

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2013 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 298 (Senator Edwards)
Judicial Proceedings

Vehicle Laws - Maximum Speed Limits - Interstate 68

This bill establishes a maximum speed limit on Interstate 68 of up to 70 miles per hour.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Transportation Trust Fund (TTF) expenditures may increase in FY 2014 for the State Highway Administration (SHA) to the extent that it conducts highway speed engineering studies regarding the effect of increasing the speed limit. TTF expenditures may increase more significantly for signage and potentially for modifications to Interstate 68 to the extent the maximum speed limit on Interstate 68 is actually increased. Revenues are not likely affected; however, to the extent speed limits are increased, general fund revenues may decrease minimally due to fewer citations being issued for exceeding the speed limit.

Local Effect: The bill is not anticipated to materially affect local operations or finances.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Current Law: Generally, a maximum speed limit of more than 55 miles per hour may not be established or continued on any highway in the State that (1) is not an interstate highway or an expressway or (2) would subject the State to federal funding sanctions under 23 USC 154. A maximum speed limit of more than 65 miles per hour may not be established on any highway in the State.

Background:

Highway Speed Limits

According to the Federal Highway Administration, the management of speed through appropriate speed limits is an essential element of highway safety. In terms of traffic law, speed limits should reflect the maximum reasonable and safe speed for normal conditions. If lower speed limits are desired, engineering modifications and other measures should be implemented that reduce speeds to a level that would support a lower limit.

The Institute of Transportation Engineers advises that the most widely accepted method for establishing speed limits is to set the limit at or below the speed at which 85% of the traffic is moving. Research indicates that crash rates are lowest at that speed.

Speeding is one of the most prevalent factors contributing to traffic crashes. According to national data from the U.S. Department of Transportation, in 2010, speeding was a contributing factor in 32% of all fatal crashes, and 10,395 lives were lost in speeding-related crashes.

Interstate 68

Interstate 68 runs about 112.6 miles, from near Hancock in Washington County, through Allegany and Garrett counties, to near Morgantown, West Virginia. The current speed limit on Interstate 68 in Maryland varies from 40 miles per hour in a small portion of Allegany County to 65 miles per hour for most of the span.

State Expenditures: TTF expenditures may increase to the extent SHA decides to conduct highway speed engineering studies on Interstate 68 regarding the possibility of raising the speed limit. TTF expenditures may increase more significantly if the speed limit is actually raised to 70 miles per hour for engineering adjustments in preparation to raise the speed limit. When highway speed limits are increased, the installation of new signs is necessary and additional guardrails or other roadside treatments may be necessary. The fabrication and installation of ground-mounted signs cost about \$300 to \$500 per sign, and installation of guardrails and other roadside treatments averages \$25,000 per location.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: HB 593 (Allegany County Delegation) - Environmental Matters.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of Transportation, Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts), Institute of Transportation Engineers, U.S. Department of Transportation, Department of Legislative Services

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