

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2016 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
Third Reader - Revised

Senate Bill 573

(Senator Mathias, *et al.*)

Judicial Proceedings

Rules and Executive Nominations

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Task Force to Study the Impact of Hauling Grain, Poultry, and Dairy on State  
Highways

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This bill establishes the Task Force to Study the Impact of Hauling Grain, Poultry, and Dairy on State Highways, staffed by the State Highway Administration (SHA). The task force must study and make recommendations regarding the impact of short and long distance hauling of grain, poultry, and dairy on State highways, including safety impacts, infrastructure needs, and associated costs. The bill specifies the membership of the task force and requires it to report findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly by December 1, 2016.

The bill takes effect June 1, 2016, and terminates May 31, 2017.

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** SHA can provide staff support to the task force with existing budgeted resources. Any expense reimbursements for members of the task force are presumed to be minimal and absorbable within existing budgeted resources. Revenues are not affected.

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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Analysis

**Current Law/Background:** One of SHA's primary goals is to maintain a quality highway system. One important way in which SHA preserves the highway system is by ensuring that vehicles observe applicable weight limits. The maximum load for a vehicle or

combination of vehicles is generally 80,000 pounds gross weight, if equipped with at least five axles. Lower limits apply to vehicles or combinations of vehicles with fewer axles.

### *Transport of Agricultural Products*

Under the Agriculture Article, “farm products” are defined as any agricultural, horticultural, vegetable, or fruit product of the soil, including livestock, meats, marine food products, poultry, eggs, dairy products, wool, hides, feathers, nuts, honey, and every product of farm, forest, orchard, garden, or water. However, the term does not include canned, frozen, dried, or pickled products.

Specified vehicles registered as farm vehicles or carrying farm products are permitted an axle load limit tolerance of 5% from established limits in the Transportation Article. During harvest seasons for wheat, corn, soybeans, and vegetable crops, the axle load limit tolerance is 15% (relative to the specified limits in the Transportation Article).

### *Exceptional Hauling Permits*

Chapter 415 of 2011 repealed exceptional hauling permits for milk and forestry products available for certain vehicles in specified counties and replaced the permits with a statewide exceptional permit for “farm products” under essentially the same parameters. Chapter 450 of 2014 re-established a separate exceptional hauling permit for the transport of raw liquid milk for specified vehicles. Thus, SHA is authorized to issue exceptional hauling permits for specified vehicles carrying farm products or raw liquid milk.

*Hauling Farm Products:* A combination of vehicles that carry only farm products (other than milk) and that are loaded in fields or other off-highway locations may apply for the exceptional hauling permit from SHA. The permit is limited to a combination of vehicles with (1) an axle configuration of not less than six axles and a front-to-rear centerline axle spacing of at least 50 feet; (2) a maximum of 20,000 pounds gross weight on a single axle; (3) for any consecutive axle configuration of two or more axles on individual vehicles in combination, the maximum gross weight consistent with federal transportation law; and (4) a maximum of 87,000 pounds gross combination weight.

*Additional Provisions Related to Hauling Raw Liquid Milk:* The permit authorizes a combination of vehicles to carry to a processing plant, as the vehicle combination’s only load, raw liquid milk that is loaded from bulk liquid milk storage tanks at one or more farm locations. A vehicle combination with at least six axles that carries milk under an exceptional hauling permit is limited to a maximum of 95,000 pounds gross combination weight. However, Chapter 450 of 2014 also established for two years a permit for a five-axle combination of vehicles, with a distance of at least 28 feet between the last axle on the tractor and the first axle on the semitrailer and a maximum of 88,000 pounds gross

combination weight that may be used from March 1 through June 30 each year. After September 30, 2016, an exceptional hauling permit for raw liquid milk may only be issued for vehicles with six axles and up to 95,000 pounds gross combination weight.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** HB 698 (Delegate Otto, *et al.*) - Environment and Transportation.

**Information Source(s):** Department of State Police, Maryland Department of Transportation, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 22, 2016  
min/ljm Revised - Senate Third Reader - April 7, 2016

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