

Legislative Analysis



MOTOR VEHICLE VIDEO DISPLAYS

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House Bill 5021 (Substitute H-2)

Sponsor: Rep. Kathy Angerer

Committee: Transportation

First Analysis (10-16-07)

BRIEF SUMMARY: The bill would amend the Michigan Vehicle Code. The code prohibits equipping a motor vehicle with a television viewer or screen that can be viewed by or reflected to the driver, but it contains exceptions. The bill would rewrite and expand those exceptions. In general, the bill would permit video displays intended "to enhance or supplement the driver's view." Further, it would permit certain monitors in police vehicles, fire vehicles, and ambulances.

FISCAL IMPACT: The bill would have no significant fiscal impact. To the extent that civil infraction traffic violations are reduced because of the bill's provisions, local libraries, local court funding units, and the Justice System Fund (JSF) might see a slight decrease in revenue. Under current law, fine revenue for civil infraction violations are directed to county treasurers for local library funding and any court costs that are assessed go to the governmental unit that funds the local court. In addition, the JSF receives a \$40 assessment for each civil infraction traffic violation.

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

The Michigan Vehicle Code was amended in 1991 (Public Act 55) to provide exceptions to the prohibition on equipping vehicles with television viewers and screens in order to allow the use of rear video displays to help drivers maneuver or park a vehicle. New technologies aimed at improving vehicle safety have emerged since then that go well beyond those described in the code. These reportedly include front cameras that identify low-lying obstructions, automatic parking mechanisms that maneuver a car into tight spots using video and ultrasonic readings, and detection systems to warn a driver if the car is drifting out of a lane or if another car is coming too close. Further, there are new technologies for police cars, ambulances, and the like that employ video screens to provide essential information. The Vehicle Code's current restrictions limit the use of these new technologies. Legislation has been introduced to address this issue.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

The bill would amend the section of the Michigan Vehicle Code that deals with video displays to do all of the following:

- Permit a motor vehicle to be equipped with a video display "to enhance or supplement the driver's view" (and remove the current provision that restricts video

displays to those that monitor the rear view of the vehicle if the monitor is only activated when the vehicle is motionless or in reverse gear).

- Permit a police vehicle, fire vehicle, or ambulance to be equipped with a monitor for use with a computer-aided dispatch system or emergency equipment controls.
- Permit a police vehicle to be equipped with a monitor for use with recording equipment.
- Prohibit aftermarket visual devices from being installed or mounted on the windshield, above the dashboard, in an area within the deployment profile of the vehicle airbags, or in a manner that interferes with the operator's view or control. This would not apply to navigational devices or special research vehicles.
- Update the provision that allows a radio, heating or air conditioning controls, and other accessory controls so that it refers instead to "an audio entertainment system" rather than "a radio."
- Add "traveler services" to the provision that currently allows the use of navigation systems displaying information about vehicle location, available routes and destinations, road layouts, weather conditions, traffic and road conditions, and vehicle conditions.
- Rewrite the current general prohibition so that a person could not operate a motor vehicle with a television or other similar electronic device that displays a video image that can be viewed by the operator while the vehicle is in motion. The exceptions as described in the bill would be exceptions to this general prohibition.

MCL 257.708b

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

A similar bill, Senate Bill 643, has passed the Senate and is in the House Committee on Transportation.

ARGUMENTS:

For:

New technologies have rendered the Vehicle Code's description of permitted visual displays in vehicles out of date. This bill would rewrite the visual display provisions to accommodate new technologies aimed at enhancing driver safety. The aim of the bill is to continue to prohibit video displays that would distract a driver while permitting the new technologies that are intended to improve driver safety. Video screens have been developed, for example, that offer drivers panoramic views and detect low-lying objects, such as shrubbery, pets, or children that would otherwise be hidden from view. Three other states—Virginia, Louisiana, and Tennessee—reportedly already have similar

legislation in place. It is important to move forward to acknowledge new technologies, particularly since Michigan is the automotive capital. The bill also updates the language regarding other similar devices used in vehicles and provides for new technologies that assist police, fire, and emergency vehicles.

POSITIONS:

The following indicated support for the bill to the House Committee on Transportation: the Toyota Motor Company; the General Motors Corporation; the Ford Motor Car Company; and the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers. (10-11-07)

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