
March 27, 2024

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chair, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis MD 21401

RE: Letter of Information – House Bill 972 – Motor Vehicles - Off-Highway Vehicles - Clarifications and Revisions

Dear Chair Smith and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) offers the following information on House Bill 972 as amended for the Committee’s consideration.

House Bill 972 would require all “off-highway motorbikes” in Maryland to be titled with the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) regardless of the year they were manufactured and any dealer of such vehicles to provide titling services to buyers. It also adds a number of enforcement provisions and restrictions around the operations of such vehicles along with authorization to local jurisdictions for enforcement of Maryland vehicle law around their operations and to impound vehicles for violating operating laws. The MVA approves of the amendments as passed by the House.

Currently, Maryland law requires off-road vehicles (ORV) to be titled, including motorbikes, or more commonly known as “dirt bikes.” From Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 to date in FY 24, the MVA has issued 27,828 titles for all off-road vehicles currently eligible for titles. The MVA issues a decal to applicants to place on the ORV to indicate the title; decals include the title number which can be looked up by certain individuals, such as law enforcement, who are provided access to MVA’s vehicle database records just like a motor vehicle’s title number.

When an ORV is sold by the original owner, the new buyer is responsible for filing a title application with the MVA. While exact numbers are not available, it is estimated that a vast majority of these sales tend to be via private sales rather than via a retail store and the new buyer is not necessarily aware that they are required to title the ORV, nor is there a viable means for the previous owner to cancel a title in their name with the MVA unless the new owner obtains a title once purchased. In addition, many dirt bikes and other ORVs are sold by large chain stores that do not provide titling services or advise buyers of these requirements. As these stores are not licensed dealerships the way a vehicle dealer is, the MVA has no means to audit their sales and ensure compliance with requirements for titling services with purchases. House Bill 972 will work to rectify the lack of mandatory titling services present with retailers in Maryland, but compliance with private sales of used ORVs, including dirt bikes, will remain unresolved due to the nature of private sales. Keeping ownership information up to date and invalidating titles after private sale to new owners will continue to be challenging.

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The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee consider this information when deliberating House Bill 972 as amended.

Respectfully submitted,

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