
March 4, 2021

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chair, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis MD 21401

Re: Letter of Information – Senate Bill 726 – Vehicle Laws - Personal Delivery Devices - Standards and Requirements

Dear Chair Smith and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) takes no position on Senate Bill 726 but offers the following information for the Committee's consideration.

Senate Bill 726 establishes exceptions to motor vehicle registration requirements for personal delivery devices and authorizes personal delivery devices to operate on sidewalks, crosswalks, and highways. This bill establishes a standard whereby a personal delivery device may navigate with or without the active control or monitoring of an individual, may weigh up to 200 lbs. excluding cargo, and may travel up to 3.5 miles per hour on a sidewalk or crosswalk.

The MDOT Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) monitors emerging and innovative technologies such as personal delivery devices (PDDs) to adapt to, and take advantage of, technologies reshaping mobility choices. PDDs have emerged as an innovative technology promising to improve the efficiency of deliveries. The impact on the transportation sector is currently not well-understood.

The Administration has identified several technical aspects to implementing the bill that remain unresolved: there are no identified roadway prohibitions, it is unclear how a unique identifying number would be assigned, there is no defined process for regulating the approval of devices, there are no standards for device hardware or software (including the lighting requirements), and the method for monitoring insurance compliance is unclear.

Several states now allow PDDs in public spaces (WA, AZ, FL, and others), although regulations are not uniform across these States. As this technology proliferates, several areas of uncertainty remain that all communities will have to consider. Chiefly, children, seniors, and people with disabilities navigating walkways will be impacted by these devices, the ability to adjust to crowded environments is currently inconsistent, and safeguards and safety controls for these devices are still evolving. Land use concerns such as the management of curb access will need to be considered if PDDs begin to appear in Maryland communities.

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Page Two

MDOT MVA currently has a process for connected and automated vehicles on Maryland's roadways. Since 2015, MDOT MVA has supported a robust Connected and Automated Vehicle (CAV) Working Group which serves as the central point of coordination for the development and deployment of emerging CAV technologies in Maryland. Maryland's CAV Working Group includes elected officials, representatives from state and local government, highway safety organizations, private sector, automotive industry and other transportation stakeholders. This group evaluates the latest research - including guidance from the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA) and the U.S. Department of Transportation - tracks federal and state actions, and coordinates with all interested stakeholders. This collaborative program is setting a course for the future of automated and connected vehicles in Maryland which prioritizes the safety for all roadway users.

MDOT MVA serves as the central clearinghouse for planning and coordination as well as testing for CAVs in Maryland. In order to support a safe and productive testing environment, MDOT MVA facilitates a permit process for parties interested in testing highly automated vehicles (HAV), and has designated a number of sites, owned by MDOT and its partners, for the testing of connected and automated vehicle technologies. Through the HAV permit process, applicants work collaboratively with MDOT MVA to ensure project objectives are met while prioritizing safety in testing.

MDOT MVA is embracing CAV technology and working collaboratively with many partners to ensure that Marylanders benefit from a transportation system which fully realizes the many positive potential outcomes of CAV technology, while also ensuring the safety of all roadway users.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests that the Committee consider this information as it deliberates Senate Bill 726.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Nizer
Administrator
Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration
410-787-7830

Melissa Einhorn
State Legislative Officer
Maryland Department of Transportation
410-865-1102