

Legislative Analysis



MAXIMUM LENGTH FOR VEHICLES USING A TOW BAR OR SADDLE MOUNTS ON DESIGNATED HIGHWAYS

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Senate Bill 274 (as reported from Senate)

Sponsor: Sen. Rick Jones

House Committee: Transportation and Infrastructure

Senate Committee: Transportation

Complete to 10-12-15

SUMMARY:

The bill would amend Section 719 of the Michigan Vehicle Code to increase the maximum allowable length of certain vehicle combinations using a tow bar or saddle mounts on a designated highway. The bill would take effect 90 days after being enacted.

Section 719 of the Michigan Vehicle Code (MCL 257.719) establishes maximum allowable height and length of vehicles. Specifically, the section establishes "normal length maximums" for vehicles and vehicle combinations. The section also provides a separate vehicle length standards for "designated highways." Section 719(9) of the Michigan Vehicle Code defines "designated highway" as a highway approved by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) or a local authority with respect to a highway under its jurisdiction.

For more than one motor vehicle, wholly or partially assembled, in combination, using one tow bar or three saddle mounts with full mount mechanisms and using the motor power of one of the vehicles in combination, the normal length maximum is 55 feet. On a highway designated by MDOT or a local authority, the maximum allowable length of such a vehicle combination is 75 feet. Senate Bill 274 would increase that limit to 97 feet.

In addition, under the bill, a combination of a truck and semitrailer, or truck tractor and semitrailer, used exclusively to transport assembled motor vehicles or bodies that have a trailer length of 53 feet could have a load that extends an additional three feet beyond the front of the trailer and four feet beyond the rear of the trailer. Retractable extensions used to support and secure the load that do not extend beyond the allowable overhang for the front and rear could not be included in determining length of a loaded vehicle or vehicle combination. The total overall length loaded of the combination of such vehicles could not exceed 79 feet.

FISCAL IMPACT:

By allowing increased length for certain truck/trailer combinations on designated highways, the bill could reduce state or local revenue to the extent that it reduces the number of permits issued for non-conforming vehicles, and thus related permit fee revenue. In addition, bill could reduce the number of civil fines currently assessed on non-

conforming vehicles. We do not have an estimate of the potential revenue impact associated with permit fees or civil fines, although we believe they would likely be minor and immaterial in amount.

Correspondence from the Federal Highway Administration indicates that the bill is not in conflict with federal size-weight limitations and would not affect federal funding allocations to Michigan.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

As noted above, Section 719 provides vehicle length standards for "designated highways." Section 719(9) of the Michigan Vehicle Code defines "designated highway" as a highway approved by the MDOT or a local authority with respect to a highway under its jurisdiction.

The Michigan Department of Transportation has "designated" 8,753 miles of state trunkline highways. These highways are identified as such on a Michigan Truck Operator's map issued by the department. Local road agencies (county road commissions, and cities and villages) may also designate routes. However, it is not clear how many roads under local jurisdiction have been designated for the higher vehicle length standards.

Michigan's designated highway length standards are associated with the National Network system of designated highways authorized under provisions of the Surface Transportation Assistance Act (STAA) of 1982. This system was established by 23 CFR 658 (under the authority of 23 USC 127). 23 CFR Part 658 prescribes national policies governing truck and bus size and weight.

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