

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2014 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 158

(Senator Edwards, *et al.*)

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 2015 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. 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 altered speed limits are desired, engineering modifications and other measures should be implemented to accommodate speeds at the new speed limit.

According to the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT), the eighty-fifth percentile speed is the speed at or below which 85% of motorists drive on a given road when unaffected by slower traffic or poor weather. MDOT considers the use of the eighty-fifth percentile speed to be a good guideline for setting the appropriate speed limit for a road. MDOT advises that research has shown that the posted speed limit has little effect on the speeds at which most motorists drive. Thus, raising the speed limit, if done in accordance with traffic and engineering studies and in consideration of the eighty-fifth percentile guidelines, is unlikely to increase the number of crashes on a road.

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, speeding is one of the most prevalent factors cited as contributing to traffic crashes. In 2011, speeding was cited as a contributing factor in 31% of all fatal crashes, and there were 9,944 fatalities in “speeding-related” crashes. In Maryland, speeding was a contributing factor in 29% of fatal crashes. Of these crashes in Maryland, about 16% occurred on an interstate highway; this is a slightly greater percentage of fatal speed-related crashes occurring on these types of highways than for the United States as a whole (11%).

Exhibit 1 shows the number of jurisdictions for each of several maximum allowable speed limits among the 50 states as reported by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety in January 2014.

Exhibit 1
Number of Jurisdictions and Maximum Speed Limit

<u>Maximum Speed Limit on a Highway</u> (miles per hour)	<u>Number of Jurisdictions</u>
60	1
65	11
70	22
75	14
80	1
85	1

Source: Insurance Institute for Highway Safety

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 in preparation for possibly 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 prior to raising 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: SB 298 of 2013 received an unfavorable report from the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee. Its cross file, HB 593, received an unfavorable report from the House Environmental Matters Committee.

Cross File: HB 252 (Delegate Beitzel, *et al.*) - Environmental Matters.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of Transportation, Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, U.S. Department of Transportation, Department of Legislative Services

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mc/ljm

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