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House Bill 5205 (as reported without amendment)  
Sponsor: Representative Judson Gilbert  
House Committee: Transportation  
Senate Committee: Transportation and Tourism

Date Completed: 2-15-02

### **RATIONALE**

The Michigan Vehicle Code prescribes maximum size and weight limits for vehicles that may travel on State highways. The Code requires a semitrailer longer than 50 feet to operate with up to two axles on the semitrailer. Apparently, the 53-foot, three-axle semitrailer has become the standard transport vehicle in the North American trucking industry. Reportedly, Michigan is the only state that does not allow three-axle semitrailers on the roadways. It has been suggested that Michigan's axle maximum be increased to reflect the current standard.

### **CONTENT**

**The bill would amend the Michigan Vehicle Code to increase from two to three axles, the maximum number allowed for operation of a semitrailer longer than 50 feet on State highways; and to specify that all semitrailers longer than 50 feet would have to have a wheelbase of 37.5 to 40.5 feet, instead of 40.5 feet, plus or minus 0.5 foot.**

The Code prescribes "normal length" maximums for a variety of vehicles and combinations of vehicles that may travel on certain designated State highways. There is no overall length limit for truck tractor and semitrailer combinations, but the semitrailer must not exceed 53 feet. All semitrailers longer than 50 feet must have a wheelbase of 40.5 feet, plus or minus 0.5 foot, measured from the kingpin coupling to the center of the tandem axle assembly equipped with two axles. The bill would require the wheelbase to be 37.5 feet to 40.5 feet, plus or minus 0.5 foot, measured from the kingpin coupling to

the center of the rear axle or the center of the rear axle assembly.

MCL 257.719

### **ARGUMENTS**

*(Please note: The arguments contained in this analysis originate from sources outside the Senate Fiscal Agency. The Senate Fiscal Agency neither supports nor opposes legislation.)*

#### **Supporting Argument**

By increasing the maximum number of axles allowed for semitrailers longer than 50 feet, the bill would make the requirement consistent with other states. The Ontario Trucking Association states that in trade shipments originating from a Michigan manufacturer destined for Ontario, 92% of all commodities are shipped by trucks. Apparently, Ontario truckers must use different vehicles than their standard 53-foot, three-axle trucks for shipment runs in Michigan. This situation creates inefficiencies in the transportation of Michigan-manufactured products between Michigan and Ontario, as well as between Michigan and neighboring states. Since trucking often crosses state lines, consistency among the states and Ontario would reduce the trucking industry's costs and be beneficial for Michigan businesses.

In addition, studies reportedly have shown that the infrastructure damage caused by a three-axle trailer is less than the damage caused by a two-axle trailer since the weight is distributed over three axles instead of two.

Legislative Analyst: Nobuko Nagata

**FISCAL IMPACT**

The bill would have no fiscal impact on State or local government.

Fiscal Analyst: Bruce Baker

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This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan Senate staff for use by the Senate in its deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.