



**House  
Legislative  
Analysis  
Section**

House Office Building, 9 South  
Lansing, Michigan 48909  
Phone: 517/373-6466

**INCREASE SIZE OF CAMPERS AND  
MOBILE HOMES**

**Senate Bill 1124 as passed by the Senate  
First Analysis (5-23-02)**

**Sponsor: Sen. Walter H. North  
House Committee: Transportation  
Senate Committee: Transportation and  
Tourism**

***THE APPARENT PROBLEM:***

A study conducted at the University of Michigan and commissioned by the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association (RVIA) [see [www.rvia.org](http://www.rvia.org) ] reports that nearly one in every 12 U.S. vehicle-owning households now owns an RV--nearly 7 million households, and an estimated 7.2 recreational vehicles. This represents a 7.8 percent increase in recreational vehicle ownership over the past four years, and a 42 percent gain over the past 21 years. The number of RV-owning households is expected to rise 15 percent, to nearly 8 million in 2010. Owners of RVs travel throughout the country, staying in more than 16,000 public and privately owned campgrounds nationwide.

Members of the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association, which represents 95 percent of the RV manufacturers in the nation, make five categories of recreational vehicles overall. However, the manufacturers separate the five categories of RVs into two classes: towable, and non-towable. The towable vehicles include travel trailers, fifth-wheel travel trailers, folding camping trailers, and truck campers. The non-towable vehicles include three kinds of motorhomes: Type A motorhomes are the largest; Type B motorhomes or van campers are the smallest; and, Type C motorhomes generally fall in between.

The Type A motorhomes have grown increasingly up-scale (often selling for \$200,000 or more), as their owners have begun using their motorhomes as full-time residences, perhaps moving between two or three regions of the country where they enter into long-term rental contracts--sometimes lasting six to eight months--in RV campgrounds. Consequently, the manufacturers of Type A motorhomes, in response to customer requests for "bigger and better" motorhomes, have recently increased the length of the homes they manufacture to more than 40 feet--generally between 42 and 44 feet according to an

industry spokesman. The manufacturers also are increasing the width of Type A motorhomes, generally by creating "slide-outs"--extra rooms that extend well beyond the customary 8.5 foot (or 102 inch) limit when the motorhome is stationary, but that fold in to the side of the vehicle when the owners move it, only extending four or five inches while in transport. What is more, many of the up-scale homes come with retractable awnings, which also can extend a few inches when the motorhome's owners are enroute to a new location.

State motor vehicle codes generally regulate the length and width of vehicles allowed on the roadways, in order to protect the health and safety of travelers. For example, in Michigan a Type A motorhome can be 40-feet long and 8.5 feet wide. Thus, Michigan's length and width restrictions do not accommodate the newer, larger Type A motorhomes. Twenty-two states already have moved to increase the customary 8.5-foot width limit (or 102 inches) to 9 feet, and the six-inch modification in width also is pending in six more states. Further, forty states already have moved to extend the allowable length beyond 40 feet to 45 feet, and six additional states have that legislation pending.

If the newer Type A motorhomes are to travel lawfully on Michigan's highways, then the length and width restrictions under the state's vehicle code must be increased. Legislation has been proposed to do so.

***THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:***

The bill would amend the Michigan Vehicle Code to revise the length and width limitations for motor homes and other oversize vehicles. Under the code, the total outside width of a bus or motor home must not exceed 102 inches (or 8.5 feet). Under the bill, an appurtenance (say, an accessory or supplement) to a truck camper, trailer coach, or motor home could

Senate Bill 1124 (5-23-02)

extend six inches beyond the 102-inch maximum (or, to nine feet). Further, under the code the total length of any vehicle, excepting trucks and buses, must not exceed 40 feet. The bill would increase that limit, and specify instead that the length of a motor home could not exceed 45 feet.

MCL 257.717 and 257.719

### ***FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:***

The House Fiscal Agency notes that the bill would have no fiscal impact on state or local government. (5-22-02)

### ***ARGUMENTS:***

#### ***For:***

The largest of all recreational vehicles, the Type A motorhomes, have grown increasingly up-scale (often selling for \$200,000 or more), as their owners have begun using their motorhomes as full-time residences, sometimes moving between a two or three regions of the country where they enter into long-term rental contracts--sometimes lasting six to eight months--in RV campgrounds. Those who use the motorhomes as full-time residences prefer models that are spacious. Consequently, the manufacturers of Type A motorhomes, in response to customer requests for "bigger and better" motorhomes, have recently increased the length of the homes they manufacture to more than 40 feet--generally between 42 and 44 feet according to an industry spokesman. The manufacturers also are increasing the width of Type A motorhomes, generally by creating "slide-outs"--extra rooms that extend well beyond the customary 8.5 foot (or 102 inch) limit when the motorhome is stationary, but that fold in to the side of the vehicle when the owners move it, only extending four or five inches while the vehicle is being driven on the highway. What is more, many of the up-scale homes come with retractable awnings, which also can extend a few inches when the motorhome's owners are enroute to a new location. In order to accommodate these changes in customer preference, and the RV industry's manufacturing practices, this legislation should be adopted.

#### ***Against:***

As the population of the country increases, so does the number of drivers and vehicles. However, new construction of highways has not kept pace with the population, and likely never will. Consequently the lane miles of the road system grow more congested. The congestion that comes of demographic trends is

further intensified when the size of the vehicles on the roadways also increases. As longer, wider, and heavier vehicles--all consuming more gasoline per mile-- fill the roadways, policymakers will eventually face the monumental challenge of preventing traffic 'grid-lock'--a traffic safety problem that stymies elected officials in several metropolitan regions of the country, such as those surrounding Atlanta, Georgia and Los Angeles, California. Sooner or later, it is likely that the size of vehicles will have to be restricted, despite up-scale consumer demand.

### ***POSITIONS:***

The Office of the Secretary of State supports the bill. (5-22-02)

The Michigan Association of Recreation Vehicles and Campgrounds supports the bill. (5-22-02)

Analyst: J. Hunault

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■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.