



Senate Fiscal Agency
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BILL



ANALYSIS

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Senate Bill 120 (as enrolled)
Sponsor: Senator Tom Casperson
Senate Committee: Transportation
House Committee: Transportation and Infrastructure

Date Completed: 11-15-17

RATIONALE

On December 4, 2015, President Barack Obama signed into law the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act). The Act authorized \$305.0 billion between fiscal years 2016 and 2020 for highway, highway and motor vehicle safety, public transportation, motor carrier safety, hazardous materials safety, rail, and research, technology, and statistics programs. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, the Act maintains focus on safety, continues the established structure of the highway-related programs the Department manages, streamlines project delivery, and provides a dedicated source of Federal dollars for freight projects. Among the Act's provisions were modifications to length and weight restrictions for certain vehicles. For example, one such provision prohibits a state from prescribing or enforcing a regulation of commerce that imposes a vehicle length limitation of less than a certain size on a stinger-steered automobile transporter. It has been pointed out that Michigan statute does not reflect the new length limitations specified under Federal law. Therefore, some have suggested amending State law to make it consistent with the recent Federal changes.

CONTENT

The bill would amend the Michigan Vehicle Code to increase the maximum allowable length of a stinger-steered combination that may be operated on a highway in the State; and establish a maximum allowable length for a towaway trailer transporter combination transporting two trailers or semitrailers.

Section 719 of the Code prohibits operation on a Michigan highway of vehicles and vehicle combinations that exceed prescribed "normal length maximums". A person who violates Section 719 is responsible for a civil infraction. (As a rule, the penalty for a civil infraction under the Code is a maximum fine of \$100.)

For a combination of a truck and semitrailer or trailer, or a truck tractor, semitrailer, and trailer, or a truck tractor and semitrailer or trailer designed and used to transport boats from the manufacturer, or a stinger-steered combination, the normal length maximum is 75 feet. The load on these combinations of vehicles may extend an additional three feet beyond the front and four feet beyond the rear of the combinations of vehicles. The bill would increase the normal length maximum for a stinger-steered combination to 80 feet, and would allow the load on a stinger-steered combination to extend an additional four feet beyond the front and six feet beyond the rear of the combination.

(The Code defines "stinger-steered combination" as a truck tractor and semitrailer combination in which the fifth wheel is located on a drop frame located behind and below the rearmost axle of the power unit.)

Additionally, the bill would create a normal length maximum of 82 feet for a towaway trailer transporter combination transporting two trailers or semitrailers.

("Towaway trailer transportation combination" would mean that term as defined in 49 USC 31111. That section of the U.S. Code defines "towaway trailer transporter combination" as a combination of vehicles consisting of a trailer transporter towing unit and two trailers or semitrailers with a total weight that does not exceed 26,000 pounds and in which the trailers or semitrailers carry no property and constitute inventory property of a manufacturer, distributor, or dealer of such trailers or semitrailers. A trailer transporter towing unit is a power unit that is not used to carry property when operating in a towaway trailer transporter combination.)

The bill would take effect 90 days after its enactment.

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

While the Michigan Vehicle Code met the previous Federal regulation that prohibited a state from limiting a stinger-steered automobile transporter to a length of less than 75 feet, with three-foot and four-foot overhangs, it no longer meets the current limit of 80 feet. Similarly, the Code does not reflect the Federal length limit for a towaway trailer transporter combination. By bringing the Code into conformity with the Federal limitations and mirroring the laws of surrounding states that have adopted those new limitations, the bill would help ensure interstate economic predictability.

Response: While it is economically necessary to have identical vehicle length limitations across state borders, policymakers also should consider how proposed transportation legislation would interact with current law or projected legislation, and the implications for the future transportation of goods, services, and people in Michigan as a whole. For example, it is important to consider how the length increases proposed by the bill would interact with Public Act 445 of 2016, which required the Michigan Department of Transportation to increase speed limits across the State under certain circumstances, and how longer car haulers and logging vehicles traveling at a higher speed could stress Michigan's aging infrastructure. Moreover, local governmental units that are responsible for local infrastructure may be enforcing different requirements, which complicates an already challenging network of transportation regulations across the State and country.

Legislative Analyst: Drew Krogulecki

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill would have no fiscal impact on the State and a minimal fiscal impact on local government. The provisions of the bill could reduce the number of civil infractions for violations of the normal length maximum, although there is no way to know if that would be the case. A reduction in civil infraction revenue would reduce revenue dedicated to public libraries. Conversely, an increase in civil infraction revenue would increase revenue dedicated to public libraries.

Fiscal Analyst: Ryan Bergan

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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.