all the duties required of the driver of a vehicle, except for rules of the road that by their very nature cannot apply or as otherwise provided in Title 21, Subtitle 12 of the Transportation Article. At an intersection, a person riding a bicycle, play vehicle, or unicycle is subject to all traffic control signals, as specified.

Additionally, a person who is lawfully riding a bicycle on a sidewalk or sidewalk area or in or through a crosswalk generally has the same rights and restrictions applicable to pedestrians under the vehicle law.

Local Expenditures: Expenditures may decrease minimally in certain, more densely populated jurisdictions where the bill’s changes reduce the need to install special signage for bicyclists at signalized intersections.

The Maryland Association of Counties advises that the bill has a negligible impact on county governments, while Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Cecil, and Frederick counties respectively advise that the bill is not anticipated to affect their finances or operations.

Montgomery County advises that the bill eliminates its need to install special signage for bicyclists regarding leading pedestrian intervals (LPIs) at various intersections throughout the county, at a cost of \$2,000 to \$5,000 per intersection. An LPI gives pedestrians the opportunity to enter the crosswalk at an intersection three to seven seconds before vehicles are given a green indication and allowed to proceed. Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) advises that the use of LPIs raises awareness among drivers about the presence of pedestrians and improves overall pedestrian safety.

Under current law, bicyclists are generally not permitted to use LPIs. MCDOT advises that bicyclists can use LPIs if they are riding on a sidewalk; however, that is only permitted if MCDOT installs signage at a given intersection stating that bicyclists may use the pedestrian walk signal. According to MCDOT, the total cost associated with LPIs is \$2,000 to \$5,000 per intersection. MCDOT has installed LPIs at seven intersections in the county but cannot estimate the number of additional intersections where LPIs will be installed. MCDOT advises that the bill eliminates the need for this signage because bicyclists would automatically be permitted to use LPIs under State law.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Cecil, Frederick, and Montgomery counties; Maryland Association of Counties; Maryland Municipal League; Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts); Department of State Police; Maryland Department of Transportation; Department of Legislative Services

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