

# Legislative Analysis



## MICHIGAN VEHICLE CODE: VEHICLE WIDTH RESTRICTIONS

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**Senate Bill 736 as passed by the Senate**  
**Sponsor: Sen. Ron Jelinek**  
**Senate Committee: Transportation**  
**House Committee: Transportation**

**Complete to 11-2-04**

### A SUMMARY OF SENATE BILL 736 AS PASSED BY THE SENATE

Senate Bill 736 (S-1), as passed the Senate, would amend Section 717 of the Michigan Vehicle Code (Public Act 300 of 1949), a section dealing with the maximum legal width of vehicles used on Michigan highways. The bill would permit trailers and semitrailers with an outside body width of 102 inches on all Michigan highways.

*Vehicle Width* — Section 717 of the Michigan Vehicle Code states that, "*The total outside width of a vehicle or the load on a vehicle shall not exceed 96 inches, except as otherwise provided in this section.*" Section 717 provides a number of exceptions to the 96-inch standard, including for vehicles hauling concrete pipe, agricultural products, logs, pulpwood, or wood bolts. In addition, Subsection 717(5) sets a vehicle width limit for buses, trailer coaches, truck campers, and motor homes of 102 inches. Senate Bill 736 would amend this subsection to also permit trailers and semitrailers up to 102 inches.

Note that Subsection 717(7) currently allows the director of the Michigan Department of Transportation, and local road authorities, to designate highways under their jurisdiction on which a person may operate 102-inch trailers and semitrailers. Trailers and semitrailers with a width of 102 inches are currently permitted on all Interstate highways, and most all state trunkline highways. See [Background Information](#) for additional information on designated highways.

### FISCAL IMPACT:

*State/Local impact of changes to Section 717* – By allowing 102-inch-wide trailers and semitrailers of 102 inches, the bill could reduce local revenue to the extent that it reduced the number of permits issued by local road agencies for non-conforming vehicles and related permit fee revenue. We do not have an estimate of the amount in permit fees currently collected by local road agencies.

The bill could also reduce civil infraction penalties currently assessed for vehicles in excess of the current width maximums. The distribution of civil infraction fines varies depending on whether the violation was of the Michigan Vehicle Code or a local ordinance. We do not have an estimate of the number or amount of civil fines currently levied for this violation.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

### **Trailer/Semitrailer Width**

Subsection 717(7) currently allows the director of the Michigan Department of Transportation and local road authorities to designate highways under their jurisdiction on which a person may operate 102-inch-wide trailers and semitrailers. Trailers and semitrailers with a width of 102 inches are currently permitted on all Interstate highways, and nearly all state trunkline highways.

The Michigan Department of Transportation has “designated” 8,753 miles of state trunkline highways. These highways are identified as such on a Michigan Truck Operator’s map issued by the department. Local road agencies (county road commissions, and cities and villages) may also designate routes. However, it is not clear how many roads under local jurisdiction have been designated to permit 102-inch-wide trailers and semitrailers. Under current law, a trailer or semitrailer 102 inches wide would be legal when traveling on a designated highway, but could be subject to civil penalty if it turned onto a local road that had not been designated by the local unit of government.

Note that the 102-inch vehicle is the standard permitted on the federal National Network of highways. The National Network is a system of designated highways for vehicles authorized under provisions of the Surface Transportation Assistance Act (STAA) of 1982. This system was established by Title 23, Part 658 of the Code of Federal Regulations (under the authority of 23 USC 127). 23 CFR Part 658 also prescribes national policies governing truck and bus size and weight.

23 CFR 658 establishes national vehicle size/weight standards. Vehicles in conformance with these standards are referred to as STAA-authorized vehicles. Under provisions of 23 CFR 658.15, states may not impose a width limitation of less than 102 inches on a vehicle operating on the National Network. In addition, 23 CFR 658.19(f) prohibits states from imposing blanket restrictions on 102-inch wide vehicles.

The National Network represents Interstate highways plus certain other federal-aid-eligible highways. 23 CFR 658.19 also requires reasonable access to the National Network. Of the 8,753 miles of designated state trunklines, 5,628 miles are also on the National Network.

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