



Senate Fiscal Agency
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BILL



ANALYSIS

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Senate Bill 915 (as enacted)
Sponsor: Senator Tom Casperson
Senate Committee: Transportation
House Committee: Transportation and Infrastructure

PUBLIC ACT 273 of 2018

Date Completed: 2-22-19

RATIONALE

The Michigan Vehicle Code provides the legal dimensions and maximum allowable weights for vehicles that operate on highways in the State. Some believed, however, that parts of the Code adversely affected school bus fleet operations. Specifically, the Code had restricted school buses to a certain width, which prohibited buses from having cameras or other safety-related components attached to their exterior, and prohibited school buses that exceeded Michigan's seasonal weight restrictions from operating on different roadways. Accordingly, it was suggested that the Code be amended to address these concerns.

CONTENT

The bill amended the Michigan Vehicle Code to specify that the maximum total outside body width of a school bus may not exceed 102 inches, excluding an appurtenance that extends up to six inches beyond the total outside body width; and to exempt school buses from seasonal load restrictions.

Under the Code, the total outside body width of a bus, trailer coach, trailer, semitrailer, truck camper, or motor home cannot exceed 102 inches. However, an appurtenance of a trailer coach, truck camper, or motor home that extends not more than six inches beyond the total outside body width is not considered a violation. (A person who violates these provisions is responsible for a civil infraction.) The bill includes a school bus in these provisions.

The Code prescribes maximum axle loads and weight restrictions for certain vehicles. Except as otherwise provided, during the months of March, April, and May in each year, the maximum axle load allowable on concrete pavements or pavements with a concrete base is reduced by 25% from the maximum axle load, and the maximum axle load allowable on all other types of roads during these months is reduced by 35% from the maximum axle loads specified. The maximum wheel load must not exceed 525 pounds per inch of tire width on concrete and concrete base or 450 pounds per inch of tire width on all other roads during the period the seasonal road restrictions are in effect.

These seasonal road restrictions do not apply to vehicles transporting agricultural commodities, a public utility vehicle on a highway, road, or street under the jurisdiction of a local road agency, or a vehicle delivering propane fuel to a residence if the vehicle's propane tank is filled not more than 50% of its capacity and the vehicle is traveling at not more than 35 miles per hour. The bill also exempts a school bus from the seasonal road restrictions.

The bill took effect on September 27, 2018.

MCL 257.717 & 257.722

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

The bill was necessary to allow school buses to continue operating regularly and to have components that enhance their security mounted to their exterior. According to testimony provided before the Senate Committee on Transportation in April 2018, approximately 500 buses had pass-by camera equipment affixed to their exterior at that time, which made them wider than the maximum width previously prescribed under the Code. In addition, many school buses inadvertently violated the seasonal weight restrictions on certain roads during the months of March, April, and May. Moving bus stop locations so that school buses conformed to the seasonal weight restrictions would have required students to walk to new locations, which could have jeopardized their safety. The bill alleviated these concerns.

Legislative Analyst: Drew Krogulecki

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill will have no fiscal impact on the State and may have a minimal negative fiscal impact on local government. The bill may reduce the number of civil infractions for violations of the body width and seasonal load restrictions, although there is no way to know if that will be the case. A reduction in civil infraction revenue will reduce 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.