

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2017 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 1199 (Delegate Bromwell, *et al.*)
Environment and Transportation

Vehicle Laws - School Zone Crosswalks - Traffic Control Signals

This bill authorizes the State Highway Administration (SHA) or a local authority to place a traffic control signal at any marked crosswalk on a highway in a school zone if the speed limit is 35 miles per hour (mph) or more. Such a signal may only operate during the hours posted on signs designating the school zone.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2017.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. SHA already has broad authority to place traffic control devices and signals under current law.

Local Effect: None. Local authorities already have broad authority to place traffic control devices and signals under current law.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law/Background: SHA is responsible for more than 5,200 miles or approximately 16,800 lane miles of road, 2,500 bridges, 3,500 small stream crossing structures, and 80 miles of sound barriers in the State. It also has responsibility for planning, designing, constructing, and maintaining these roads and bridges to safety and performance standards while considering sociological, ecological, and economic concerns.

On every highway under its jurisdiction, SHA is required to install and maintain the traffic control devices that it considers necessary to carry out the provisions of the Maryland Vehicle Law or to regulate, warn, or guide traffic. Each device installed must conform to SHA's manual and specifications. A local authority may only install or maintain a traffic control device in SHA's jurisdiction with SHA's permission and under its direction but may place a traffic control device at or near any intersection under its own jurisdiction.

Establishment of School Zones

SHA or a local authority is authorized to establish a school zone and maximum speed limits within the school zone, within a half-mile radius of any school. SHA is responsible for establishing school zones on State roads (either of its own volition or at the request of a local authority), and a local authority is responsible for establishing school zones under its own jurisdiction.

In any established school zone, SHA or the local authority must place signs that designate the school zone and may place other traffic control devices, including timed flashing warning lights. The signs must show the maximum speed limit of the school zone. In any school zone where a crossing guard is posted to assist students crossing a highway, the maximum speed limit may not exceed 35 mph during the hours designated by the school zone sign. Fines for speeding in a school zone are double the amount that would otherwise apply if (1) a sign designating a school zone is equipped with timed flashing warning lights and indicates that fines for speeding are doubled when the lights are activated and (2) the lights are activated when the violation occurs.

Speed Limits

Unless there is a special danger that requires a lower speed, the maximum lawful speeds on a State highway are (1) 15 mph in alleys in Baltimore County; (2) 30 mph on all highways in a business district and on undivided highways in a residential district; (3) 35 mph on divided highways in a residential district; (4) 50 mph on undivided highways in other locations; and (6) 55 mph on divided highways in other locations. A maximum speed limit of more than 70 mph may not be established on any highway in the State.

If, based on an engineering and traffic investigation, SHA or a local authority determines that any maximum speed limit is greater or less than reasonable or safe under existing conditions on any part of a highway in its jurisdiction, it may establish a reasonable and safe maximum speed limit for that part of the highway in a specified manner. In a school zone, a county or a municipality within the county may decrease the maximum speed limit to 15 mph if the county or municipality pays the cost of placing and maintaining the necessary signs.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: Although SB 865 (Senator Klausmeier, *et al.* - Judicial Proceedings) is designated as a cross file, it is not identical.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of Transportation; Montgomery County; Department of Legislative Services

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mm/mcr

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