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HB5337 AS REPORTED WITHOUT AMENDMENT

Sponsor: Rep. Jud Gilbert

H-2

Committee: TRANSPORTATION

Analyst(s): Hamilton, William

Completed: 12/13/01

State Fiscal Impact

Cost: None
Revenues: None

Local Fiscal Impact

Cost: Indeterminate
Revenues: None

Section 722 of the Michigan Vehicle Code (MCL 257.722) is within a chapter of the Code dealing with "Size, Weight, and Load Limitations" for motor vehicles on public highways. Section 722 sets limits on vehicle weights. House Bill 5337 would amend section 722 to do two things: (1) change weight restrictions for certain vehicles under certain circumstances and, (2) repeal a sunset provision in current law.

Weight Restrictions

The bill inserts a new subsection (numbered as subsection 4) which would increase the weight limits for tractor-trailer combinations with no more than 5 axles where there are two consecutive sets of tandem axles. For practical purposes this combination would be a truck tractor with a single front axle and tandem rear axles, pulling a trailer with a set of tandem axles at the back of the trailer (see photo in internet version of this analysis). The bill would increase the gross permissible weight for any axle on either tandem axle combination from 16,000 pounds to 17,000 pounds - if there is no other axle within 9 feet of any axle in the tandem, and the front tandem axle (on the tractor) is at least 36 feet from the rear axle (of the trailer). The bill would also raise the permissible gross vehicle weight on such a tractor-trailer combination from 73,280 pounds to 80,000 pounds. The increased weight limits would only apply "to pick up and deliver agricultural commodities between the National Truck Network or special designated highways and any other highway." The bill contains a sunset provision that would end application of the subsection after December 31, 2006.

The bill indicates that the subsection would not apply during the period (March, April, May) when maximum loads are reduced pursuant to subsection 7 [as renumbered by the bill]. Subsection 7 indicates that the seasonal load restrictions of the subsection do not apply to "vehicles transporting agricultural commodities on a highway, road, or street under the jurisdiction of a local road agency". Subsection 5 [as renumbered by the bill] establishes conditions for the exceptions to persons hauling agricultural products.

The exception made in Section 7 for persons hauling agricultural products, and the related conditions for the exceptions in Section 5, were added to Section 722 by PA 6 of 2000. PA 6 also included sunset provisions for these exceptions.

Sunset Repeal

As noted above, subsection 7 of Section 722 establishes seasonal load limits. For the months of March, April, and May, the maximum allowable vehicle weight is reduced by 25% for concrete base roads, and 35% for other types of roads. These seasonal restrictions are intended to prevent the breakup of roads during the spring thaw.

PA 6 of 2000 (SB 46) amended Section 722 to exempt vehicles hauling agricultural products from the seasonal weight restrictions, under certain circumstances. The act required the hauler to notify the applicable road commission within 48

hours of pick up or delivery of the product. The act allowed the road commission, through a permit process, to set the route of travel, the date and time of travel, the maximum speed, and "any other specific conditions agreed to by the parties." The restrictions were intended to mitigate potential road damage from vehicles exceeding normal weight limits. The act limited road commission permit fees to administrative costs.

The weight limit exemptions created by PA 6 for persons hauling agricultural products were to sunset April 1, 2002. HB 5337 would repeal the sunset language and make the effect of the exemptions for vehicles hauling agricultural commodities - and the related conditions established in renumbered Section 5 - permanent in the Vehicle Code. The bill also adds "public utility vehicle" to the weight limit exemption of the subsection.

Fiscal Impacts

To the extent that the bill would allow heavier vehicles on local roads it could increase damage to local roads and thus increase local costs. There appear to be no fiscal impacts on state or local revenue or state costs. The bill's effect on local costs can not be determined at this time.



Figure 1 - This is an example of a five axle vehicle with two sets of consecutive tandem axles. The truck tractor has a single axle in front with a set of tandem rear axles. It is pulling a trailer with a set of tandem axles.

PHOTO