

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2021 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
Third Reader - Revised

House Bill 964

(Delegate Parrott)

Environment and Transportation

Judicial Proceedings

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Vehicle Laws – Driving in Right-Hand Lanes – Interstate Highways in Rural  
Areas

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This bill requires, on an interstate highway located in a rural area (as defined by the bill), a driver traveling slower than the general speed of traffic to drive in the right-hand lane or lanes, if practicable as determined by the driver. The bill establishes the policy of the State and guidance with respect to the rules of the road, and a person may not be issued a citation for a violation of this requirement. The Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) must include the requirement in the State’s driver education curriculum, and the State Highway Administration (SHA) must inform drivers of the requirement by placing and maintaining signs at regular intervals on appropriate highways and through the dynamic message sign system located throughout the State. By December 1, 2023, MVA and SHA must report to the Senate Judicial Proceedings and House Environment and Transportation committees on the efforts made to provide driver education and notice throughout the State as required under the bill.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** Transportation Trust Fund (TTF) expenditures increase, potentially significantly, in FY 2022 only for sign installation, as discussed below. Revenues are not affected.

**Local Effect:** Local government finances are not directly affected.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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## Analysis

**Current Law:** On every roadway, any vehicle going at least 10 miles per hour below the applicable maximum speed limit or at less than the normal speed of traffic under existing conditions generally must be driven in the right-hand lane then available for traffic or as close as practicable to the right-hand curb or edge of the roadway. The requirement to keep right does not apply when overtaking and passing another vehicle going in the same direction or when preparing for a lawful left turn. A violation is a misdemeanor subject to a maximum fine of \$500. Upon conviction, MVA must assess one point against the driver's license, or three points for a violation that contributes to an accident. The District Court assesses a prepayment penalty of \$90 for this offense or \$130 if the offense contributes to an accident.

“Urban area,” as defined under § 8-507 of the Transportation Article, means an area with boundaries fixed by SHA that includes and is adjacent to a municipality or other urban place having a population of at least 5,000 as determined by the latest federal census. (Under the bill, “rural area” means an area outside the fixed boundaries of an urban area.)

**State Expenditures:** The bill requires SHA to place and maintain signs at regular intervals on appropriate highways informing drivers of the bill's requirements. SHA estimates for sign installation costs have generally ranged from approximately \$500 to \$1,000 per sign. *Under one illustrative scenario*, if SHA installs 100 signs under the bill, TTF expenditures increase by roughly \$50,000 to \$100,000 in fiscal 2022 only.

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## Additional Information

**Prior Introductions:** HB 1262 of 2020, a bill with similar provisions, received an unfavorable report from the House Environment and Transportation Committee.

**Designated Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts); Department of State Police; Maryland Department of Transportation; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 16, 2021  
an/aad Third Reader - April 2, 2021  
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