

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2014 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 429 (Senator King, *et al.*)
Judicial Proceedings

Vehicle Laws - Intercounty Connector - Maximum Speed Limit

This bill establishes a 65-miles-per-hour speed limit on the Intercounty Connector (ICC).

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Maryland Transportation Authority (MDTA) nonbudgeted expenditures increase minimally in FY 2015 for additional signage and increase to a significantly greater extent beginning in FY 2015 for roadway reconstruction and any additional guardrails or other necessary safety enhancements, to the extent that such costs would not otherwise be incurred in the absence of the bill. General fund revenues decrease minimally due to fewer citations being issued for exceeding the speed limit, to the extent that this revenue loss would not otherwise occur in the absence of the bill.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

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 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 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 48% occurred on roads characterized by the U.S. Department of Transportation as an interstate, freeway, expressway, or other arterial road; this is a greater percentage of fatal speed-related crashes occurring on these types of highways than for the United States as a whole (38%).

Intercounty Connector

The ICC is a planned 18.8-mile tolled highway extending from the I-270/I-370 corridor in Montgomery County to the I-95/US 1 corridor in Prince George’s County. The first 5.65-mile tolled segment of the ICC, from I-370 at Shady Grove to MD 97/Georgia Avenue in Rockville/Olney, opened in February 2011. A second segment of the ICC, from Georgia Avenue to I-95 (Exit 31) at Laurel, opened in November 2011. The final segment of the ICC, from I-95 eastbound to US 1, is tentatively scheduled to open in spring 2014. MDTA will own, operate, and maintain the roadway once construction is complete. ICC construction is managed by the State Highway Administration and has been underway since 2007.

According to the 2013 *Maryland State Highway Mobility Report*, the ICC has reduced congestion on three parallel routes by between 5% and 11%, and it provides a savings in

travel time of between 55% and 60% (between 21 and 25 minutes) over these three parallel routes.

The ICC was designed for a maximum speed of 60 miles per hour due to safety and environmental concerns. An engineering study of the ICC concluded that it would be safe to increase the highway's speed limit from 55 to 60 miles per hour if supported by an analysis of crash data. In March 2013, the speed limit was increased to 60 miles per hour. MDTA advises that, in accordance with standard practice, it plans to conduct a study as early as April 2014 of the effect of increasing the speed limit to 60 miles per hour, as well as the potential for further increasing the speed limit.

State Expenditures: MDTA nonbudgeted expenditures increase by \$8,000 in fiscal 2015 to procure new signs for the ICC, and capital expenditures increase to a significantly greater extent beginning in fiscal 2015 to undertake any necessary roadway reconstruction and for the installation of any new or additional guardrails or other safety enhancements. The cost to install guardrails is about \$25,000 for each additional segment. However, nonbudgeted expenditures only increase to the extent that the currently planned study, as noted above, results in the determination by MDTA to not support or recommend an increase in the speed limit to 65 miles per hour. If the study results in the determination to retain the current speed limit, or does not result in a determination prior to the bill's October 1, 2014 effect date, then nonbudgeted expenditures increase as described above, to establish a speed limit of 65 miles per hour on the ICC. Regardless, as a study is being conducted anyway, this analysis assumes that study can and will incorporate the effects of increasing the speed limit to 65 miles per hour. Thus, any costs associated with the study are not factored into this analysis.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: HB 1111 (Delegate Barve, *et al.*) - Environmental Matters.

Information Source(s): Montgomery County, Maryland Department of Transportation, U.S. Department of Transportation, Department of Legislative Services

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mc/ljm

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