



# Montgomery County

## Office of Intergovernmental Relations

---

ROCKVILLE: 240-777-6550

ANNAPOLIS: 240-777-8270

---

**HB 70**

**DATE: January 30, 2020**

**SPONSOR: Delegate Carr, et al.**

**ASSIGNED TO: Environment and Transportation**

**CONTACT PERSON: Sara Morningstar (sara.morningstar@montgomerycountymd.gov)**

**POSITION: SUPPORT (Montgomery County Department of Police)**

---

### **Vehicle Laws – Intersections – Prohibited Acts**

House Bill 70 is a statewide “Don’t Block the Box” bill prohibiting drivers from entering a signalized intersection on a circular green signal, a green arrow signal, or a steady yellow signal and failing to travel all the way through the intersection before the light changes to red. A vehicle making a left turn at a circular green signal may enter an intersection while yielding the right-of-way to a pedestrian or vehicle approaching from the opposition direction. For right turns, a vehicle may enter an intersection while yielding the right-of-way to pedestrians and bicyclists. Under House Bill 70, a police officer can issue a citation for Blocking the Box only if the intersection has been appropriately posted with prohibition signage in accordance with the Maryland Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices. Montgomery County Department of Police supports the bill.

Traffic safety and roadway congestion rank among the highest complaints received from residents by law enforcement agencies in Maryland. Gridlock on our roadways is due not only to heavy traffic volumes, but incidents of vehicles entering intersections that cannot be fully cleared before the light changes to red. This can be particularly frustrating during morning and evening rush hour commutes.

Currently, in Maryland case law (*Baltimore Transit v. Presberry*, 233 Md. 303, 196 A.2d 717 (1964), cert. denied, 304 Md. 299, 498 A.2d 1185 (1985)), if a driver enters an intersection on a green light, the driver has the right to continue across and complete passage- even after the light has turned red and against vehicles having a green light. This provision is more commonly known as the “Continuation Rule.” Accordingly, it is not illegal in Maryland for a vehicle to remain in the intersection after the traffic light has changed to red.

House Bill 70 seeks to eliminate the “Continuation Rule” by requiring drivers to ensure that they can clear an intersection before they enter the intersection (except for left and right turns) or face a penalty. Left turning vehicles have been excluded from the bill because it is believed that it is safer for vehicles to enter and stage into the intersection while they await

OVER

the left turn- reducing the distance required to complete the turn – as well as recognized that because of heavy traffic, without it, left-turning vehicles would need to wait through several light cycles to complete the turn – compounding traffic gridlock.

House Bill 70 aligns with Montgomery County's Vision Zero action plan focused on adopting road safety strategies that will make a difference in the lives of drivers, passengers, pedestrians and bicyclists. Montgomery County Department of Police supports the measure for its positive effect on traffic congestion and improved pedestrian and bicycle safety and urges the Committee to adopt a favorable report.