



Senate Fiscal Agency
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BILL ANALYSIS

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Senate Bill 736 (as passed by the Senate)
Sponsor: Senator Ron Jelinek
Committee: Transportation

Date Completed: 5-21-04

RATIONALE

Under the Michigan Vehicle Code, the total outside width of a vehicle or the load on a vehicle may not exceed 96 inches. The Code makes exceptions to the width limit for specified vehicles. (The 96-inch limit also does not apply to vehicles traveling on roads under the jurisdiction of the Michigan Department of Transportation.) Reportedly, most trailers purchased for use on Michigan roads actually are 102 inches wide. It has been suggested that the maximum allowable width of a trailer or semitrailer be increased in statute to reflect the current practice of trailer manufacturers.

CONTENT

The bill would amend the Michigan Vehicle Code to increase from 96 inches to 102 inches the maximum allowable width for a trailer or semitrailer.

Under the Code, the total outside body width of a bus, a trailer coach, a truck camper, or a motor home may not exceed 102 inches. Under the bill, the 102-inch limit also would apply to a trailer or semitrailer.

MCL 257.717

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

Trailers are used for a variety of purposes throughout the State. Businesses use them to carry their products and materials. Farmers use them to transport crops, livestock, and machinery. Tourists use them to transport recreational equipment to parks, trails, and lakes. Those who purchase trailers have shown a greater preference over the years for wider trailers on which to haul snowmobiles and other large loads. Apparently, the demand for wider trailers has grown to the extent that 96-inch trailers must be specially ordered. The law, however, has not evolved with the changing times. Many people probably do not even realize that their trailers are not legal on many roads in this State. The law should be updated to reflect that customer demand has made a wider trailer the industry standard.

Opposing Argument

Reportedly, studies have shown that wider lanes are safer lanes. Increasing the maximum width of trailers to 102 inches would leave only a two-inch berth on either side of the vehicle on most local roads. Trailers often have difficulty making turns, and sometimes must drive over curbs to get through intersections. Particularly in residential areas, where cars are often parked along both sides of the street, wider trailers can present safety risks. Apparently, some counties choose to divert vehicles pulling large trailers to designated roads,

rather than allow them to travel on more widely used local roads. Even though there are many 102-inch trailers on the roadways in spite of the law, putting more on the road would pose a safety hazard.

Legislative Analyst: Julie Koval

FISCAL IMPACT

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

Fiscal Analyst: Craig Thiel

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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.