

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2021 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader

House Bill 558
Economic Matters

(Delegate D.E. Davis)

Finance

For-Hire Driving and Vehicles - Requirements

This bill makes administrative changes to the for-hire driver’s license application process, generally to facilitate the receipt of driver photographs. The bill also removes a requirement for Baltimore City taxicab drivers to complete an education course, removes a general requirement related to the display of specified information on taxicabs, and removes taxicabs from the limited list of motor vehicles not required to have seat belts in the vehicle. Finally, provisions related to 15 or fewer passenger limousines are expanded to encompass all motor vehicles, including a corresponding authorization to be operated by a licensed transportation network operator. **The bill takes effect June 1, 2021.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The Public Service Commission (PSC) and the Motor Vehicle Administration can handle the bill’s requirements with existing budgeted resources. The bill is not expected to materially affect State finances or operations.

Local Effect: The bill does not materially affect local government finances or operations.

Small Business Effect: Likely minimal.

Analysis

Current Law:

For-hire Transportation – Generally

In addition to its better-known role in the regulation of electric and gas utility rates, PSC also regulates persons engaged in the public transportation of individuals for-hire in

vehicles such as cars, vans, limousines, and buses. This includes issuing relevant permits for the vehicles and issuing related licenses to authorize drivers to operate those vehicles for hire.

Generally, a person may not operate a motor vehicle for hire in the State under a permit or authorization to transport passengers issued by PSC or the appropriate local authority unless the person holds a for-hire driver's license or a transportation network operator's (e.g., an Uber driver) license issued by PSC. There are limited exceptions. PSC only issues permits for taxicabs in Baltimore City and a few local jurisdictions.

Taxicabs Provisions Affected by the Bill

In Baltimore City, an individual applying for a taxicab license (a type of for-hire license) or renewal of a taxicab license must submit proof of having successfully completed a course approved by PSC that includes in the curriculum (1) courteous treatment of passengers; (2) geography and map reading for the jurisdiction in which the taxicab services will be provided; and (3) tourist information for the jurisdiction in which the taxicab services will be provided.

Each taxicab for which a permit is required must have (1) the name of the taxicab permit holder of the taxicab permanently painted or affixed on one door on each side of the taxicab, in letters at least 2.5 inches high and (2) the word "taxicab" appear conspicuously on the taxicab.

Seat Belts

For purposes of the State requirement for individuals to wear seat belts, "motor vehicle" means a vehicle that is registered or capable of being registered in Maryland as a passenger vehicle, truck, tractor, multipurpose vehicle, or passenger bus vehicle and is required to have seat belts under federal motor vehicle safety standards. Historic vehicles are not subject to the mandatory seat belt requirement. Seat belts are required for any person operating a motor vehicle and any passengers younger than age 16. Persons age 16 or older riding as a passenger in an outboard front seat of a motor vehicle or in the rear of a motor vehicle must also be restrained by a seat belt.

Another provision of State law – the one altered by the bill – has a separate definition of "motor vehicle." For the purpose of the following requirements only, "motor vehicle" *does not include* any motorcycle other than an autocycle, bus, truck, or taxicab. Every motor vehicle registered in the State and manufactured or assembled after June 1, 1964, must be equipped with two sets of seat belts on the front seat of the vehicle. Every motor vehicle registered in the State and manufactured or assembled with a rear seat after June 1, 1969,

must be equipped with two sets of seat belts on the rear seat of the vehicle. A person may not sell or offer for sale any vehicle in violation of these requirements.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Designated Cross File: SB 429 (Senator Kelley) - Finance.

Information Source(s): Public Service Commission; Maryland Department of Transportation; Harford, Montgomery, and Wicomico counties; City of College Park; Department of Legislative Services

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