
February 29, 2024

The Honorable Marc Korman
Chair, House Environment and Transportation Committee
251 House Office Building
Annapolis MD 21401

RE: Letter of Information – House Bill 275 – Motor Vehicle Registration – Exception for Golf Carts – Town of Charlestown

Dear Chair Korman and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) respectfully offers the following information on House Bill 275 for the Committee’s consideration.

House Bill 275 creates an exception to the motor vehicle registration requirements for golf carts operated on a highway in the Town of Charlestown, Cecil County. A person may operate an unregistered golf cart on a highway in Charlestown only under the following conditions: 1) on a highway with a posted maximum speed limit of 30 miles per hour; and 2) if the golf cart is equipped with lighting devices as required by the Motor Vehicle Administration. A person operating a golf cart under the authority created by House Bill 275 must keep the golf cart as far to the right of the roadway as feasible and possess a valid driver’s license. Finally, House Bill 275 authorizes the Town Commissioners of the Town of Charlestown to designate by resolution the highways in the town on which a person may operate a gold cart.

In most of Maryland, golf carts are prohibited from operating on public roadways. The only time a golf cart may operate on a public street is if the cart is crossing the street for continuation of a golf course (i.e. a golf course is divided by a road). A handful of jurisdictions, however, have been granted exceptions.

Maryland law provides four discrete authorizations for the use of golf carts on public roads in specific geographic jurisdictions. House Bill 275 is modeled on Section §21-104.2A, which allows golf carts on highways, *including State highways*, in the City of Crisfield. House Bill 275 differs from the law applicable to Crisfield in that House Bill 275 does not include the provision that limits operation of an unregistered golf cart on highways to the period of the day between dawn and dusk. It also adds a separate provision allowing Town Commissioners to designate, by resolution, those highways in Charlestown on which golf carts may operate.

Authorizing the operation of golf carts on State roadways has the potential to create conflicts with other roadway traffic. In addition, allowing Town Commissioners to determine the roadways where this exception applies, without consulting with the State Highway Administration, may create issues where State roads are involved.

The Honorable Marc Korman
Page Two

In certain jurisdictions, golf carts provide an economic alternative to getting around town. They save on gas, are easy to store and park, and reduce carbon footprints. While they offer many benefits and conveniences, they also can pose an increased safety risk due to speed differentials with other roadway traffic. Golf carts require the same care and attention to safe operation as other motorized vehicles, and operators need to ensure safe conduct when driving on Maryland's highways. It is important to ensure that golf carts are required to obey all the same laws and rules of the road as other motorists, including prohibiting impaired driving on State highways. Where golf carts were authorized to operate on State highways in Crisfield, the State Highway Administration (SHA) was involved with determining the designated locations for operation. Since there are State highways in Charlestown, SHA suggests that the Town Commissioners of Charlestown consult the Administration prior to authorizing the operation of golf carts if there will be an impact on State highways.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee consider this information when deliberating House Bill 275.

Sincerely,

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