

February 4, 2026

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

RE: Letter of Information – Senate Bill 352 – Motor Vehicles – Special Registration Plates – Old Line Plates (Old Line Plate Program Act of 2026)

Dear Chair Smith and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) takes no position on Senate Bill 352 but offers the following information for the Committee’s consideration.

SB 352 creates a new alternative registration plate called the “Old Line Plate” that is to be issued by the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) with the design based on the license plate issued to vehicles in 1911. The numeric only registration numbers, titled “Old Line Numbers,” are to be auctioned off to applicants, and the MVA is to issue a plate with those numbers to the “rights holder” of that number. The bill further details how license plates, once issued, can be transferred under limited circumstances or returned to the MVA along with other relevant administrative details.

Maryland’s current standard plate, the “Maryland Proud” design based on the State flag, uses an alpha-numeric code that is unique to each plate and printed in a clear font with an easy-to-read contrasting background using the Maryland state flag along the bottom of the plate, giving it a distinctive and easily recognizable design from other jurisdiction plates. This is in line with the standards for best practices as established by the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA)¹. These standards include a clearly identifiable plate that includes the jurisdiction along the top of the plate along with the use of unique alpha-numeric characters, fonts that are easy to read and provide a clear distinguishment for similar characters (i.e. O, Q, and 0), a background that does not interfere with the plate number, and is manufactured in such a manner that it allows for high-contrast recognition for infrared and visible light illumination in both daylight and nighttime conditions, including the ability to read it from distances of at least 75 feet.

When plates do not follow AAMVA standards, such as dark backgrounds that may reduce visibility or not using the prescribed alpha-numeric formatting, it can cause problems for automated plate reader (ALPRs) technology used by law enforcement and tolling authorities. These types of plates often require specific coding to be created in the software which increases

¹ AAMVA License Plate Standard, Edition 3, October 2023, Updated September 2025.

The Honorable William C. Smith Jr.
Page Two

the ability to read these plates by ALPRs, but at the expense of less accurate reading of plates that follow these practices.

The MVA has not previously conducted auctions for its license plates or for the assigned plate number. Doing so will require staff resources to identify the best means to conduct such an auction, establish a relationship with potential vendors should any be needed, and complete all of this and hold an auction by December 1, 2026. Such expenses would have to be recouped solely through the monies raised at auction as there are no additional fees for administering the unique costs for the Old Line Plate program unlike the annual fees assessed for other specialty plate programs offered by the MVA. These administrative impacts and costs to the MVA are in addition to working with its plate vendor to design and produce the plates. Maryland Correctional Enterprises, who produces license plates for the MVA, indicated in the fiscal note submitted for this proposal that the plates would be more than double the standard production costs of MVA specialty tags, averaging \$23.50 compared to the \$10 per set of specialty plates.

In addition to its standard flag tag design, the MVA currently offers agricultural and bay license plates, amateur radio operator license plates, 1910 vintage license plates, 138 military plates for qualified veterans, three kinds of disabled veterans' plates including an organization plate, 843 other organizational plates with a logo, and 69 organizational plates without logos for customers to choose from. In addition, customers can further customize plates with personalized alpha-numeric codes more commonly known as vanity plates, and eligible customers can obtain a disability plate. This is in addition to unique vehicle class plates such as motorcycle plates, fleet vehicles, apportioned, and other types of registration class plates and previous standard registration plates such as the War of 1812 that are still in use by customers. The MVA offers one of the broadest selections of registration plates to its customers in the country.

The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the committee consider this information during its deliberation of Senate Bill 352.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Matthew Mickler
Director of Government Affairs
Maryland Department of Transportation
410-865-1090